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Therapeutic separation form

Partners & Couples

Sexual Addiction Recovery Packet

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Therapeutic Separation Guidelines

A Therapeutic Separation is usually suggested when the couple is not able to live at the same residence and move forward in recovery. A few of the reasons that would trigger this could be: an escalation of anger and arguing, physical altercations, and other behaviors that impede the couple in moving forward.

The most constructive therapeutic separation begins with a clear, specific agreement between partners or spouses often facilitated by a therapist in a clinical setting.

While a therapeutic separation can feel frightening, anxiety provoking, abandoning, triggering, and/or frustrating for one or both members of the couple, if both individuals are willing to use the time to focus on their own areas of healing, and learn the tools necessary to come back together, it can be one of the best gifts a couple can give their relationship.

Couples should not make any big decisions [i.e. divorce, selling the home, contacting an attorney, large purchases such as a car, start an affair, or having cosmetic surgeries] during the therapeutic separation unless there are serious and/or life-threatening reasons why these changes would need to take place.

INStructions:

If you are stepping into a therapeutic separation it is essential to set up some ground rules. Couples who are separated and cannot agree to these ground rules should recognize that this is further indication of a relationship in crisis:

1. If you are able to come together on “neutral ground” to go over the questions in this worksheet, then select a place where you will not be interrupted.
2. Allow enough time for partners to answer the questions separately.
3. Discuss each question until you reach agreement. Be very specific with your answers. If you are unable to come together to discuss this on neutral ground then it is best that you meet with your therapist to discuss.
4. Be flexible and compromise.
5. If children are involved place their well being as a top priority.

Therapeutic Separation Questions & Planning Worksheet

***Please begin answering the following questions separately and bring in to your therapy session to discuss.***

1. Decide on which partner will be moving out and where they will live. If one person is the primary caregiver over the other for children, it is best that this person remain in the home. If children are not a consideration, the addicted partner is often the person who will make arrangements to leave the home during the separation.
2. Estimated length of the trial separation? (A specific period that is determined by benchmarks and goals, not by time. Typically 90 days).
3. What benchmarks/goals need to be met or practiced by the end of the estimated length of trial separation?
4. State the financial agreements during this time. For example, how much money will be needed, how the money will be handled, how bills will be paid, the dates, and so forth.
5. State both partners’ living arrangements for this period:
6. State specific plans for visits, dates, or other contacts between partners. This would include upcoming special events, visiting children, children’s school or sporting events, weddings, church, etc. Who will attend what events?
7. State who you will tell, what you will tell and how much you will tell and how you will tell these individuals. Therapists advise to select only safe people to both of you, this may include family members or close friends. It is best to be very selective and agree on this. Some couples prefer to write an email.

An example would be:

“We have been facing challenges in our relationship. In order to heal, recover and re-build trust, we are seeking therapy both individually and for couples. We will be living apart for a period of time (90 days) during a therapeutic separation. This is not a legal separation, rather it is a break where we will be practicing the tools we are learning in our therapy. We ask for your prayers and good thoughts of support during this time. And we ask that you hold this in confidence as we are sharing with only a specific number of trusted individuals. We will check in periodically on our progress. If you prefer not to be included in these check ins, we respect that. Thank you for your support and love during this challenging season of healing.”

1. State the specific counseling expectations, agreement and recovery plan.
2. State when and where you will discuss with children, and how much information will be shared. Please read the chapter from *Mending a Shattered Heart* on guidelines for disclosing to children.

10. Is there anything that could happen to cause one or both of you to end the separation and proceed immediately to break-up or divorce? Be specific.

1. State spiritual considerations.
2. State specific physical, sexual boundaries.
3. State specific communication boundaries, including text, email, snail mail, and phone calls.
4. State when you will be planning your Couples Check-In. Often at the start, Couples Check-Ins are facilitated in the counseling office. Gradually as the couple builds tools, they meet one time a week with a specific outline to work from. [Note: If you are not sure what this is, please work with your therapist to put a plan together].
5. What changes will each partner need to make to renew the relationship commitment?
6. What are your three biggest concerns?
7. What are your three top non-negotiable boundaries?
8. Please list any other requests or concerns.

We are agreeing to a therapeutic separation as our own decision and as part of our recovery. We understand that we are not mandated to agree to this if we do not feel it is best for our relationship. We agree to use the time apart to work on our own individual therapy and recovery. If children are a consideration, we agree to put the needs of our children first. We agree to treat one another with respect and honor the guidelines of this agreement. We agree to not make any big decisions during this separation. If one or both of us feels that we are a threat to self (suicidal) or the other (homicidal) we agree to call 911 and emergency support. If one or both of us decides to change any part of this agreement, we agree to discuss this in a counseling session. We agree to use discretion during this time in discussing with others. Please sign and date below:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_         \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  
  
  
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