FANOS

A Practice for Self-Awareness, Connection & Communication

FANOS is a simple structure for slowing down, noticing what is happening inside, and putting words to it with honesty and compassion. It can be used as an individual check-in or shared with a partner, friend, or other trusted person.

F	**FEELINGS** What am I actually feeling? What else is here beneath the first answer?
A	**APPRECIATION / AFFIRMATION** What can I genuinely appreciate or affirm - in myself, another person, or my life?
N	**NEEDS** What do I need to give myself? Is there a clear request I would like to make of someone else?
O	**OWNERSHIP** What thoughts, choices, or behaviors are mine to honestly own - especially where they may have created hurt, confusion, or disconnection?
S	**SELF-CARE / SOBRIETY** How am I caring for myself? Am I using substances, behaviors, distraction, or avoidance to escape what I am experiencing? How am I doing with emotional sobriety?

The spirit of FANOS: This is not about shame, blame, or getting it right. It is a practice of truthful noticing - making room for connection, healing, responsibility, and acceptance with yourself and with others.

Using FANOS as an Individual Check-In

Write it out or speak it aloud. Move slowly enough to notice what is actually true rather than what you think you *should* be feeling.

FEELINGS

Really check in with yourself. What are you feeling? Once you have named the obvious feelings, ask again: *What else am I feeling?* Stay with feeling words and use "I" statements.

APPRECIATION / AFFIRMATION

Name something you authentically appreciate or affirm. It might be something about yourself, another person, your relationship, or an ordinary part of your life. Let it be specific rather than automatic.

NEEDS

Ask: *What do I need right now?* Consider what you can offer yourself and, if another person is involved, whether there is a clear and respectful request you would like to make.

OWNERSHIP

Reflect on your own thoughts, behaviors, choices, and reactions. Is there anything you need to acknowledge or take responsibility for - especially something that has caused hurt, confusion, chaos, or disconnection for yourself or others?

SELF-CARE / SOBRIETY

Notice how you are caring for yourself physically and emotionally. If substances or impulsive/compulsive behaviors are relevant for you, check in honestly about them. Also notice emotional sobriety: Are you able to stay present with what you feel without immediately acting it out, escaping it, or making it someone else's responsibility?

A helpful rhythm

Try a written FANOS check-in several times a week. Writing often slows the mind enough to reveal feelings, needs, and patterns that are easy to miss when we stay in our heads.

Sharing FANOS With a Partner or Trusted Person

Sit facing one another if that feels comfortable. Put away distractions and create enough time that neither person feels rushed. Take turns sharing.

When you are listening

Practice presence rather than problem-solving. Listen with openness, compassion, and as little defensiveness as possible. Avoid interrupting, questioning, correcting, or using facial expressions and body language to signal judgment or disagreement.

Let being heard be enough for the moment

Resist the urge to immediately analyze, defend, solve, or debate what was shared. If something needs a fuller conversation, return to it intentionally later. The immediate purpose of FANOS is to practice telling the truth and being heard safely.

Reflect back rather than react

If it would help, the listener can briefly reflect what they heard through each FANOS element and ask, *"Did I hear everything?"* or *"Do you feel heard?"* Once the sharer feels heard, switch roles when both people are ready.

Use "I" language

Stay as close as possible to your own experience: *I feel... I need... I noticed... I would like...* If you catch yourself moving into a judgment or conclusion about the other person, pause and gently return to your own experience.

Allow emotion

Tears do not need to be fixed. If the person sharing cries, allow space for the emotion. The listener can offer presence and, when appropriate, ask whether physical comfort would feel supportive.

Respect the need for space

Either person can ask for a pause if they are too activated to stay connected. When possible, agree on a specific time to return to the conversation rather than leaving the relationship in uncertainty.

Communication Guidelines

These guidelines are invitations, not rigid rules. The goal is to create more honesty, safety, responsibility, and connection - not another standard to perform perfectly.

1. **Make room for more than processing.** Relationships also need appreciation, play, joy, affection, humor, flirting when appropriate, and positive memories. FANOS is one practice - not the whole relationship.
2. **Practice with yourself.** Use FANOS individually several times a week. Writing it out can help you access more of what is happening beneath the surface.
3. **Listen before responding.** During a FANOS exchange, prioritize understanding. Reflect back what you heard if useful, and ask whether the person feels heard before moving on.
4. **When triggered, slow the process down.** Journal FANOS-style before bringing an activated issue into the relationship. If you seek support from someone else, aim to be witnessed rather than recruited into a "who is right?" argument.
5. **Practice being a witness.** Make room for curiosity, compassion, and complexity. See if you can hear another person's experience without immediately personalizing it.
6. **Notice urgency.** If everything feels as though it must be resolved immediately, experiment with allowing some time and space before acting.

Communication Guidelines, continued

7. **Use pauses intentionally.** A temporary moratorium can be healthy when connection or processing is not possible. When you pause, name when you plan to reconnect - ideally within a reasonable period that works for both people.
8. **Return to "I" statements.** "I feel..." "I need..." "I would like..." keeps the focus on your lived experience rather than assigning motives or identities to the other person.
9. **Self-correct without shaming yourself.** If you notice that you have moved into judgment, accusation, or mind-reading, pause and begin again.
10. **Let emotion be emotion.** Crying is not a communication failure. The listener does not have to stop the tears. Presence may be enough; physical comfort can be offered rather than assumed.
11. **Get curious about closeness and space.** After sharing, either person may want contact or may need room. If you want space, gently wonder why: hurt, fear, resentment, overwhelm, or simply a genuine need to process.
12. **Sharing is invited, not forced.** It is okay for one person to share when the other is not ready. At the same time, each person can privately ask whether reluctance is coming from healthy boundaries or from fear, anger, or withholding. Sometimes stretching toward connection is useful; sometimes respecting a "not yet" is wiser.

A final reminder

FANOS works best when it is held in a spirit of curiosity rather than interrogation, responsibility rather than blame, and compassion rather than perfection. The practice is not about winning a conversation. It is about becoming more available to yourself and to one another.

If a conversation feels unsafe, coercive, or chronically unmanageable, a structured self-help exercise may not be enough. Consider seeking appropriate professional support.