

## Table 10.2 Recording Your Complaints

*The purpose of this procedure is to provide a way for your partner to practice reacting more constructively at moments when you try to express your feelings. For this exercise, you need either a smart phone equipped with a voice recorder or a free-standing digital sound recorder. In the days ahead, whenever you feel dissatisfied with your partner's behavior, start the voice recorder and speak as if you were leaving a voice mail message for your partner. Address the issue as you typically would. Some people express dissatisfaction head-on (e.g., "It really bugs me that you forgot to tell me you talked to my mother"), while others express dissatisfaction more by asking questions (e.g., "Were you going to tell me that you talked to my mother?") Communicate your feelings the way you typically do. Keep each recording relatively short (from 15-45 seconds). Any time you feel even mildly dissatisfied with your partner, make a recording. After you've made each recording, simply email it to your partner.*

*These recordings can be a tremendous resource your partner can use to develop the ability to react better when you bring up a question or complaint in real life. While listening to your recordings, if your partner is like most people, your partner will feel the same kind of defensive or dismissive internal reactions that s/he typically does in real life. However, unlike in real life, without you actually being there in front of him/her your partner won't feel the pressure of responding to you immediately and will be more able to focus on his or her reactions. Your partner will have the luxury of becoming more aware of his/her knee-jerk reactions, and then develop a plan for how s/he can better react. Finally, your partner will use the recordings to practice new reactions while feeling at least mildly upset or frustrated by your recordings, and s/he'll do this over and over again until the new ways of reacting become more of a habit.*