



# F E L T S E N S E

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## PSYCHOTHERAPY

### Worksheet: Navigating a Defensive Partner (EFT Perspective)

#### Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) inspired worksheet

#### **Purpose**

Use this worksheet to respond to defensiveness without self-abandoning. The goal is to reduce escalation, stay connected, and protect your own dignity.

#### **1. Notice the Cycle**

- What usually happens right before your partner becomes defensive?
- What do you do next (pursue, shut down, explain harder, criticize, give up)?
- How does the cycle keep both of you stuck?

#### **2. Regulate Yourself First**

- Pause before responding.
- Take one slow breath and relax shoulders/jaw.
- Ask: What am I feeling underneath this moment (hurt, fear, loneliness, frustration)?

#### **3. Speak From Vulnerability, Not Attack**

- Instead of: "You never listen."
- Try: "When this happens, I feel alone and I want to know we're on the same team."
- Instead of proving your point, name your need.

#### **4. Validate Without Agreeing**

- "I can see this feels hard to hear."
- "I get that you feel blamed right now."
- "I'm not trying to attack you. I'm trying to reach you."

#### **5. Hold Boundaries (No Self-Abandoning)**

- "I want to talk about this, but not if I'm being dismissed."



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- “I care about us and I also need respect in this conversation.”
- “We can take a break and return when we’re calmer.”

### **6. Keep the Relationship at the Forefront**

- “I’m bringing this up because I care about us.”
- “You matter to me, and this issue matters too.”
- “Can we solve the problem together instead of against each other?”

### **Reflection**

- What helps your partner soften?
- What helps you stay grounded?
- What boundary do you need more often?