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RENEWED FROM WITHIN

Understanding *Conflict, Together*

A GUIDE AND PRACTICE WORKBOOK FOR COUPLES

The patterns that hurt connection, and the skills that rebuild it.

Read with curiosity. Notice your own patterns. Choose one small thing to practice.

THIS WORKBOOK BELONGS TO

BEGIN HERE

Welcome

A note before you begin

First, thank you for trusting me with your relationship.

Every couple experiences conflict. Disagreements, misunderstandings, and moments of disconnection are a normal part of being in a relationship. The goal is to better understand yourselves, understand one another, and learn healthier ways of reconnecting.

This guide introduces concepts we can explore together in counseling. You do not need to master everything before our next session. Read with curiosity, complete the reflection questions honestly, and notice what stands out.

This is an opportunity to understand the patterns that shape your relationship. Begin by noticing your own responses rather than deciding who is right or wrong.

I look forward to discussing your thoughts and experiences when we meet.

- Misty

Make this your own

Type into the fields and save a copy, or print the pages and write by hand. Each partner can use a separate copy. Choose one recent moment and one pattern to reflect on; you do not need to complete every page at once.

Something I would like to understand about my own responses

PART ONE

The four patterns

Notice which patterns you recognize in yourself first. Awareness gives you a place to begin.

Criticism / A gentle start-up

Criticism attacks your partner's character instead of naming a specific behavior. It sounds like 'you always' or 'you never,' turning a complaint into a judgment about who your partner is.

'You never think about anyone but yourself' versus 'I felt overlooked when plans changed without me.'

Open with how you feel and what you need, tied to a specific moment rather than a sweeping statement about character.

Contempt / Fondness and respect

Contempt communicates disgust or superiority through sarcasm, mockery, eye-rolling, or name-calling.

An eye-roll mid-disagreement, or a sarcastic 'wow, impressive' after a mistake.

Actively notice and voice appreciation for your partner, even in small moments. Practice speaking about the problem with respect.

Defensiveness / Take responsibility

Defensiveness protects yourself instead of hearing your partner. It often shows up as excuses, deflecting, or meeting a complaint with a counter-complaint.

'I am late because you always take forever too,' instead of addressing the lateness.

Find a piece of your partner's concern that you can honestly acknowledge, and own it before explaining your side.

Stonewalling / A real pause

Stonewalling is withdrawing from the conversation: shutting down, going silent, or turning away. This can happen when you feel emotionally flooded.

Going quiet mid-conversation, or 'checking out' while still in the room.

Name that you need a break to let your body calm down, with a plan to return to the conversation.

PART TWO

Starting gently

Choose a time when you can both give the conversation your attention.

1. Pick a real moment

Bring up something that matters when you are both rested and not mid-rush.

2. Lead with the feeling

Say what you feel and what triggered it, instead of labeling your partner's character.

3. Name one thing at a time

Stick to one specific issue. Stacked complaints are hard to respond to.

4. End with an actual ask

Close with a clear, doable request rather than leaving your partner to guess what would help.

Try this

Instead of: 'You are always on your phone during dinner.' Try: 'I feel disconnected when we are both on our phones at dinner. Can we put them away for that half hour?'

My gentle start: I feel ... when ... Could we ...?

PART THREE

Listening and pausing

Slow the conversation down enough to understand one another.

Listen with curiosity

Before answering, put what your partner said into your own words: 'What I am hearing is ... Did I get that right?' Once they confirm you understood, share your side and invite them to do the same.

Know when to pause

Agree on a word or signal, take time apart to calm your body, and make a plan to return. Use the break for something settling, such as a walk, music, or slow breathing. A pause needs a return plan.

Our word or signal for a pause

What helps me settle, and how we will agree when to return

Aim for a resolution, not a win

Ask what you each need underneath your position. Look for a next step that honors both of you. Some issues need more than one conversation.

PART FOUR / REFLECTION 1

Criticism

Practice: A gentle start-up

A different response to try

I feel ... when ... Could we ...?

A recent moment I noticed myself using this pattern

What was I really feeling underneath my reaction?

What could I say instead next time?

PART FOUR / REFLECTION 2

Contempt

Practice: Fondness and respect

A different response to try

One thing I appreciate about you is ... My concern is ...

A recent moment I noticed myself using this pattern

What was I really feeling underneath my reaction?

What could I say instead next time?

PART FOUR / REFLECTION 3

Defensiveness

Practice: Take responsibility

A different response to try

You are right that I ... Next time I can ...

A recent moment I noticed myself using this pattern

What was I really feeling underneath my reaction?

What could I say instead next time?

PART FOUR / REFLECTION 4

Stonewalling

Practice: A real pause

A different response to try

I am feeling overwhelmed. I need a pause. Can we come back at ...?

A recent moment I noticed myself using this pattern

What was I really feeling underneath my reaction?

What could I say instead next time?

PART FIVE

Feeling loved and understood

Use differences as conversation starters, rather than fixed labels.

Every person tends to experience love in slightly different ways. Complete the two activities below individually and bring the results to counseling. Wait until you have both finished before discussing your answers.

Love Languages assessment

<https://5lovelanguages.com/quizzes>

Color Personality Test

<https://www.colorpersonalitytest.net/>

My results or notes to bring to our next session

What surprised me? What would I like my partner to understand?

Remember

Progress is noticing your communication patterns sooner, repairing more quickly, and feeling more connected afterward. Be patient with yourselves. Every small step matters.