

Understanding Our Needs: The First Step Toward Compromise

This worksheet is designed to help partners identify and clarify their emotional and practical needs in a relationship conflict. Compromise starts not by giving up what matters, but by deeply understanding what matters—to you and to your partner. By becoming more self-aware, couples can approach compromise with empathy and clarity instead of defensiveness or frustration.

This worksheet can be used in individual or couples therapy sessions. Therapists may guide the client or couple through it in-session, or assign it as homework before a discussion or negotiation. Each partner should complete the worksheet separately and then come together to share and discuss.

Section 1: Clarifying My Own Needs

Think of a recent situation where you and your partner did not agree. It could be big or small. Use the space below to describe the situation, then reflect on what really mattered to you beneath the surface.

1. Briefly describe the situation where compromise was difficult:

2. What was I asking for or hoping would happen?

3. What emotional needs were underneath that request? (e.g., respect, safety, connection, independence)

4. Why does this matter to me? Is it linked to past experiences or values?

Section 2: Seeing My Partner's Perspective

Now take a moment to consider how your partner may have experienced the same situation. This isn't about assuming you're wrong—it's about expanding your viewpoint to build empathy.

5. What might my partner have been needing or hoping for in this situation?

6. How might they have felt about my request or reaction?

7. What fears or pressures might they have been holding?

Section 3: Finding Space for Flexibility

After clarifying both sides, we can start thinking about what flexibility might look like. Remember, compromise doesn't mean losing—it means choosing to find a way forward together.

8. What is one core need I want to clearly express to my partner?

9. What is one area I feel more flexible in now that I've reflected on both sides?

10. What is one way we could meet both of our needs, even partially?

Use your answers to start a calm, honest discussion with your partner. Your goal is not to win the argument, but to build understanding. This worksheet can be revisited any time a new conflict arises.