

FANOS: Couples Sharing Exercise

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

Each letter of the acronym represents a subject you will talk about together:

Feelings: Share with your partner a feeling you have. (You may use a list of feelings if it could help you identify feelings).

Affirmations: Affirm your partner for something she has done.

Needs: State a need you have today (not necessarily one that must be met by your partner).

Ownership: Take responsibility and apologize for something you have said or done.

Struggles/Sobriety: Here you have an opportunity to tell your partner the status of your struggles/sexual sobriety/recovery today (sobriety date, general struggles, recovery work, etc.). Be specific but not graphic.

Your partner also has the opportunity to check in regarding something she struggles with and works on (sobriety from overeating, raging, criticizing, obsessing about, checking on you, withdrawing, etc.).

One of you will begin the check-in and run through the entire FANOS; then the other will do the same. Talking through the entire FANOS should take no longer than a few minutes, but it gives you both an opportunity to share what you are thinking, feeling, and doing on your journey toward healing.

When you share your FANOS, it is important that the other person provide a safe environment. Their role is simply to listen, not really give feedback.

When sharing your FANOS, it is important to maintain eye contact with the person with whom you are sharing it. Eye contact may feel uncomfortable at first, but will eventually become comfortable. This is part of the benefit of this exercise. If you do the exercise with your wife or partner, remember not to give feedback. Do not criticize, correct, or shame one another. Simply listen to each other and know that the goal of this exercise is to build intimacy into the relationship. Also agree not to talk about the FANOS for 48 hours after it has been shared. The key is to create safety in the sharing time.

Here is an example of FANOS from a partner:

Feelings: I'm a little scared but hopeful. I often feel fear thinking about whether you are taking recovery seriously. I'm worried that you will one day betray me again.

Affirmations: I want to acknowledge and thank you for doing the dishes today.

Needs: I need recognition from my boss that I helped solve a problem for the company last week. I took a big risk to be honest and report some inappropriate conduct, and I recognize I want to be thanked.

Ownership: I take ownership over my financial issues with spending. I recognize that you desire to save for our future and that my spending has often harmed us financially. I am sorry and I am trying to work on balance.

Struggles/Sobriety: I've practiced healthy eating habits all day. While I have occasional periods of desiring unhealthy foods, I'm making progress in being more honest about how I've used food to cope with my feelings.

(Taken from "Shattered Vows" by Debra Laaser, ps. 184-186)