The Reach

ASKING FROM THE SOFT PLACE

> *The bravest sentence in any language:*
> *come closer, I need you.*

There is a world of difference between a protest and a reach. A protest says: “You're never here. You don't care. What's wrong with you?” A reach says: “I'm lonely tonight. I miss you. Can you come sit with me?” Both come from the same ache. But a protest hands your partner an accusation to defend against. A reach hands them your actual heart, and a way to succeed.

Reaching feels risky, and it is honest to say so. To reach is to show the need without armor, which means it can be missed, fumbled, or brushed off, and that would hurt in the old, deep way. This is why couples protest for years instead. Anger is a shield, and a shield feels safer than an open hand.

But a shield can never let you be truly found. Only a reach can do that. When one partner finally speaks from the soft place, with a lower voice, simpler words, and the need in plain view, something shifts in the room. Most partners, given a real reach instead of a protest, discover they wanted to respond all along.

ONE REAL REACH

1. Find a recurring protest of yours, the complaint with the longest history.
2. Locate the need inside it. What are you actually asking for?
3. Rewrite it as a reach: soft voice, “I” language, one clear request your partner could actually do.
4. Pick a calm moment, never in the middle of the cycle, and say it without armor.
5. Whatever happens, give yourself credit. Reaching is the courage this whole thing runs on.

WHEN IT’S HARD

If your reach gets fumbled, met with a joke, a fix, or a blank look, try not to slam the door and call it proof. A fumble is usually inexperience, not indifference. Say: “That was me reaching just now. Can we try that moment again?” Second tries count.

TO SIT WITH

What reach have you been disguising as a complaint for years?

What would you need from your partner to make reaching feel one notch safer?

OUR INTENTION THIS WEEK

Something small you can both actually do this week.

WITH YOU ON THE JOURNEY,

Dr. Mark Gregory Karris