

Embracing Cultural Differences in Your Marriage



Objective

To help you and your partner embrace and manage cultural differences in your marriage, fostering a more harmonious and fulfilling relationship.

How to use this Worksheet

This is meant as a self-help worksheet. It is designed to be filled out individually and then discussed as a couple. It emphasizes practical actions and consistent communication, helping couples integrate cultural understanding into their daily lives. When differences feel overwhelming, or conflicts are recurring without resolution, you need to seek professional help. You need to recognise when your efforts need outside help. All the best as you start this process.

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Self-Reflection: Understanding Your Perspective

a. Acknowledge Your Cultural Lens

- Describe Your Cultural Background: Write down aspects of your cultural upbringing that are important to you (e.g., traditions, beliefs, family dynamics).
- What Cultural Norms Do You Expect in Your Marriage? Reflect on how your culture influences your expectations of your partner and your marriage. List these expectations.

b. Assess Your Reactions

- Identify a Cultural Difference That Bothers You: Think of a specific instance where your partner's cultural practice clashed with yours. What was your initial reaction? Why did it bother you?
- Challenge Your Perspective: Ask yourself: Was my partner's behavior wrong, or was it simply different? How might their culture view this behavior?

a. Learning About Each Other's Culture

- Questions to Ask Your Partner: Use these prompts to explore your partner's cultural practices and beliefs:
 - What does [specific cultural practice] mean to you?
 - How does this practice reflect your values and identity?
 - Are there cultural traditions or practices that are particularly important to you in our marriage?
- Active Listening Exercise: After your partner shares, summarize what you've learned without offering solutions, judgment or criticism. How did this new understanding change your perception?

b. Finding Common Ground

- Identify Shared Values and Interests: List areas where you and your partner's cultures overlap or where you share common values (e.g., family, respect, hospitality).
- Plan an Activity That Celebrates Your Common Ground: Choose an activity that reflects your shared values (e.g., cooking a meal from each culture, attending a cultural event). Describe how this activity could strengthen your bond.

a. Recognize the Inner Battle

- Daily Affirmation: Write an affirmation that helps you resist the urge to impose your cultural norms on your partner (e.g., "I celebrate our differences and learn from them daily").
- Track Your Progress: Keep a journal of moments where you successfully managed cultural differences. What strategies worked? What could you improve?

b. Addressing Conflict Respectfully

- Respectful Communication Plan:
- Outline how you will approach cultural differences in the future. Include:
 - How to express your feelings without blame
 - How to listen to your partner's perspective
 - How to work together to find a solution

a. Set a Goal

- What Is One Cultural Difference You Want to Embrace Better? Identify a specific area where you want to improve. Why is this important to you?
- Create an Action Plan: Break down how you will work on embracing this difference. Include small, manageable steps (e.g., researching your partner's cultural practice, discussing it openly, practicing patience).

b. Evaluate and Adjust

- Reflect After One Month: Review your progress on embracing cultural differences. What has improved? What challenges remain? Adjust your approach as needed.

c. Review Your Journey

- What Have You Learned About Yourself and Your Partner?
- Reflect on how this process has changed your understanding of your partner and your marriage.

d. Commit to Ongoing Growth

- Write a commitment statement to continue working on embracing cultural differences in your marriage. What are your long-term goals?

Conclusion

Remember, embracing cultural differences is a continuous journey. This worksheet is a tool to help you actively engage with your partner's culture and nurture your marriage. Regularly revisit these exercises to strengthen your relationship over time.