COUPLES WORKSHEET

Marriage Growth Map™

Decode your conflict. Discover the growth beneath it.

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How to use this map

- Each partner fills in their own copy first. Print two, or take turns.
- Choose a calm time, not the middle of an argument. Plan on 30 to 45 minutes.
- Then share your answers. Listen to understand, not to correct.
- If either of you starts to feel flooded, pause, breathe and come back to it later.

PART 1

Identify the pattern

1. What recurring conflict loop do you two get stuck in?

Write it like a short script, as if you were watching a movie of yourselves.

Example: "You criticize. I defend. You shut down. I chase."

2. What usually sets the loop off?

Think beyond events: tones, words, looks, or what something seems to mean.

Example: "When I feel dismissed." "When I'm interrupted."

PART 2

Explore the inner story

3. What do you feel in that moment, underneath the anger or the silence?

Circle any that fit, or write your own.

Rejected | Unimportant | Not good enough | Unsafe | Controlled | Abandoned | Alone | Ashamed

4. What story do you tell yourself about your partner when this happens?

Example: "He doesn't care." "She's trying to control me." "They'll never understand me."

PART 3

Connect to the nervous system

5. What state does your body go into during conflict?

☐ Fight ☐ Flight ☐ Freeze ☐ Fawn ☐ Functional shutdown (numb but still present)

6. What does your partner's nervous system seem to do?

☐ Fight ☐ Flight ☐ Freeze ☐ Fawn ☐ Functional shutdown ☐ Not sure

7. How do your two patterns feed each other?

Example: "My shutdown triggers their panic. Their panic makes me shut down more."

PART 4

See the pattern as a doorway

8. What is this pattern trying to protect in each of you?

Me

My partner

9. What core need is hidden beneath the behavior?

Circle the needs that feel true for each of you.

To be chosen | To be respected | To feel safe | To be heard | To be seen | To be free | To be understood | To belong

Our unmet needs

PART 5

Grow the response

10. What would the regulated version of me say or do in this moment?

Example: "I feel scared I'm losing you. Can we pause and come back together?"

11. What would the "modern hero" version of me do: calm, honest and brave?

Example: "I breathe. I own my fear. I reach for repair without blaming."

PART 6

Practice the return

12. Together, write a short "return ritual" you can use after conflict.

Some couples use:

- "We each take 20 minutes to calm our bodies, then come back."
- "We reach for each other's hands before we speak again."
- "We say, 'I'm still here. Let's try again.'"

Our return ritual

CLOSING REFLECTION

What is this loop teaching us?

About our healing, our history, and the kind of love we are ready to grow into.

> *The Marriage Growth Map™ isn't about fixing your relationship overnight. It's about learning to see it: to decode the unconscious dance beneath the arguments and meet each other there, with compassion and truth.*

Print. Reflect. Return.

Want support putting this into practice?

I work with individuals and couples in Florida and Michigan, in person in Fort Lauderdale or by secure video. Book directly; no phone call needed: christinewaltercoaching.com/book-online

More free tools: christinewaltercoaching.com/free-resources

This resource is for education and self-reflection. It is not therapy and does not replace care from a licensed professional. In a crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline, US). In an emergency, call 911. If you are afraid of your partner, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233.