



New Reflections

CLINICAL SERVICES

Considering a Separation

A therapeutic separation may give you time to pause and think through some options before making any long-term decisions. To successfully complete the separation agreement, you will want to fill out the form separately and then review your answers together with your therapist. Decide on the details of the agreement together, so that both parties are heard and the needs of both parties are met. This agreement will give you direction and a plan while you both are deciding how the future will look. As written and agreed upon in the agreement, you both get to practice new boundaries and limits. This is not a legal document, but rather a means of setting expectations and new ways of trying on radical love while you work at repairing your relationship.

Agreement for In-House or Out-of-House Therapeutic Separation

What things will we do when either one of us is emotionally overwhelmed?

What behaviors or words will we avoid, and how will we remind each other that a break is needed if we are engaged in any of these behaviors?

Decide which partner will move out if this is an out-of-house separation. Children are a primary consideration in this process. If you have children and are the main caretaker, it is well advised that you stay at home.

If children are not involved, come to a consensus for arrangements during the time of absence.

I recommend a separation of no less than 90 days. What is a good date to start and end?

What individual, partner, and relational goals must be met during the separation agreement?

For example: *Individual counseling, couples counseling, working on our trauma eggs, reading books, attending meetings, regular calls with a sponsor, attending a couple's group, going to church, and completing daily check-ins. Be specific, clear, concise, and concrete.*

Individual

Partner

Relationship

If this is an out-of-house separation, how would you like to see the household budget and finances met, who will maintain it, and how will it be handled?

If this is an out of the house separation, state specific plans for how you will stay in contact and manage family events, such as holidays, date nights, church, and kid's events.

If this is an in-house separation, state plans for sleeping arrangements, sexual intimacy, beginning or continuing a period of sexual abstinence (typically three months of sexual abstinence is recommended after discovery, rewiring the brain to not use sex as a means of turning away from the underlying issue and learning to effectively manage your impulses, feelings, and stress). Be clear about any sexual boundaries, including touching, kissing etc.

How will you spend time with the children as a family and special times? What are the eating arrangements?

What do we tell the children, whether it's in- or out-of-house separation?

What family members and friends do we inform, and what do we tell them?

Define what sobriety, relapse, and a "slip" mean to you?

State what and who is in your inner, middle, and outer circle.

Do you have any expectations, such as a disclosure, polygraph, or two or three-day intensive workshop? State how and why this is important to you. Are you willing or not to comply?

Are you willing to disclose in an agreed amount of time if you have had a slip or relapse, defined by your relational circles and contract to sobriety?

What specific changes need to be made, whether emotional or physical, to experience success?

Is there anything that is negotiable or non-negotiable?

What is your bottom line? Is there anything that would cause either of you to end the separation agreement and follow through with a divorce? Please be specific.

Please list any other concerns.

We agree to be rigorously honest and acknowledge the truth for the sake of trust and hope in our future, to have the integrity to comply with our agreement, and if at any time I can no longer adhere to my word, I will discuss this with you and my therapist. We will talk about our next steps. Otherwise, I will be respectful and learn what it means to be safe, sober, healthy, and honest. After our three-month separation agreement, we will continue implementing everything essential to move forward as a couple. We will write a letter to each other stating the things that went well in our allotted time of a separation agreement and discuss areas of improvement, as well as new things we would like to do to support and encourage the best in each other. This will be read in our therapy session.

Sign and date below:

Sign _____ Date _____