What Emotional and Relational Safety Can Look Like During Early Recovery Worksheet

Early recovery after betrayal can feel uncertain, emotionally intense, and overwhelming. Emotional and relational safety does not mean that all pain, conflict, or fear has disappeared. It means that there are consistent conditions that support honesty, stability, respect, and healing.

Safety is built through repeated actions over time. This worksheet can help you identify what safety looks like for you, what is currently present, and what may still be needed.

Part 1: Understanding Emotional Safety

Emotional safety means feeling able to express your thoughts, feelings, questions, and needs without being mocked, threatened, blamed, pressured, or punished.

Emotional safety may include:

☐ Being able to ask questions without being shamed
☐ Having your emotions acknowledged, even when they are difficult
☐ Being allowed time to process information
☐ Feeling heard rather than dismissed
☐ Being able to say “no,” “not yet,” or “I need a break”
☐ Receiving empathy rather than defensiveness
☐ Being free from threats, intimidation, or retaliation
☐ Feeling supported when trauma responses arise
☐ Being able to speak honestly without managing another person’s reaction
☐ Having your boundaries taken seriously
☐ Other: _____

Which of these are most important for you right now?

Part 2: Understanding Relational Safety

Relational safety means that the relationship is becoming more predictable, honest, respectful, and emotionally stable.

Relational safety may include:

☐ Consistent honesty
☐ Clear and direct communication
☐ Follow-through on agreements
☐ Respect for boundaries
☐ Willingness to answer reasonable questions
☐ Accountability without excuses or blame-shifting
☐ Openness about schedules, communication, and behavior
☐ Consistent participation in recovery work
☐ Respect for the pace of the injured partner's healing
☐ A willingness to repair after conflict
☐ Other: _____

What relational behaviors help you feel most secure?

_____

_____

_____

Part 3: Signs of Safety During Early Recovery

Place a checkmark next to any signs that are currently present.

Honesty and Transparency

☐ Information is shared voluntarily rather than only after discovery
☐ Answers are clear and consistent
☐ There are fewer omissions, half-truths, or vague explanations
☐ Questions are answered without anger or manipulation
☐ Agreements about technology, finances, schedules, or contact are followed
☐ New concerns or setbacks are disclosed promptly
☐ Other: _____

Emotional Responsiveness

☐ My pain is acknowledged
☐ I am not pressured to forgive or move on
☐ My reactions are treated as understandable

☐ My partner can listen without immediately becoming defensive
☐ My need for space is respected
☐ Reassurance is offered without making me feel needy or unreasonable
☐ Other: _____

Accountability

☐ Harmful behavior is named clearly
☐ Responsibility is accepted without minimizing
☐ Blame is not redirected toward me
☐ Apologies are supported by changed behavior
☐ Commitments are followed through consistently
☐ Recovery work is treated as a responsibility, not a favor
☐ Other: _____

Boundaries and Respect

☐ My boundaries are discussed and understood
☐ My boundaries are respected even when inconvenient
☐ I am not pressured into emotional or physical intimacy
☐ I can pause or end a conversation when overwhelmed
☐ Privacy and transparency agreements are clearly defined
☐ Consequences for broken agreements are understood
☐ Other: _____

Stability and Predictability

☐ Daily behavior is becoming more consistent
☐ Plans and schedules are communicated clearly
☐ Changes are explained rather than hidden
☐ Conflict does not regularly escalate into threats or chaos
☐ I know what to expect during difficult conversations
☐ There is a shared plan for handling triggers and setbacks
☐ Other: _____

Part 4: What Safety Does Not Require

Emotional and relational safety does not require you to:

☐ Trust immediately
☐ Forgive before you are ready
☐ Stop asking questions

☐ Hide your emotions
☐ Comfort the person who hurt you before tending to yourself
☐ Resume sexual or physical intimacy
☐ Make a final decision about the relationship
☐ Ignore inconsistencies or warning signs
☐ Accept apologies without changed behavior
☐ Heal according to someone else's timeline

Which of these expectations have you felt pressured to meet?

Part 5: Signs That Safety May Be Missing

Place a checkmark next to any concerns you have noticed.

☐ Continued lying, secrecy, or hidden behavior
☐ Defensiveness when questions are asked
☐ Minimizing the impact of the betrayal
☐ Blaming me for the betrayal or its consequences
☐ Pressure to forgive, trust, or resume intimacy
☐ Broken agreements
☐ Anger, intimidation, or emotional punishment
☐ Threats of leaving, self-harm, financial harm, or retaliation
☐ Refusal to participate in recovery work
☐ Inconsistent stories or unexplained behavior
☐ Expecting praise for basic honesty
☐ Using therapy or recovery language to avoid accountability
☐ Other: _____

Which concern feels most significant right now?

Part 6: My Emotional Safety Needs

Complete the following statements.

I feel emotionally safer when:

I feel emotionally unsafe when:

When I am triggered, I need:

During difficult conversations, it helps when:

I need permission to:

Part 7: My Relational Safety Needs

Place a checkmark next to what would help you feel safer in the relationship.

☐ Clear communication agreements
☐ Scheduled check-ins
☐ Honest disclosure of relevant information
☐ Transparency around technology
☐ Transparency around finances
☐ Clear expectations for travel, work, or time apart
☐ No contact with people connected to the betrayal
☐ Individual therapy
☐ Couples therapy with a betrayal-informed professional
☐ Participation in a support or recovery group
☐ A relapse or setback response plan
☐ Written boundaries and consequences
☐ Time apart or physical space
☐ Other: _____

Which three needs feel most urgent?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

_____

Part 8: Safety During Difficult Conversations

A safer conversation may include:

☐ Choosing a time when both people are able to participate
☐ Agreeing on the topic before beginning
☐ Keeping the conversation time-limited
☐ Speaking one at a time
☐ Avoiding yelling, threats, insults, or name-calling
☐ Allowing breaks when either person becomes overwhelmed
☐ Returning to the conversation at an agreed-upon time
☐ Answering questions clearly and honestly
☐ Avoiding unnecessary graphic details
☐ Ending the conversation if safety or respect breaks down
☐ Seeking professional support for highly charged topics

What conditions help you participate in difficult conversations?

_____
_____

What behaviors cause you to shut down, escalate, or feel unsafe?

_____
_____
_____

Part 9: My Safety Check-In

Use the scale below to rate how safe you currently feel.

0 — Not safe at all
1–3 — Frequently unsafe or unstable
4–6 — Some safety is present, but it is inconsistent
7–8 — Mostly safe, with some areas still needing repair
9–10 — Consistently safe, respected, and supported

Emotional Safety

My current rating: _____ / 10

What supports this rating?

What would help raise it by one point?

Relational Safety

My current rating: _____ / 10

What supports this rating?

What would help raise it by one point?

Part 10: Safety Agreements

Complete these statements individually or together.

When one of us becomes overwhelmed, we agree to:

When new information needs to be shared, we agree to:

When a boundary is unclear, we agree to:

When an agreement is broken, we agree to:

To support recovery this week, we will:

Part 11: My Personal Safety Plan

One boundary I need to communicate is:

One form of support I need is:

One behavior that helps me feel safer is:

One behavior that I am no longer willing to accept is:

One person or professional I can contact for support is:

Reflection

What does emotional safety mean to you personally?

What does relational safety look like in daily life?

Which signs of safety are already present?

Which areas still require attention or change?

What is one realistic step that could support greater safety this week?

Closing Reminder

Safety is not created through promises alone. It develops through honesty, accountability, consistency, empathy, respected boundaries, and dependable action over time.

You are allowed to identify what you need, move at your own pace, and evaluate safety based on patterns of behavior rather than words alone.

This worksheet is intended for education and reflection. It is not a substitute for professional mental-health, legal, medical, or emergency support.