thaw

A guide for men

# Still Reaching

How to reconnect with a wife or girlfriend who's pulled away, without pushing her further.

Counselling needs her in the room. This starts without her.

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From Thaw. thawformen.com

# Before you start

If you're reading this, something has changed. She's quieter. Further away. Maybe she's moved out, or said the words you were dreading.

This guide is for the man who still wants to reach her. It won't give you a script to win her back, because there isn't one. It will show you what's likely going on from her side, what tends to make things worse, and what you can do, starting today, that gives the two of you the best chance.

## How to use it

Read it through once. Then keep it close, and come back to the chapter you need. Chapter 10 is a 30-day plan you can start straight away.

## What it isn't

This is general guidance, not therapy or professional advice. It only knows what you bring to it, and it can't promise any outcome.

**If home doesn't feel safe**

If you're afraid of her, afraid of yourself, or anyone has been hurt, this guide isn't the right tool. Page 24 lists people who can help, confidentially.

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Chapter 1

# What's really happening

Distance rarely arrives in one day. It builds quietly: a few conversations that went nowhere, a few times she felt unheard, a few evenings side by side on your phones. By the time you notice, she may have been feeling it for months, or years.

That's why it can feel sudden to you and slow to her. You're at the start of noticing. She may be near the end of trying.

**69%**

of divorces are started by the wife. Married women also report being less happy in their marriages than their husbands do.

Rosenfeld, Stanford University, How Couples Meet and Stay Together survey. American Sociological Association, 2015.

None of this means it's over. It means the same relationship can feel very different from each side, and that you have some catching up to do on hers.

## What quiet usually means

When a woman stops raising problems, it's rarely because they've gone away. More often, she's stopped expecting to be heard. Arguments turning into silence can feel like peace. Often it's the opposite.

## Signs worth taking seriously

- She's polite, but somewhere else.
- She's stopped asking about your day.
- She goes to bed before you, or in another room.
- Your kindness doesn't seem to land.
- She talks more easily with friends than with you.

## The good news

Distance that built slowly can also ease slowly. Not through one big talk, but through hundreds of small moments handled well. It thaws. The rest of this guide is about those moments.

# Two ways to rebuild it

Most advice points you to couples counselling, and it's good advice. If she'll go, go. A good counsellor can do things no book or app can.

But counselling needs her in the room, on a day you both agree, at a price per session. If she isn't ready, or has moved out, or has said it's over, you can be left waiting on a decision that isn't yours to make.

There's a second way, and it's the subject of this guide: **changing how you show up, starting tonight, without needing her to agree to anything.**

| | Counselling | This guide |
|---|---|---|
| WHO HAS TO SHOW UP | Both of you | **Just you** |
| WHAT SHE HAS TO AGREE TO | Sessions, together | **Nothing at all** |
| WHAT IT WORKS ON | The conversation | **How you show up, every day** |
| WHERE | An office, on a schedule | **Your phone, wherever you are** |
| WHEN IT STARTS | The next free appointment | **Tonight** |
| WHAT IT COSTS | Per session, every time | **Nothing to read it** |

Neither is better than the other, and they work well together. This one just doesn't need her permission to start.

Chapter 2

# Why your good days don't count yet

Here's something that catches almost every man off guard. You start making an effort. You're kinder, more present, more patient. And she barely seems to notice. But the one time you snap, it seems to prove everything.

This is **confirmation bias**. After a long stretch of feeling disconnected, anyone starts noticing what confirms how they feel and missing what doesn't. It isn't unfair or deliberate. It's human.

It means the old story about you has momentum. One good week doesn't rewrite it. Consistency over months can.

## It doesn't change overnight. Keep going anyway.

## Never point it out

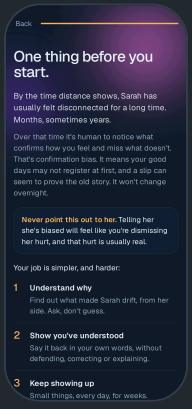
However tempting, don't tell her she's only seeing the negatives. To her, it will sound like you're dismissing her hurt, and that hurt is usually real. Her complaints almost always point to something you need to understand.

## It works both ways

After months of coldness, you're probably doing it too: noticing every flat reply and missing the moments she softened. Start noticing the warm ones. They're easier to miss than you think.

## What to do instead

- Expect your effort to go unnoticed for a while. That's normal.
- Do the kind thing anyway, and don't point it out.
- Measure yourself in weeks, not days.




In the Thaw app

### It keeps you on track

Thaw explains this when you start, and reminds you when a kind act goes unnoticed, so frustration doesn't turn into pressure.

Chapter 3

# The key is no pressure

If you remember one thing from this guide, make it this.

**Pressure is anything that asks her for something before she's ready:** a big talk about the relationship, reassurance, affection, forgiveness, or credit for trying.

When you're scared of losing her, pressure feels like effort. To her, it confirms the fear that being close to you comes with demands, and pushes her further away.

What works is the opposite: **warmth she can take or leave, at her own pace**, shown again and again until she trusts it.

## What pressure looks like

| Pressure | No pressure |
|---|---|
| ~~"Can we talk about us?"~~ | "How was your day?" |
| ~~"Are we OK?"~~ | Letting a good evening be a good evening |
| ~~"I've been really trying"~~ | Keep trying, quietly |
| ~~Hugging her and waiting for one back~~ | Leaving room for her to reach first |
| ~~A long message about your feelings~~ | One short, easy message, then wait |
| ~~Asking where things stand~~ | Letting time do some of the work |

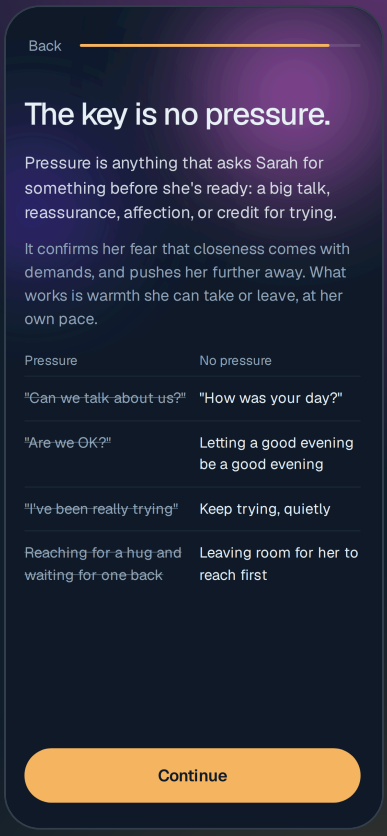
## The danger zone: after a good moment

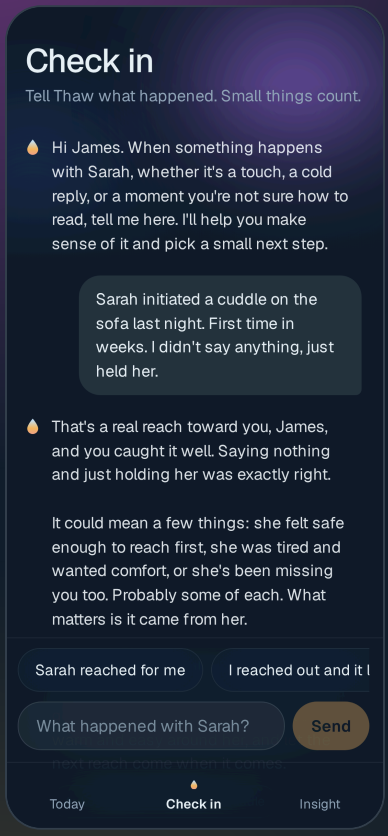
The urge to push is strongest right after something goes well. She laughs at your joke, or sits closer on the sofa, and you want to seize it: "See? We're good, aren't we?" Don't. Enjoy it, and let it be. Good moments that come with no strings attached are how trust rebuilds.

In the Thaw app

# A second opinion before you act

Before you send that message or start that conversation, check in with Thaw. It looks at what you're planning, tells you straight if there's pressure in it, and helps you find the version without it.



Chapter 4

# Her guard is up

When someone has felt unheard or let down for long enough, they stop opening up and start protecting themselves. Short replies. Early nights. Polite, but far away.

It's worth sitting with what that means. It usually isn't that she's stopped caring. It's that being close to you has started to feel risky, so she's put something between you to make daily life bearable.

You can't argue someone out of that. You can't prove it wrong, and you can't rush it. Trying to is what pushes it higher.

## What lowers a guard is not needing it.

Which means your job isn't to convince her. It's to make home feel safe enough, often enough, that the guard stops earning its keep. That's slow, unglamorous work, and it's the work that actually moves things.

## The ten-minute reset

Three small steps, done at home, tonight. It's deliberately short, because what matters is doing it most days, not doing it perfectly.

Two minutes

### Settle yourself first

Before you properly see her, sit somewhere quiet and slow your breathing. You're not preparing a speech. You're arriving calm, because calm is contagious and so is tension.

Five minutes

### Give real attention

Same room, phone away. Ask one ordinary question about her day, then mostly listen. Follow up once: "What else?" Nothing about the relationship.

Three minutes

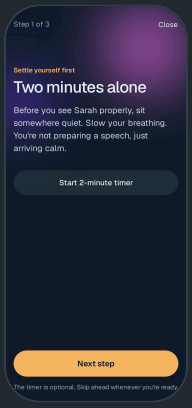
### Add warmth that asks for nothing

One small useful thing, done without mentioning it: the dishes, a cup of tea, the kids' bags for the morning. No hint, no sigh, no waiting to be thanked.

## What this is not

- **Not a technique to get a reaction.** If you're doing it to produce a response tonight, she'll feel the ask in it.
- **Not something to hide.** If she found out you were doing ten minutes a day to make home feel safer, that should be fine. Anything you'd need to conceal isn't in this book.
- **Not a fix on a schedule.** Some nights land flat. That isn't failure. It's what rebuilding looks like from the inside.

If you're living apart, the same three steps still work: settle yourself, keep contact short and warm, and be reliable with everything practical.




In the Thaw app

### Tonight's ten minutes

Thaw gives you a fresh reset each day, with a timer for each step and a version for men living apart.

Chapter 5

# Reaches: the moments that matter

A **reach** is any small attempt to connect. It's rarely dramatic. It sounds like:

- "Look at this."
- A sigh after a long day.
- A question about something you're doing.
- A hand on your back as she walks past.
- A funny video she sends you.

Every reach is a tiny question: *are you there for me?* Closeness is built, or lost, in how those questions get answered, thousands of times over.

## Catching a reach

Catching a reach means turning toward it, even briefly. Look up from your phone. Answer the question. Laugh at the video. Ask about the sigh. Ten seconds of real attention is often enough.

## Missing a reach

Missing one means not noticing, or brushing it off: "Mm." Eyes still on the screen. One miss doesn't matter. A pattern of them teaches her to stop reaching. When she's distant, her reaches will be smaller and rarer, so they matter even more.

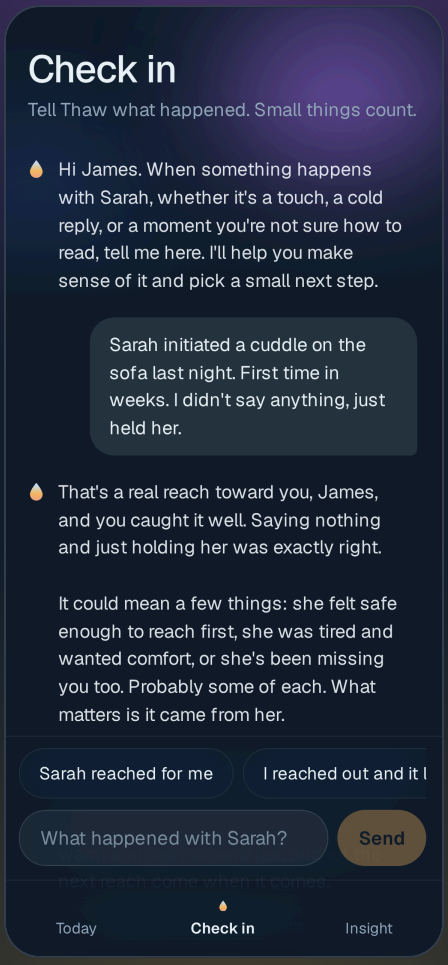
## Making your own

Make easy reaches that ask for nothing back. A cup of tea. "How did the meeting go?" A message with nothing to reply to. Keep them small, and don't keep score.

In the Thaw app

# "She started a cuddle. Now what?"

When something happens, big or small, tell Thaw. It reads the moment with you, gives you an honest range of what it might mean, and suggests one small next step.



Chapter 6

# Listen 80, talk 20

Your job has three parts. They're simple to say and hard to do.

1 **Understand why**
Find out what made her drift, from her side. Ask, don't guess.

2 **Show you've understood**
Say it back in your own words, without defending, correcting or explaining.

3 **Keep showing up**
Small things, every day, for weeks. Consistency changes the story.



Listen 80% Talk 20%

## Questions that open doors

Only use these when she opens up. Don't schedule a big talk to ask them.

- "What was that like for you?"
- "What's been hardest lately?"
- "What did you need from me then?"
- "Is there anything I haven't understood yet?"
- And the most useful of all: "What else?"

## What to hold back

- **Your side.** There'll be a time for it. It isn't now.
- **The fix.** Being understood has to come before being helped.
- **Corrections.** If she remembers it differently, the details matter less than how it felt.

## What it sounds like

"You're never here, even when you're here."

**Defending:** "That's not fair. I'm home every night."

**Fixing:** "OK, I'll stay off my phone after dinner."

**Listening:** "That sounds lonely. When does it feel most like that?"

The first two end the conversation. The third one opens it. Then your only job is to keep it open: nod, ask "what else?", and say back what you've heard.

"So it's the evenings, when I'm on my phone and you've had the kids all day. You end up feeling like you're on your own." If she says "yes, exactly," you've done something powerful. You've shown her she was heard.

Chapter 7

# Frost patterns to drop

Some habits make distance set in faster than anything else. Most men have at least one. Spot yours, and practise the alternative.

## Criticism

"You never..." "You always..."

**Instead:** A complaint about one specific thing: "I felt left out last night."

## Contempt

Eye-rolling, sarcasm, mocking

**Instead:** Respect, and saying what you appreciate

## Defensiveness

"That's not what happened." Blaming back

**Instead:** Taking some responsibility: "You're right, I did that."

## Shutting down

Going silent, walking off

**Instead:** "I need twenty minutes to calm down. Then I want to hear you."

Chapter 8

# Raising something hard

While she's distant, focus on understanding her before raising your own complaints. But when something does need saying, how you start decides how it ends.

## A gentle opening

> "I feel **[a feeling]** about **[one specific thing]**, and I'd love **[what you need]**."

"I feel a bit lonely in the evenings lately. I'd love it if we could sit together for ten minutes after the kids are down."

## Repairs

When a moment goes wrong, a small repair can stop it spiralling:

- "That came out wrong. Can I try again?"
- "You're right. I'm sorry."
- "Can we pause? I don't want to fight with you."

Notice her repairs too, and accept them.

Chapter 9

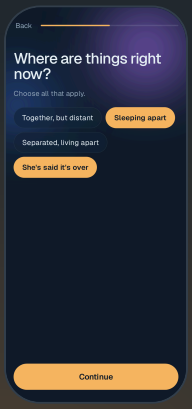
# If she's moved out or said it's over

Separated isn't the same as over. But if she's said it's over, that's her decision to make. Arguing with it, or trying to talk her out of it, almost always pushes her further away.

What you can control is how you show up from here. Calm. Reliable. Easy to be around. That's the only thing that could ever change how she sees things, and it's also what will help you most if she doesn't.

## No pressure matters even more now.

If she's asked for space or no contact, honour it completely. If there's a court order, follow it to the letter. Use that time to work on yourself.



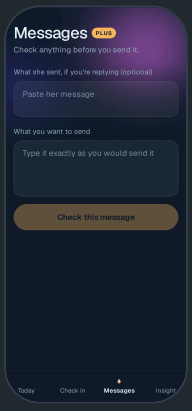

In the Thaw app

**Advice that fits where you are**

Tell Thaw where things stand, and it adjusts everything: the daily practices, the check-in prompts, and what counts as pressure.

## Practical rules

- **Messages:** short, warm, and easy to ignore. Nothing that demands a reply.
- **Arrangements:** be on time, do what you said, keep it calm. Reliability rebuilds trust.
- **The kids:** never use them as messengers, and keep handovers drama-free.
- **Friends and family:** don't reach her through them.
- **Social media:** stop checking hers. It feeds the worry and never gives you the answer.
- **Her reasons:** quietly work on what she said was wrong, without announcing it.




In the Thaw app

### Check it before you send it

Thaw can read a message before it goes, tell you what it's really asking of her, and offer a lighter version.

Chapter 10

# Your 30-day plan

Four weeks, one focus each. Each week builds on the last, so keep doing the earlier weeks as you go.

Week 1

## Take the pressure off

No big talks, no "are we OK?", no pointing out your effort.

**Every day:** One small kindness that asks for nothing back.

Week 2

## Catch her reaches

Notice every small attempt to connect, and turn toward it.

**Every day:** Phone down when she speaks to you.

Week 3

### Listen to understand

When she opens up: 80/20, reflect back, ask "what else?"

**Every day:** One open question about her day.

Week 4

### Keep showing up

Calm, reliable, consistent. Quietly work on one thing she's said was a problem.

**Every day:** Follow through on everything you say you'll do.

**If you're living apart,** swap the daily actions for: keep contact short and easy, be reliable with every arrangement, and look after yourself.

After 30 days, don't stop. This is what showing up looks like. It's meant to become how you are.

Chapter 11

# Looking after yourself

Rebuilding from one side is exhausting. And a man running on no sleep, no friends and constant worry is harder to be close to, however hard he's trying.

- **Sleep and move.** Both steady your mood more than you'd expect.
- **Talk to someone.** A friend, a brother, a mate you trust. You don't have to carry this alone.
- **Get your own support.** A counsellor can help even if only you go.
- **Keep a life.** Don't make her your only project. Steady people are easier to come back to.

## Work on being someone you'd want to come home to.

# Getting more help

If she's open to it, couples counselling can help a great deal. Some counsellors specialise in couples where one person is leaning out. If she isn't ready, going on your own is still worthwhile.

## If home doesn't feel safe

**UK: Men's Advice Line**
If you're being hurt or feel afraid. 0808 801 0327

**UK: Respect Phoneline**
If you're worried about your own behaviour. 0808 802 4040

**UK: National Domestic Abuse Helpline**
For anyone affected. 0808 2000 247

**US: National Domestic Violence Hotline**
1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788

## If you're struggling

Samaritans, any time, on 116 123 in the UK. In the US, call or text 988. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999 or 911.

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# This guide is the map. Thaw walks it with you.

Counselling needs her in the room. Thaw starts without her.




**Check in after any moment**
and get a straight read on what it means and what to do next.

**No-pressure checks**
on anything you're planning to say or do.

**It learns your relationship**
and gets sharper with every check-in.

**Private**
with PIN and Face ID. She doesn't need to sign up.

## Try it free

Scan, or visit **thawformen.com**
On iPhone and Android. Built for men.