

### Assessment: What Stage Are We In? (TTM Couples Checklist)

This assessment helps each partner identify where they currently are in the behavior change process around digital habits. Knowing your starting point can help you choose the most useful next step, whether that's reflecting, planning, or acting.

Each partner reads through the five statements below and selects the one that best reflects how they currently feel about changing their digital habits in the relationship.

Stage	Statement
Precontemplation	"I don't think our technology use is a real issue."
Contemplation	"I see how our digital habits might be affecting us, but I'm not sure I want to change yet."
Preparation	"I'm ready to make small changes and explore alternatives."
Action	"We've started implementing boundaries or new tech-free routines."
Maintenance	"These new habits are working for us and feel more natural over time."

#### **Reflection:**

- Did you and your partner choose the same stage?
- What do you each need to feel more supported moving forward?
- Based on your answers, which type of exercise might be most helpful to start with, reflection, planning, action, or maintenance?

**Note:** *This tool is not a diagnostic or clinical measure. It's designed to support conversation, insight, and progress within your relationship.*

**Next Step:** Use the stage(s) on the following pages to decide where to begin. Each stage has a paired exercise below to help you move forward.

### Exercise: Decisional Balance Worksheet (Contemplation Stage)

This exercise is designed to help you pause and weigh both sides. Sometimes we keep old patterns not because we like them, but because they're familiar, easy, or emotionally protective. This tool helps you and your partner make those reasons visible, so that any change you commit to comes from insight, not pressure.

Fill out the chart together or individually. Then reflect on what stands out.

Pros of Keeping Current Habits	Cons of Keeping Current Habits
e.g., Easy to unwind quickly	e.g., Less present with each other
Comfortable routine, no effort needed	Fewer meaningful conversations
Always entertained or distracted	Harder to notice emotional cues
Get to decompress solo	Miss chances for physical affection
Feel "caught up" on news or socials	More likely to ignore bids for attention

Pros of Changing Our Habits	Cons of Changing Our Habits
e.g., More time for connection	e.g., Might feel bored at first
Better sleep or rest	Could trigger resistance or defensiveness
More eye contact and touch	Harder to set boundaries with work or friends
Feel more emotionally "seen"	Takes effort and consistency
Set a good example for kids	May surface uncomfortable emotions

#### Reflection:

- Are there any "cons" of your current habits that you tend to minimize or justify?

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- Which "pro" of changing habits feels most motivating? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- Which one change could you start this week? \_\_\_\_\_

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## Handout: SMART Goals for Digital Balance

Setting intentional digital wellness goals can help you improve communication, presence, and emotional connection with your partner by establishing healthier digital habits. The SMART framework—**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, and **t**ime-bound—offers a structured yet simple approach to goal setting that enhances follow-through and accountability. While this may seem like a straightforward exercise, its true impact lies in the intention behind it and the commitment to maintaining change. Even small shifts in how couples define and pursue their goals can significantly increase their effectiveness and sustainability over time.

**S**

### **SPECIFIC**

What do you want to achieve? What will you change?  
(e.g., *reduce time on social media, no tech at dinner*)

**M**

### **MEASURABLE**

How will you track progress and know when it's accomplished?  
(e.g., *usage insights, screen time limits*)

**A**

### **ACHIEVABLE**

How can you break larger goals into smaller, manageable steps?  
Is this goal *realistic* given your current lifestyle?

**R**

### **RELEVANT**

Why is this goal important? How does it align with your values or needs?  
Does it align with your wants and needs from the *Specific* step?

**T**

### **TIME-BASED**

What is the timeline for achieving this goal?  
(e.g., *minutes, hours, daily limit, one tech-free day per week*)

## Worksheet: SMART Goal Builder (Preparation Stage)

This worksheet helps you create clear, realistic goals around digital habits that support emotional and relational connection. By using the SMART framework—**s**pecific, **m**easurable, **a**chievable, **r**elevant, **t**ime-bound—you can turn vague intentions into shared commitments that feel doable and motivating.

**Example Goal:** No phones during dinner for the next 7 days.

SMART Element	Example
Specific	We'll put our phones away after 9 PM.
Measurable	We'll check in weekly on how often we did it.
Achievable	We've done tech-free nights before.
Relevant	We want to feel more connected at night.
Time-bound	We'll try it for 2 weeks, then reassess.

Choose one goal together to start with: \_\_\_\_\_

SMART Element	Your Goal
Specific	
Measurable	
Achievable	
Relevant	
Time-bound	

### **Reflection:**

- Which part of this goal feels most important to you right now? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What support or adjustment would make it easier to follow through this week?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What's one way you'll remind each other to stay on track without judgment?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Worksheet: Habit Loop Identifier (Action Stage)

This worksheet helps you recognize the psychological pattern behind your digital habits:

Cue → Routine → Reward

Once you can spot the loop, you can experiment with healthier routines that still meet the emotional need, whether it's comfort, connection, or escape.

Cue (Trigger)	Routine (Behavior)	Reward (Emotional Payoff)
e.g., Stress from work	Watch YouTube in bed	Escape and temporary relief
e.g., Feeling lonely	Scroll social media	Distraction or connection
e.g., Boredom after dinner	Open TikTok on couch	Quick stimulation, novelty
e.g., Conflict with partner	Play mobile game	Avoidance, emotional buffer

**Challenge:** Choose one loop that feels easiest or most frequent. This week, interrupt the routine on purpose. Don't try to overhaul your entire behavior. Just change one moment. The goal is to notice what changes when you do something different.

### Reflection:

- Which cue happens most often and when? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What emotional need is driving this habit? (*e.g., comfort, escape, connection*)?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- If you replaced it just once this week, what would you choose instead? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Did the new routine feel better, worse, or just different? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Worksheet: Weekly Rewire Tracker (Action → Maintenance)**

This worksheet helps you track your new habits and notice what’s working. Consistency builds momentum, and small wins matter. Use the tracker to reflect on your progress. For example, on Monday you chose a screen-free dinner with your partner—your Reflection Note might be: “*We actually talked without distraction.*”

Day	Phone-Free Dinner	Screen-Free Bedtime	Reflection Note
Mon	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Tue	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Wed	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Thu	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Fri	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Sat	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	
Sun	✓   ✗	✓   ✗	

**Reflection:**

- Which habit felt easier to maintain? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Did any of these habits change the tone or connection in your relationship?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What support or adjustment might help you keep going next week?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Exercise: Relapse or Reset Plan (Maintenance / Relapse)**

This exercise helps you recognize early signs of slipping into old digital patterns and create a plan to reconnect, without blame or giving up. The goal is to normalize setbacks and prepare a gentle reset that feels doable.

Use the examples below for reference and fill out your own together:

What pulls us back?	How we notice it's happening	What we'll do to reset
Work stress or feeling overwhelmed	Less eye contact, eating while scrolling	No-tech dinner and a 5-minute "How are we doing?" check-in
Feeling emotionally distant	We retreat into solo tech use at night	Share a memory or appreciation before bed
Parenting overload or fatigue	Zoning out on phones while kids are distracted	"How are you holding up today?"
Habitual evening scrolling	No real conversation before sleep	Set an alarm to put phones down 10 minutes before bed
Avoiding hard conversations	More passive checking of devices during tense moments	Use a code word to pause and check if something's being avoided
Lack of recent intimacy	Flirting only happens online or not at all	Choose one small ritual again—like a nightly "what made you smile today?"

**Reflection:**

- Which reset feels achievable this week? \_\_\_\_\_

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- What's one signal you'll each look for that might show you are disconnecting again?

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