affair recovery

What Do You Need?

A Worksheet for Finding Your Stopping Point

"What do you need?" It sounds like a simple question. When you've spent years bending around everyone else, it can feel almost impossible to answer.

This worksheet breaks that question into four small steps: notice, name, ask, and try. You don't have to finish it in one sitting. You don't have to fill in every line. Start wherever you have energy today, and come back when you're ready.

Part 1: Notice where you bend

Check any that sound familiar. This isn't a test, and there's no score. It's a way to start seeing your own patterns with curiosity instead of shame.

- ☐ I say yes when I want to say no.
- ☐ I rush to smooth things over when there's tension or conflict.
- ☐ I feel anxious or unsafe when someone is upset with me.
- ☐ I feel guilty taking time, rest, or help for myself.
- ☐ I know what others need before I know what I need.
- ☐ I keep giving even when I'm running on empty.
- ☐ I find it hard to answer when someone asks how I'm really doing.
- ☐ Since discovering the betrayal, I've found myself managing my spouse's feelings or recovery more than my own.

What does your body do when you start to bend?

Some people notice a tight jaw, a fluttering chest, a churning stomach, or tense shoulders. What do you notice?

A recent moment I bent past my limits:

Part 2: Name what you need

Needs can be hard to find when you've ignored them for a long time. Use the examples as prompts, then write your own in the last column. Small needs count, and so do big ones.

Kind of need	Examples	What I need
Rest	Sleep, a quiet hour, permission to do nothing	
Practical help	A babysitter, meals, help with errands or chores	
Emotional support	Someone to listen without fixing, comfort, reassurance	
Communication	Honest conversations, clearer answers, being heard	
Safety	Feeling secure at home, space when you need it, boundaries that are respected	
Time for me	Time alone without guilt, a hobby, a walk, a friend	
Connection	People who understand what you're going through	
Something else		

If I could only choose one need to start with, it would be:

Part 3: Decide who to ask

You don't have to meet every need on your own, and you don't have to get every need met by one person. After betrayal, your spouse may not be the safest or most able person to help with some needs right now. That's okay. Look wider.

People you might ask: a friend, a family member, a neighbor, someone from your faith community, a support group, a counselor or therapist, or paid help like a sitter or a cleaning service.

My need	Who could help	Does asking this person feel safe and realistic right now?

If no one comes to mind for a need, write it down anyway. Naming it is still a step forward.

Part 4: Try one small ask

Pick one need and one person. Keep it small enough that it feels possible this week.

This week, I will ask _____ for _____.

If you're not sure how to say it, try one of these starters:

- "I've been running on empty. Would you be willing to …?"
- "It would really help me if …"
- "I'm learning to ask for what I need, and right now I need …"
- "Could we find a time to talk about …?"
- "I can't do that this week. What I can do is …"

Before you ask, pause. Notice what your body is doing. Take a few slow breaths. Remind yourself that asking is allowed.

After you ask, check in with yourself: How did it feel? What did you notice in your body?

If the answer is no

A need isn't a demand, and asking doesn't mean you control the answer. If someone says no, that doesn't mean your need was wrong to have. It may mean you need another way, or another person, to meet it. Go back to Part 3 and look again.

You are allowed to have needs. You are allowed to find your stopping point.

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