

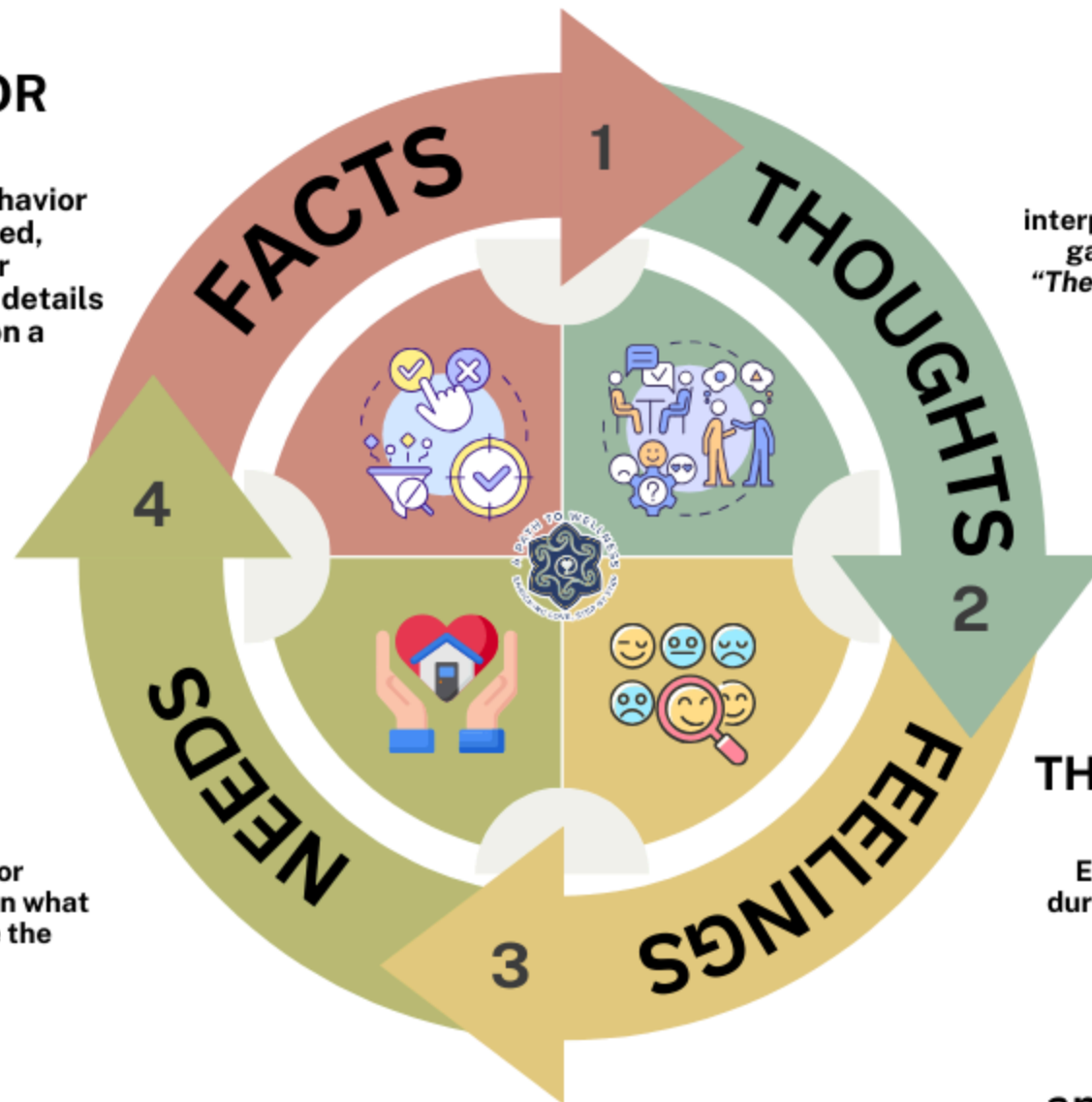
COUPLES COMMUNICATION WORKSHEET: THE FEEDBACK WHEEL

WHAT I SAW OR HEARD

Describe the specific behavior or event that you observed, without interpretation or judgment. Use concrete details that could be captured on a video camera.

WHAT I MADE UP ABOUT THAT

Share your personal interpretation or the meaning you gave to the observed behavior. *"The story my mind tells me is..."*



WHAT I'D LIKE NOW

Communicate your needs or desires clearly, focusing on what could help heal or improve the situation.

THIS IS HOW I FEEL ABOUT IT

Express the emotions you felt during the event without mixing them with interpretations or accusations.

Couples Communication Worksheet: The Feedback Wheel

Purpose: This worksheet helps couples communicate more effectively about conflicts or issues, emphasizing clarity, honesty, and empathy.

Four Steps for the Speaker

1. Report what you saw
2. Describe the story your mind told you about what you saw
3. Describe the feelings that stemmed from your story
4. Ask for what you need

Step 1: What I Saw or Heard

Objective: Describe the specific behavior or event that you observed, without interpretation or judgment. Use concrete details that could be captured on a video camera.

Instructions:

1. Reflect on a recent event that triggered a strong reaction in you.

2. Describe only what you observed directly—what the other person said or did.

Example:

Noticed Behavior: *"Yesterday evening, when you came home, you threw your keys on the table harder than usual and didn't greet me."*

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Step 2: What I Made Up About That

Objective: Share your personal interpretation or the meaning you gave to the observed behavior.

Instructions:

1. Reflect on what you thought the behavior meant at the moment.

2. Use the phrase, "What I made up about that is..." to emphasize that this is your interpretation.

Example:

My Interpretation: *"What I made up about that is you were frustrated about something from work and took it out at home, which made me feel as though I might be part of the problem."*

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Step 3: This Is How I Feel About It

Objective: Express the emotions you felt during the event without mixing them with interpretations or accusations.

Instructions:

1. Identify and name your feelings directly related to the incident.

2. Use simple, straightforward language.

Example:

My Feelings: *"I felt ignored and unimportant when you didn't greet me, which made me sad and a bit rejected."*

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Step 4: What I'd Like Now

Objective: Communicate your needs or desires clearly, focusing on what could help heal or improve the situation.

Instructions:

1. Think about what you need from your partner to feel better about the situation.

2. Be specific about actions or words that can help.

Example:

My Request: *"I would like it if we could take a few minutes to connect after you come home, even if it's just a quick check-in to say 'hi' and share how our day was."*

Steps for the Listener

Step #1. “What I hear you say is...”

This step is crucial as it serves to validate the speaker. By repeating back what you've heard, you confirm that you have paid attention and understood their message, which is fundamental in any communication

Instructions:

- Listen attentively without planning your response while the speaker is talking.
- Repeat back the key points or emotions expressed by the speaker using phrases like, “What I hear you saying is...”
- Ensure your recap includes both the content and the feelings involved, as accurately as possible.
- *For example, “If I understand correctly, you felt overlooked when I didn’t acknowledge the effort you put into organizing the dinner last night.”*

Step #2. Acknowledge Whatever You Can

Purpose: Acknowledgment shows that you recognize the speaker’s perspective or feelings, regardless of whether you agree with them. It’s about showing respect for their experience.

Instructions

- Identify elements in the speaker's narrative that you recognize as true or understand, even if they are not your own experiences or feelings.
- Express acknowledgment of the speaker’s feelings and experiences without defensiveness.
- Use phrases like, “I can see how that made you feel...” or “I understand that when I did X, it made you feel Y.”
- Example: *“I can see how my actions could have come off as uncaring. I understand why you felt hurt by that, and I regret that my behavior made you feel this way.”*

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Step #3. Give As Much As You Can

Purpose: This step involves demonstrating willingness to meet the speaker's needs or requests, fostering cooperation and resolution.

Instructions

- Consider what the speaker has requested and evaluate what you are genuinely willing and able to give or change.
- Communicate clearly what you can do to meet their needs or move towards a resolution.
- It's important to be honest and realistic in your commitments—offering only what you can genuinely follow through on.
- *Example: "You asked for us to spend more quality time together. I agree that's important, and I can commit to setting aside time each weekend for us to do something special together."*

Final Note to Couples:

Remember, the goal of using this worksheet is to foster understanding and empathy, not to win an argument. Each person should have the opportunity to go through these steps, one at a time, while the other listens actively and openly. After both have shared, discuss ways to address the issues constructively together.

Print or copy this worksheet and use it during times of conflict or when you feel a need to discuss something important. It's a tool designed to guide your conversations to be more productive and supportive.

Adapted from *The New Rules of Marriage. What You Need to Know to Make Love Work* by Terry Real.