



Real Empathy, Care, or a Performance?

A worksheet for letting trust grow from patterns - not promises

You do not have to prove someone is pretending

Mirroring can be ordinary rapport, attraction, masking, or a genuine shared interest. It can also be used strategically. Because motives are hard to know, focus on what is observable: consistency, respect for boundaries, mutuality, accountability, and what happens when the person does not get money, access, intimacy, admiration, or agreement.

Look beyond words and chemistry

Care tends to...	A concerning pattern may...
Stay consistent over time	Shift quickly after money, sex, housing, access, status, or another benefit is unavailable.
Respect no without punishment	Pressure, bargain, sulk, guilt, threaten withdrawal, or repeatedly test the boundary.
Remain curious when you differ	Copy your tastes and values early, then mock, discard, or contradict them later.
Support your independence	Create urgency, exclusivity, secrecy, debt, dependence, or distance from other supports.
Offer mutual care	Use your disclosures to fast-track closeness while revealing little that can be verified.
Remember feelings and follow through	Repeat empathic phrases but fail to change behavior when you say something hurts.
Accept accountability and repair	Deny, minimize, reverse blame, or perform remorse mainly when access is threatened.
Care when no one is watching	Show concern selectively when praise, image, influence, or leverage is available.
Let closeness develop gradually	Overwhelm with attention, future plans, flattery, or crisis stories that demand rescue.
Protect private information	Collect vulnerabilities, passwords, financial details, sexual images, or secrets and later use them as leverage.

A safer rule

Do not make major financial, housing, legal, sexual, caregiving, or privacy decisions based on intensity alone. Trust can be warm and still be paced. A healthy person can tolerate time, verification, independent advice, and a clear no.



Let Trust Earn More Trust

Reflect, test gently, and keep your choices your own

What have I actually observed?

- Their words and actions match across time and settings.
- They respect small boundaries as well as large ones.
- They can hear feedback without retaliation or disappearance.
- Interest remains when I cannot provide money, intimacy, rescue, contacts, housing, or status.
- They encourage my relationships, work, privacy, and independent judgment.
- Care is reciprocal; I am not always the listener, fixer, payer, or forgiver.
- Their history and important claims can be reasonably verified.
- I feel able to slow down without fearing I will lose them.

Try a low-risk boundary

Examples: I am not ready to lend money. I do not share passwords. I want to keep separate housing and finances. I need more time before sexual intimacy. I will talk with someone I trust before deciding. Then observe the response - not just the explanation.

What did I say no to, delay, or keep private?

What did the person do next? What happened more than once?

What do trusted people notice that I may be missing?

What is the next smallest boundary or verification step?

Pause and get perspective

If there is pressure for money, housing, immigration help, account access, intimate images, sex, secrecy, or rapid commitment, pause. Consult someone who has no stake in the outcome. If you feel controlled, threatened, or unsafe, consider a safety plan before confronting the person.