

FANOS Couples Check-In

Adapted from The Atlanta Center for Relational Healing

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

Each letter represents a topic each partner briefly shares about:

F – Feeling:

Share a genuine feeling you’ve had. (Using a feelings wheel can help.)

-  Correct: “I feel sad.”
-  Incorrect: “I feel that...”, “I feel you...”, “I feel like...”

A – Affirmation:

Affirm or appreciate your partner for something they did.

N – Need:

Share a personal need you have today (not necessarily one your partner must meet).

O – Ownership:

Take responsibility for something you’ve said or done. Offer an apology if needed.

S – Struggle:

Share where you’re struggling today—emotionally, relationally, mentally, or with unhealthy coping behaviors. Be specific but avoid excessive detail. Your partner is not your accountability partner.

-  Correct:
“I’ve been feeling overwhelmed today and noticed I coped by withdrawing. I’m working on staying present when I’m anxious. I reached out to my counselor and am journaling this week.”
 -  Incorrect:
“I couldn’t stop thinking about that argument at work and spent the night doom-scrolling social media. I’m so frustrated with myself.”
(This level of detail may be better suited for a therapist or trusted support person.)
 -  Correct (for partner):
“I struggled today with anger and shutting down. I’m talking to my therapist about the patterns that keep me stuck. I’m trying to respond instead of react.”
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How It Works

One person shares their full FANOS while the other listens without interrupting, correcting, or giving advice. Then switch roles. The entire process should take just a few minutes each. Use a timer if helpful.

After both have shared, you may choose to add reflective listening (e.g., “What I hear you saying is...”). Maintain eye contact while speaking to help build emotional connection. This may feel awkward at first, but it strengthens over time.

Rules for Safety:

- Do not offer feedback or analysis during or immediately after.
 - Do not criticize or shame your partner.
 - Do not discuss the content of the FANOS for at least 48 hours.
 - The goal is emotional safety and intimacy—not resolution or correction.
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FANOS Examples

Partner 1 Example:

- **Feeling:** I feel scared about our future but also hopeful. Sometimes I worry about whether we’re growing in a healthy direction.
 - **Affirmation:** Thank you for making dinner last night—it meant a lot.
 - **Need:** I need space to unwind this weekend. It’s been an emotionally heavy week.
 - **Ownership:** I take ownership of being impatient with you yesterday. I was stressed and didn’t handle it well. I’m sorry.
 - **Struggle:** I’ve been feeling the urge to check out emotionally when things get hard. I’m working with my counselor to identify why I do that and how I can stay engaged.
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Partner 2 Example:

- **Feeling:** I feel nervous about talking to my manager tomorrow. I also feel some guilt for not being more available emotionally this week.
- **Affirmation:** I appreciate how patient you were with the kids today. That helped me a lot.
- **Need:** I need a little quiet time each morning. Would you be open to talking about how to make that possible?
- **Ownership:** I didn’t communicate that I’d be home late, and I know that left you hanging. I’m sorry for not being considerate.
- **Struggle:** I noticed myself slipping into old avoidance habits today—scrolling on my phone instead of dealing with stress. I’m trying to bring more awareness to that and make better choices.

