

PARTNER EMPATHY MAP

Repair Starts with Understanding.

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Partner Empathy Map:

Step into your partner's shoes to **understand** their emotional pain...
... so your partner doesn't feel alone in it.

When something painful happens between partners, it can be tempting to move on quickly, avoid talking about it, or explain why it happened. But hurt that never feels fully **understood** often keeps showing up.

The Partner Empathy Map helps you step out of your own perspective for a few minutes and into your partner's experience.

Sometimes the repair needs to go both ways. Other times, one person needs to feel heard first.

Stay curious, not defensive. You can return to your own side later. For now, stay with theirs.

Think of a relationship hurt that still feels unfinished. It may be one moment, something that happened repeatedly, or a larger rupture that affected trust, safety, or connection.

Move through each section slowly and imagine what your partner may have felt, thought, heard, needed, and carried forward from the experience.

Try to understand their experience based on who they are, what matters to them, their history, their fears, and their strengths & vulnerabilities.

The **goal of empathy** is simply to help your partner feel less *alone* in what happened.

1.

Hear

What did they see and hear from you?

What message did your words or actions send to them?

What did they want to hear from you most?

2.

Feel

How were they feeling?

What makes sense about that?

What was the worst part?

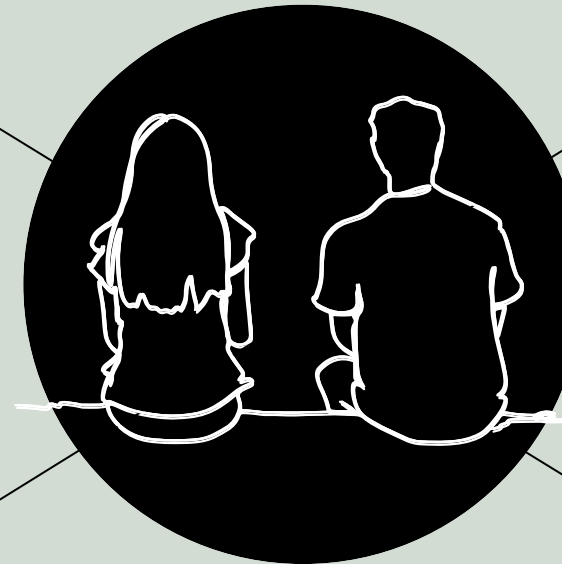
3.

Think

What did they think to themselves?

What did they think should have happened?

What old fear might this have touched?



Impact

4.

What did they do in response to the pain?

How did this impact them day to day?

What might still feel unresolved for them?

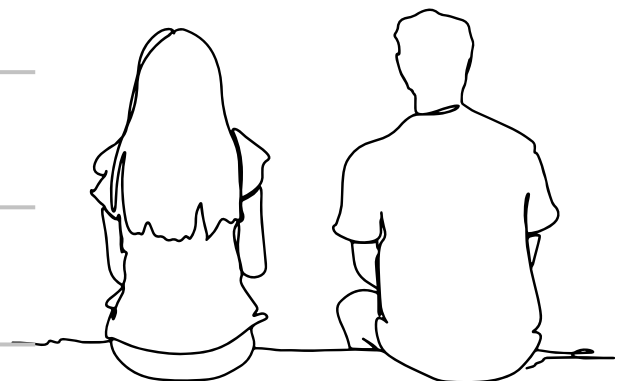
Hear

EMPATHY MAP

What did they see and hear from you during this time?

What message did your words or actions send to them?

What did they want to hear from you most?

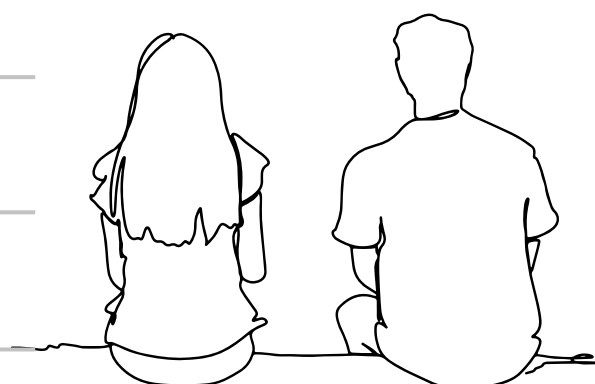


Feel

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What makes sense about that?

What was the worst part?

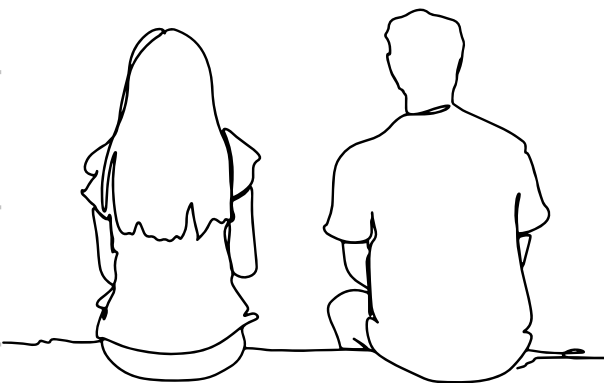




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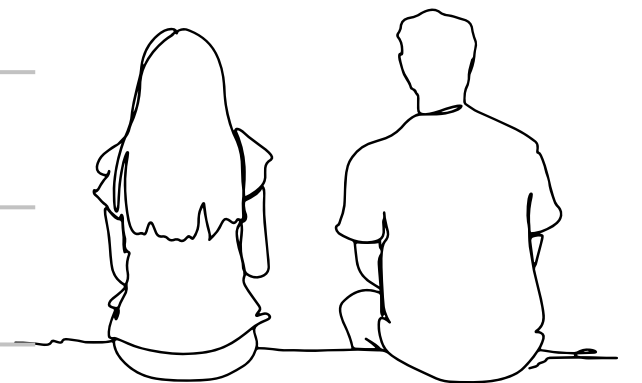


Impact

What did they do in response to the pain?

How did this impact them day to day?

What might still feel unresolved for them?



HOW TO USE THE EMPATHY MAP TO RECONNECT DAY TO DAY:

Pick a Recent Moment of Tension.

Choose a situation where your partner felt hurt, misunderstood, or frustrated.

Pause Your Perspective.

Set aside your own story for a few minutes. This isn't about agreeing – it's about seeing.

Walk Through the Partner Empathy Map.

Answer each question honestly, imagining what your partner might have felt, thought, heard, and done. Stay curious, not critical.

Remember: Empathy is not about excusing behavior or forgetting your own feelings... it's about creating *space to understand* where your partner is coming from. This is how resentment softens, defenses drop, and real connection begins.

EMPATHY IS THE BRIDGE BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT REALITIES.

Each time you choose to understand instead of defend, you're building a relationship where both of you feel safer, closer, and more supported.



TURNING EMPATHY INTO REPAIR

Take your time answering the questions. Writing your responses out by hand can help you slow down, reflect more honestly, and stay with the experience instead of rushing to an answer. When you are ready, either talk through your responses, share what you wrote with your partner, or wait to bring it into therapy to process with expert guidance.

Let your partner take it in without you explaining or defending anything. Ask: “Did I get that right?” and “What am I still missing?” **Listen** to any feedback, corrections, or additions with curiosity. Keep the focus on validating their reality. Validation does not mean you agree with everything your partner feels. It means you are willing to understand why the experience made sense from your partner’s point of view and acknowledge the impact it had on them... so they are not *alone* in the pain.

The **goal** is not to rehash the past. It is to understand it well enough that you do not have to keep fighting to be heard. Feeling understood can reduce the need to keep proving how much something hurt.

Going back once with intention can be very different from going back again and again without resolution. Repair helps turn an open loop into something the relationship can begin to integrate and move forward together.



WHAT YOU NEED TO FEEL UNDERSTOOD

Relationship ruptures can make it hard to think clearly. When attachment gets threatened, the brain can shift into **survival mode**. Thinking often becomes narrower, more absolute, and more focused on danger. While your partner completes the Partner Empathy Map, take a few minutes to think about what would help you feel more understood and what you may still need in order to begin moving forward.

What do you wish your partner understood about the impact?

What would meaningful repair look like to you?

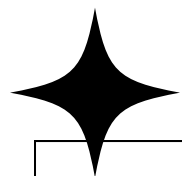
What do you still find yourself wondering about?

What would help you feel less alone in this?

What do you need your partner to be patient with?

What would repair look like in actions, not just words?

What small change would help you feel a little safer this week?



The bridge back to connection is built when each person feels that their inner experience **matters** to the other.

