

Chapter 1 Resources: Evolution of Relationship Dynamics

Exercise: Digital Presence or Real Connection

This exercise is designed for self-reflection and to explore how your digital habits influence your relationships, emotional intimacy, and personal identity. It helps you to consider what strengthens connection and what may weaken it, and whether your online behaviors align with your emotional needs and values.

Step 1: Your Digital Relationship Inventory

Reflect on how you use digital platforms in your closest relationships (romantic, friendship, or family).

Digital Behavior	How Often? (<i>Rarely, Sometimes, Often</i>)	Impact on Your Relationship?
Checking your partner's social media		
Sharing memes, videos, or links		
Posting personal updates		
Messaging instead of calling/talking		
Delaying replies after reading texts		
Comparing your relationship to others online		

Step 2: What's Behind the Screen?

Answer these short questions to explore the why behind your habits.

- Do you feel more comfortable expressing emotions online or in person? Why? _____

- When you scroll or post, do you seek connection, distraction, validation, something else?

- Do your online interactions reflect who you are, or who you want others to see? Why?

- Have you ever avoided a real conversation by sending a message or emoji instead? Why?

Step 3: Digital vs. Emotional Intimacy

Reflection examples:

Area	Digital Expression (Example)	In-Person Expression (Example)
Appreciation	e.g., texting "love you" daily	e.g., holding hands, eye contact
Vulnerability	e.g., sharing feelings via DM	e.g., talking about fears or needs
Conflict or frustration	e.g., passive-aggressive post	e.g., direct conversation or silence
Humor & playfulness	e.g., sending funny reels	e.g., inside jokes, shared laughter

For your closest relationship, reflect on the following:

Area	Digital Expression	In-Person Expression
Appreciation		
Vulnerability		
Conflict or frustration		
Humor & playfulness		

Reflect on:

Where do you notice more emotional depth? _____

Your digital expressions or face-to-face interactions? _____

What's one area you'd like to change? _____

Step 4: Curated Self vs. Authentic Self

Check the box if it applies to your online behavior:

- I edit or delete messages before sending
- I avoid sharing vulnerable or emotional content
- I present a more "positive" or successful image than I feel
- I've been misunderstood online because my tone didn't come through
- I share things I wouldn't say aloud

Respond to the following:

- Is your digital self-aligned with your values and emotional needs? _____

- What's one small change you could make to bring more authenticity or emotional clarity into your digital communication?

Optional Therapist Prompt (For Clinical Use):

Ask your client to reflect:

- What is your relationship with technology saying about your relationship with vulnerability?
- Are your digital patterns enhancing or avoiding emotional intimacy?