STAY IN THE ROOM · 1

My line.

The sentence you'll actually say the next time it gets hot. Write it before you need it.

"I'm getting worked up. I don't want to say something I regret. I need 8 minutes and I'll be right back."
"I went quiet. I'm not trying to disappear. Give me a minute to find my words."
"I raised my voice. That's mine. I want to try again."
"I don't have a polished answer. Can I just say what's going on, even if it comes out messy?"

MINE What I'm going to say

MOVE My usual move, the one most likely to make it worse

- ☐ go quiet and wait it out
- ☐ defend before I listen
- ☐ fix it fast so it stops
- ☐ raise my voice
- ☐ bring up old stuff
- ☐ agree just to end it
- ☐ leave without saying when I'm back

✂ I need 8 minutes. I'll be back at _____.

STAY IN THE ROOM · 2

Compliance, control, containment.

Three ways to handle the needs of your house. Only one of them lets her rest.

	COMPLIANCE	CONTROL	CONTAINMENT
What it looks like	Whack-a-mole. Does whatever she asks the moment she asks it.	Decides for everyone and doesn't ask.	Watches the whole system and acts ahead of time.
Who's carrying the big picture	She is, alone.	He is, alone.	He is, with her voice in it.
When he's wrong	It was her fault for asking.	He doesn't find out.	He checks, and changes course.
What it feels like to her	Managing a helpful employee.	Being managed.	Being able to rest.

> *"If what I'm doing takes weight off her, I'm containing. If what I'm doing adds another thing to her list, even a good thing, I'm not containing. I'm importing."*
>
> THE TEST I WISH I'D HAD TEN YEARS EARLIER

DAY	WHAT I DID FOR THE PEOPLE IN MY HOUSE	TOOK WEIGHT OFF	ADDED TO HER LIST
Mon			
Tue			
Wed			
Thu			
Fri			
Sat			
Sun			

THIS WEEK One thing I'll take all the way off her list, including the remembering

STAY IN THE ROOM · 3

COAR, for two.

For the repair after a fight, once you're both calm. Not for disclosing a betrayal; that needs its own help.

C Clarify

What happened, in plain words, without the case for your side.

O Own

The part that was mine.

A Apologize

What I'm sorry for, with no "but" after it.

R Remedy

What I'll do differently, specific enough that she could notice it.

STAY IN THE ROOM · 4

A room with joy in it.

> *"The list said provide and protect. It never said delight."*

Receiving

"When she offers affection, can you just have it, or do you start bracing for what it'll cost you?"

Safety you bring to her

"Being an open book is passive honesty. Bringing her the information is active."

Not everything on one person

"I relied on my wife alone to define and validate me as a man, and I put a crushing amount of pressure on every word and look she gave me."

Play

"What do you two enjoy that isn't a project, a fix, chores or the kids?"

THIS WEEK One thing I'll make room for

If you're afraid of being hurt, get somewhere safe first. In danger now: 911. National Domestic Violence Hotline, 24/7: 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. Thinking about ending your life: call or text 988.