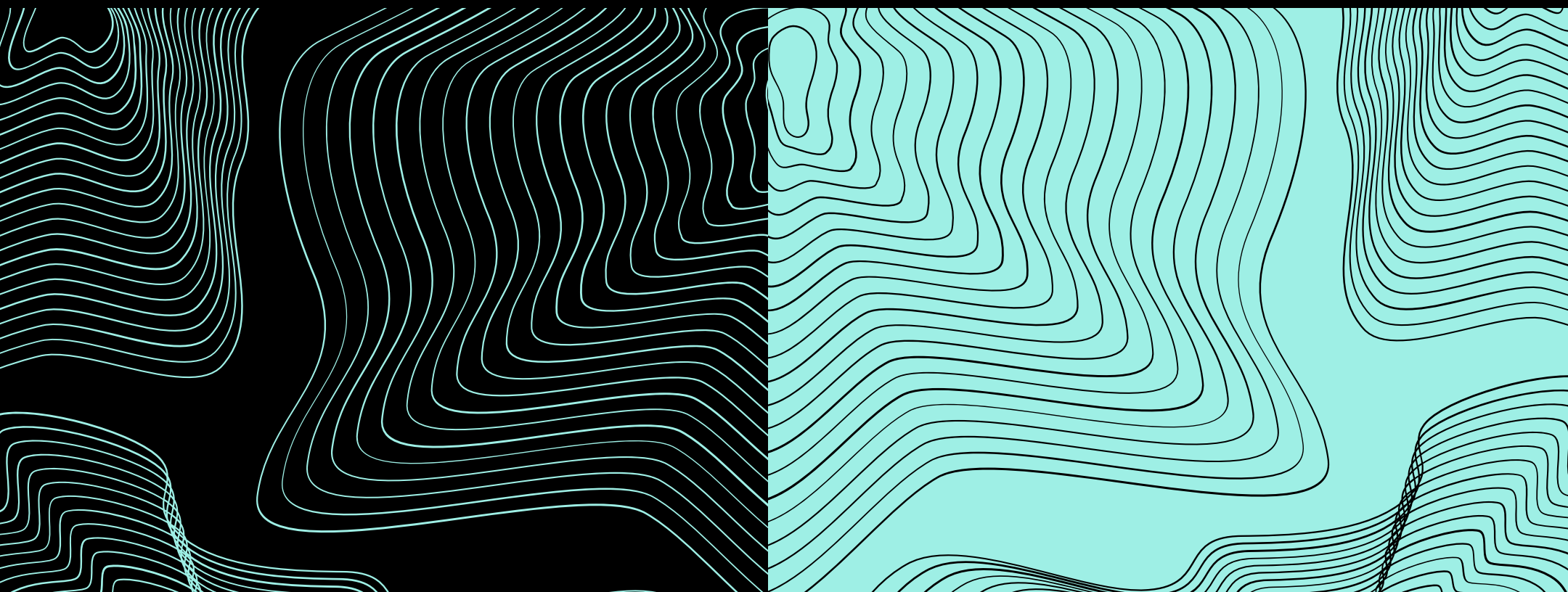


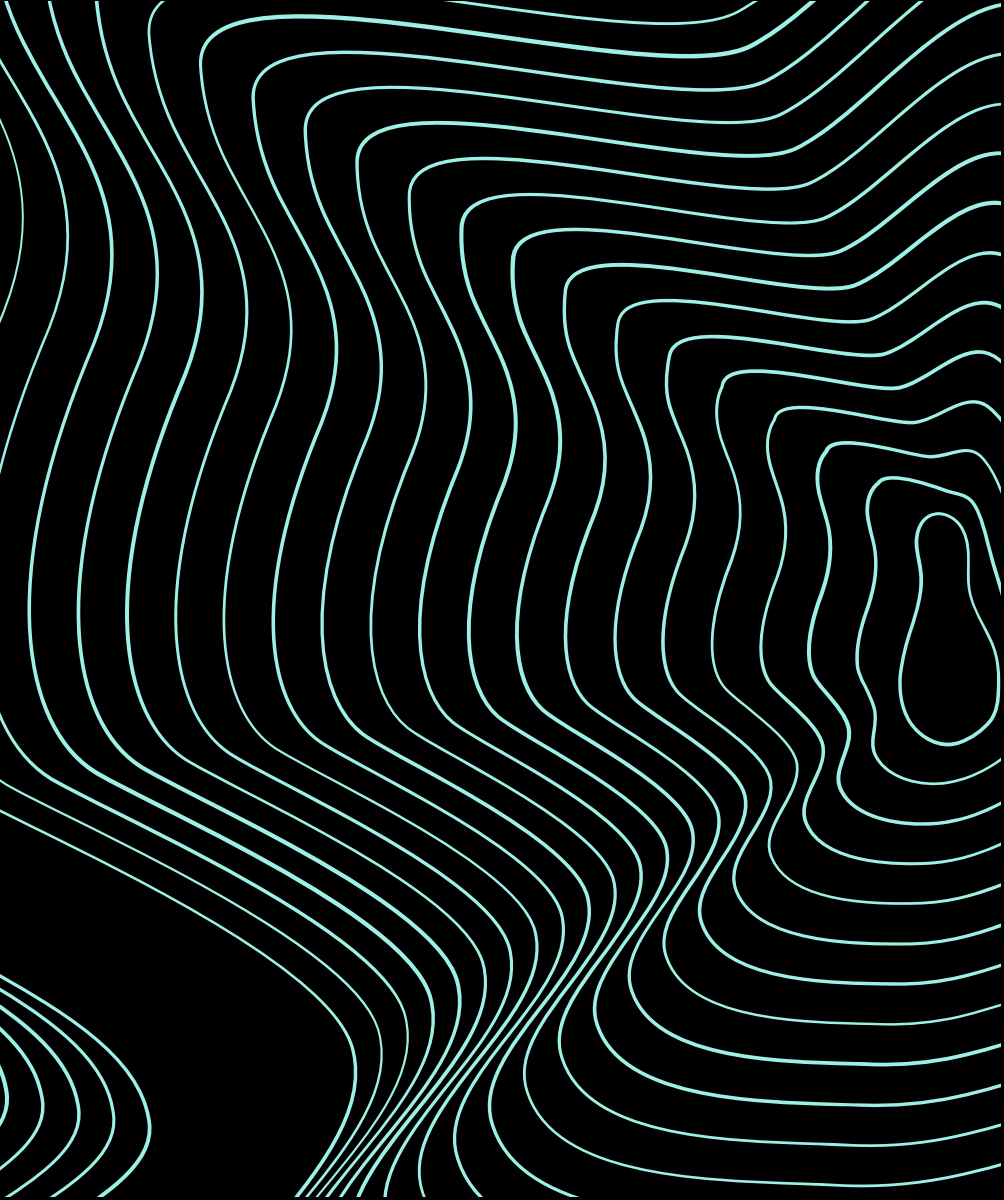
Suggestions for
EFFECTIVE
COMMUNICATION
IN YOUR RELATIONSHIPS

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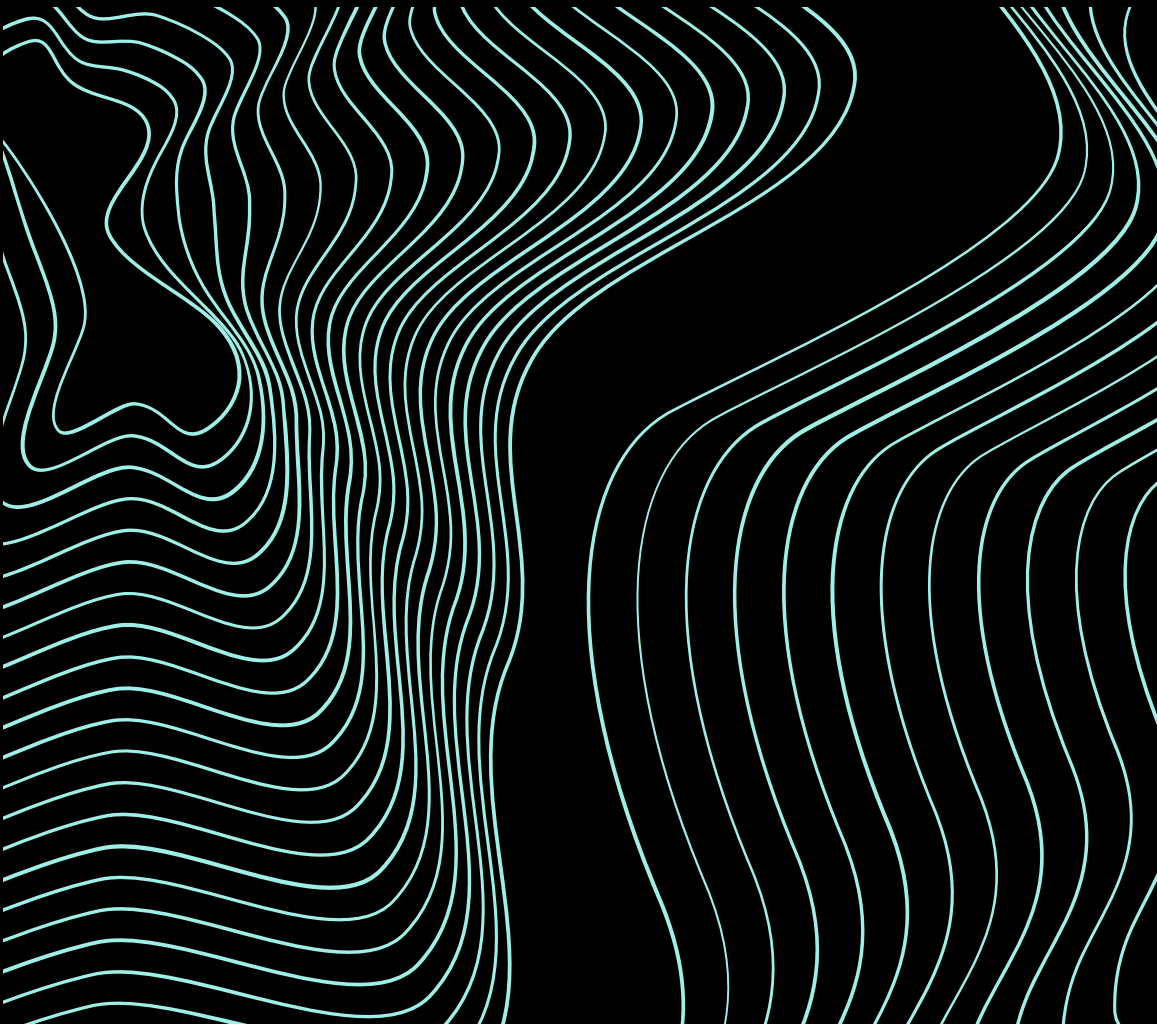


WHY IS COMMUNICATION IMPORTANT?

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COMMUNICATION IS IMPORTANT FOR ANY FORM OF RELATIONSHIP - CASUAL, ROMANTIC OR PLATONIC. REGARDLESS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURE AND CONTENT, COMMUNICATION IS CRUCIAL TO MAKING SURE THAT EVERYONE FEELS SEEN, HEARD, CARED FOR, AND FULFILLED.



ENGAGING IN NON MONOGAMY SIMPLY ADDS MORE FACTORS TO COMMUNICATE ABOUT. BECAUSE NON-TRADITIONAL RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURES MAY NOT FOLLOW THE GENERAL CULTURAL SCRIPTS OF MONOGAMY, THEY MAY INCREASE THE COMPLEXITY OF YOUR COMMUNICATION - THAT'S NOT BAD, YOU'LL JUST HAVE MORE THINGS TO DISCUSS!

COMMUNICATION SHOULD BE COMPASSIONATE, CLEAR, RESPECTFUL, AND OPEN.

Relationships do not just happen to us.

We should not just be passive participants in relationships; we should be actively making and remaking our relationships through communication! Change is a healthy part of this making process, we want to communicate through to make healthy changes in our relationships so they don't break down.

Much of what we see in the media is unhealthy communication, and that's if we get to see any at all. The cultural ideals of relationships in the West rely on knowing and predicting your partners' needs and desires - **but it's not realistic to expect others to know exactly what we want when we want it!**

Clear communication helps to avoid resentment, as resentment often stems from unexpressed feelings and needs not being met. This kind of communication comes from a desire to constantly improve our relationships - this means talking to each other about our desires and needs, and asking clarifying questions when we're not sure about what our partner means.

Important skills to build for relationship communication

Radical, respectful honesty with yourself and your partners

- Radical, respectful honesty happens when you are **completely honest**, in a way which is loving, caring and respectful towards the other person. This can involve sharing your own feelings, and asking questions.
- This does not mean you need to share everything all the time. You're entitled to privacy and also your partner is deserving of your honesty. Discuss what you will share, when, and how you'd like to share that information!

I would like to share about the date I had with my other partner last night, but I'm worried that you will feel sad. How would that be for you?

Self advocacy

- The skill associated with one's ability to advocate, speak up, request or declare their needs, wants, and thoughts in a confident comfortable manner
- Think about how you can communicate that and present your needs, wants, intentions, and expectations in a compassionate way to your partner(s).
- Some people may have a hard time feeling what they need, or expressing it. That is totally okay! Self advocacy is a skill and needs training.

I see that you really want some support right now, but if I'm honest, my energy is quite depleted. I don't think I can be there for you right now.

Communicating through discomfort

- It's okay to be uncomfortable in a conversation! Lean into it and learn from it.
- Check-in with yourself and your partner, not only about the feeling of discomfort but also why you might be uncomfortable with the topic of conversation. You may not get to the bottom of it at that moment, which is fine, but opening conversations around the root of the discomfort can create space to move through it, together.
- Talking about fears and insecurities helps everyone be on the same page and stay in connection.

Hey, I notice I'm feeling really sad and angry. I'm not really sure why. Would you mind taking a moment so we can figure out why?

Of course, thank you for sharing that! Do you need anything to calm down a bit before we dive in?

When you have a disagreement....

- Try to remember that there is **generative potential** in conflict! Conflict helps us see that boundaries are being crossed, and helps us work out our problems. It's not a bad thing!
- Try to let go of **vindictive tendencies**. We're not out for revenge.
- **Fighting the problem (together) rather than fighting each other - try to fight for solutions, not to be right**

What to think about when you're fighting

Different communication and attachment styles

Everyone comes with their own baggage. This means we all have different ways of relating to and communicating with people - some people may feel really comfortable having a shouting match, whereas this might completely shut others down. It's good to think about and understand how you best communicate, as well as how you attach to others. It's important to be able to talk about how you communicate through conflict, and what worked and what didn't work. Having a debrief about how conflict evolved after the conflict itself can be helpful with identifying patterns of (de)escalation.

Ask yourself and your partner(s):

- What do you need to feel comfortable expressing your feelings?
- When do you feel best-having conversations about your relationship?

Triggers and taking breaks

Communicating can be hard and feelings come up. If they are intense you can always **take a break** and come back to the conversation when you have time to calm down. Better to take some alone time than to make a rash or emotionally fueled choice. Make sure that you have a conversation about how to make this work for you - breaks in a heated argument can sometimes trigger other underlying issues, for example, feelings of abandonment.

Sometimes it's better to wait and not make decisions in the heat of the moment. Emotions may impede your ability to really feel what you want. **Take your time!**

Be specific

Remember, **terms don't mean the same thing for everyone**, and sometimes we phrase things differently. Try to make sure you define what you mean to avoid miscommunication, and **when in doubt - ask questions.**

For example: "when you said [x], I feel like you mean [y] and that makes me feel [z]. Is this what you were trying to communicate?"

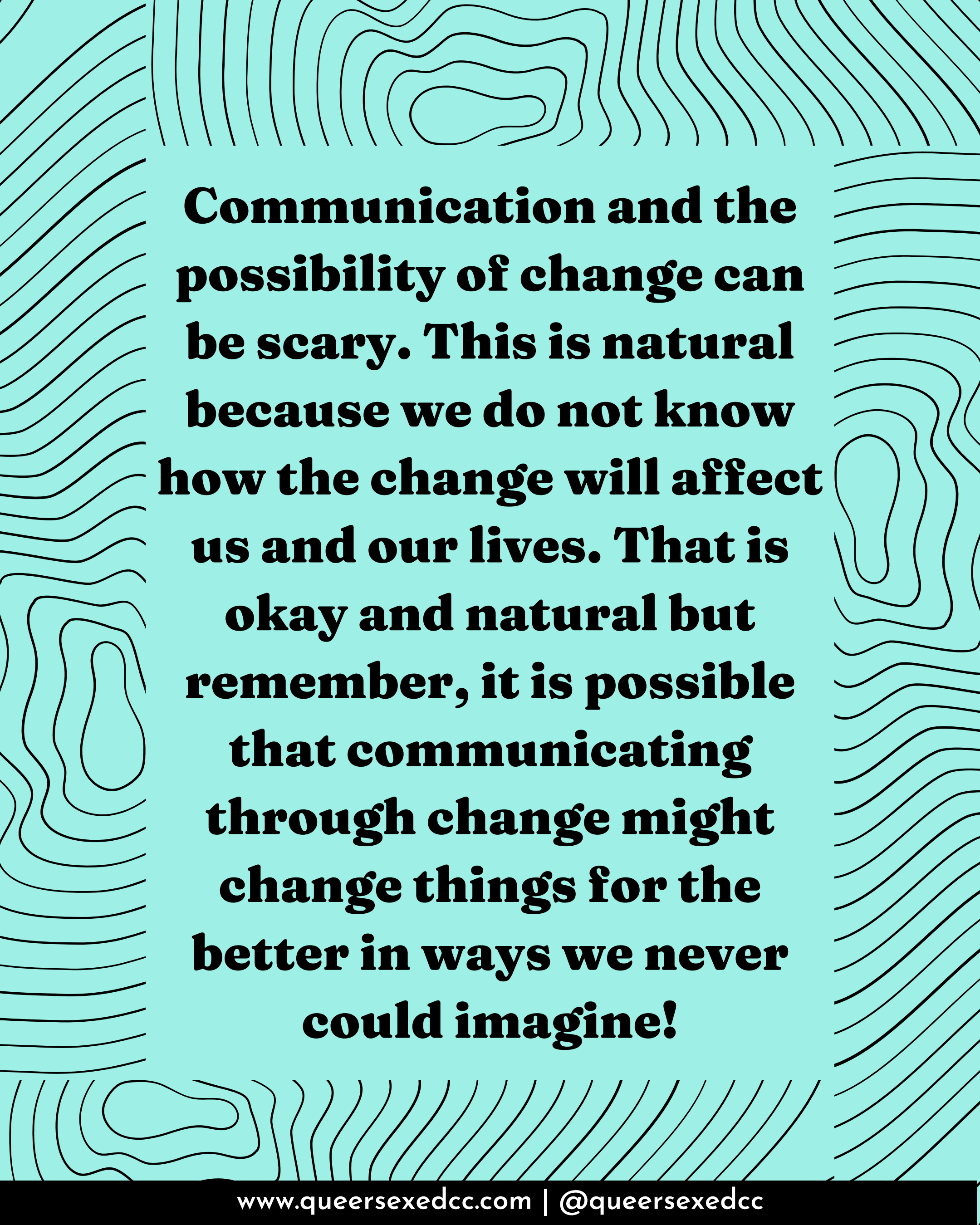
Other tips....

Setting aside time for communication and time for affirmation and fun to reconnect after a hard talk

Use 'I' statements, speak about how you're feeling, and try not to place blame.

Listen intentionally

Bring up an issue to solve it, not to make someone feel guilty. Guilt is not productive to healing and improving in the future. You want your partner to hear you and think with you on solutions because they want to, not because they feel guilt.



Communication and the possibility of change can be scary. This is natural because we do not know how the change will affect us and our lives. That is okay and natural but remember, it is possible that communicating through change might change things for the better in ways we never could imagine!