

Suggestions for both ND and NT  
regarding communication.

Married 14 years 8 months 6 days

I'm on the spectrum, and the first keys to communication are litmus, boundaries, evolution.

By: J. Starin

“Litmus is what do you need to have in order to understand that your relationship is still functional and you both are still in love. This is absolutely vital to your sanity, and his. If you need him to wrap his arms around you and hug you, and he's touch adverse, you're going to have to make allowances for evolutions(more later) like a hand squeeze that gets better. Most Litmus tests are non-verbal, and Autists, especially us older guys diagnosed when Asperger's was in the DSM and accepted as a separate diagnosis are using a great deal of our focus on masking while at the same time doing a “high-functioning job,” naturally reinforce the litmus test check-ins you two mutually decide to have with kind words and encouragement.

“Love you [endearment based nickname], and I love [this activity] and I use it to know you're okay.”

“If you aren't okay, it's okay to use these frequent moments to checkin. Acceptable and reasonable check-ins include, but aren't limited to, 'thanks, but I'm not okay,' 'you okay?,' 'give me a few minutes,' 'I'm overwhelmed, but I love you,' 'I need to relax,' 'I need to decompress with you,' 'I need to decompress separately from you,' 'I am at or just past burn out and need help.’”

Boundaries require over communication. Treat it like a mode. “Hey, can we realign boundaries on your chaos and mine? Your projects have spread to the dining room table, and I think they're starting to spoil my sanity. How can we get you a space that let's me eat my food, and you have a safe, clean space for your process?”

Try to make boundaries about shared problem solving, and don't readily discard any idea unless it makes you feel unsafe. Under boundary discussions you should define sexual needs, desires, taboos, and any safety concerns. I am cisgender, but I know Autists in a variety of complex and simple sexual and social relationships ranging from Ace to monogamous traditional, to closed non-binary

groups, to larger groups or even fully open for one or both partners. You said "boyfriend" and establishing the boundaries and roles to that relationship sexually, socially, familiarly, in work situations and other dynamic engagements will be critical to further relationship discussions.

Evolution, sometimes we change who and what we want, sometimes we change who and what we are, from things as simple as facial hair and hair styles, to some partnerships change socio-economic, sexual, or other considerations. Evolutions require over communication.

Over communication requires you to notify your partner that it's time or there is an expectation that anything like this needs to be discussed.

You have to explain where you were, what you currently believe is the change, where you're going and your hopes, fears, and beliefs with limited evidence so far, on what is next, and what it means.

They have to do the same thing. If you lose/change jobs, if your parents die/make demands/change themselves, if you want other relationship(s), if your feelings change, if you think you need something to evolve or change. All relationships evolve or die. My wife is not the same person I met, she's not the same person I married, she's not the same person that toured Europe, and she will change again and again.

And I will too.

Evolution discussions have to be honest and over communicated.

You have to get into the details faster, and spend less time on the low-information steps at the beginning of most novels. In Harry Harrison's *A Stainless Steel Rat*, the main character drops a safe on a cop's head, and the cop turns out to be a robot. In a traditional novel, you might read 30 pages before you know what the hell the book is even starting to talk about. Drop the safe.

Say the important parts earlier in ANY evolution. Heck, for any conversation.

This is my advice."