

## FANOS Couples Check In

FANOS couples sharing exercise is an acronym derived from a Greek word meaning “to shed light on” or “to bring to light.” It provides a way for a couple to connect emotionally and to build intimacy (intimacy = “into me you see”).

Each letter of the acronym represents a subject about which you each will share briefly:

- **Feeling:** Share with your partner a feeling you have. (You may use a feelings wheel to help identify your feelings).
  - **Correct:**
    - “I feel \_\_\_\_\_(feeling word).”
  - **Incorrect:**
    - “I feel *that* \_\_\_\_\_”
    - “I feel *you* \_\_\_\_\_”
    - “I feel *like* \_\_\_\_\_”
- **Affirmation:** Affirm your partner for something s/he has done.
- **Need:** State a need you have today (not necessarily one to be met by your partner).
- **Ownership:** Take responsibility and apologize for something you have said or done.
- **Struggle/Sobriety:** Here you have an opportunity to tell your partner the status of your struggles/sexual sobriety/recovery today (sobriety date, recovery work, etc.). Be specific but not graphic. Your partner is not your accountability partner.
  - Correct:** “I am sober today and my sobriety date is still June 6, 2018. Today I read chapter 4 in the Big Book and am working on Step 3. I will attend a meeting tonight at 7 and am meeting with my sponsor at 6.”
  - Incorrect:** “I saw a cute girl at the office today and had lustful thoughts about her. I’m really struggling with wanting to act out with porn.” (This is an appropriate check-in with a sponsor, sobriety buddy or therapist, not a spouse/partner).
  - Correct (for partner):** I struggled today with raging and withdrawing. I am working with my therapist on obsessional thoughts that re-traumatize me. I went to an SAnon meeting this afternoon and have asked for a temporary sponsor so I can begin working the steps.

One of you will begin the check-in and run through the entire FANOS; then the other will do the same. Talking through the entire FANOS should take no longer than a few minutes (set a timer if necessary to provide containment), but it gives you both a opportunity to share what you are thinking, feeling, and doing on your journey toward healing.

When you share your FANOS, it is important that the other person provide a safe environment. Their role is simply to listen, not to give feedback. Once you are familiar with the format, you can add a time for reflective listening after each person shares (the other person would say “what I hear you saying is that you feel...”).

When sharing your FANOS, it is important to maintain eye contact with the person with whom you are sharing it. Eye contact may feel uncomfortable at first, but will eventually become comfortable. This is part of the benefit of this exercise. If you do the exercise with your spouse / partner, ***remember not to give feedback***. Do not criticize, correct, or shame one another. Simply listen to each other and know that the goal of this exercise is to build intimacy into the relationship. Also agree not to talk about the FANOS for 48 hours after it has been shared. The key is to create safety in the sharing time.

Here is an example of FANOS from a betrayed spouse/partner:

- **Feelings:** I feel a little scared about our future, but also hopeful. I often feel fear thinking about whether you are taking recovery seriously. I feel worried that you will one day betray me again.
- **Affirmations:** I want to acknowledge and thank you for doing the dishes today.
- **Needs:** I need recognition from my boss that I helped solve a problem for the company last week. I took a big risk to be honest and report some inappropriate conduct, and I recognize I want to be thanked.

OR

- I need help with the kids so I can attend my SAnon meeting. Would you be willing to get dinner and put the kids to bed on Thursday so I can go?
- **Ownership:** I take ownership over my financial issues with spending. I recognize that we need to save for our future and that my spending has often harmed us financially. I am sorry and I am trying to work on balance.
- **Struggles/Sobriety:** I've practiced healthy eating habits all day. While I have occasional periods of desiring unhealthy foods, I'm making progress in being more honest about how I've used food to cope with my feelings. I am going to therapy weekly and working on identifying and sharing my feelings. I am going to an SAnon meeting on Thursday night and am working on step 1 with my sponsor.

Here is an example of FANOS from a recovering addict:

- **Feelings:** I feel very anxious about sharing my 4<sup>th</sup> step with my sponsor tonight. I also feel increasingly aware of how much my actions have harmed you and our family. I feel frustrated and even angry that I don't "get credit" for being sober.
- **Affirmations:** I want to affirm you for the way you are working on your own healing and how thoughtfully you are parenting the kids even in this time of stress.
- **Needs:** I need more downtime in my schedule because I am introverted and need to re-fuel. Would you be willing to work together on the family schedule so that I can set aside a half hour each Saturday to meditate with the app my therapist recommended?
- **Ownership:** I take ownership for not letting you know I was going to be 20 minutes late coming home from work today. I should have called you before I left the office and I didn't and that was wrong. Please forgive me.
- **Struggles/Sobriety:** I am sober today and my sobriety date is still November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2018. This morning I read the program daily meditations and the Big Book chapter 2 and am working on my 4<sup>th</sup> step to present to my sponsor tonight. I missed a meeting this week because I had a cold, but I texted my recovery buddies that night and am going to go to two meetings this weekend to make up for it.

(Taken from "Shattered Vows" by Debra Laaser, ps. 184-186)