FREE CHECKLIST · GRACEROOT INSTITUTE

Red Flags in Marriage Ministry

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Most couples you serve will grow. Some will show signs that change the nature of the work. Missing those signs does real harm, and so does over-reacting to ordinary struggles. Use this page to tell the difference.

STOP AND REASSESS IF YOU SEE

- ☐ Any form of abuse: physical, sexual, emotional, or financial
- ☐ Coercive control
- ☐ One partner afraid of the other
- ☐ Pervasive contempt
- ☐ No accountability at all, paired with control
- ☐ Untreated addiction or serious untreated mental illness
- ☐ Active betrayal or ongoing deception
- ☐ One partner silenced, isolated, or controlled
- ☐ Deal-breaker differences (children, fidelity, faith, core values) that are not being honestly faced

These are not "work harder on the worksheet" situations.

SAFETY FIRST, ALWAYS

- ☐ Where there is abuse, coercion, or danger, the standard couples format is not appropriate. Joint sessions can endanger a victim.
- ☐ Assess each partner separately and privately.
- ☐ Never press for disclosure in front of a potentially abusive partner.
- ☐ Do not try to fix an abusive dynamic with communication skills. That mislabels abuse as a mutual problem.
- ☐ Know your local domestic-violence resources and your reporting obligations before you begin.
- ☐ When in doubt about safety, consult a domestic-violence professional.

Safety overrides every other goal, including finishing the course.

KNOW YOUR SCOPE

- ☐ Mandated reporting, where it applies to your role
- ☐ Duty to warn
- ☐ Confidentiality limits
- ☐ Documentation

These vary by jurisdiction and credential. When a couple's needs exceed your scope, referral is not optional. It is your ethical responsibility.

BUILD YOUR REFERRAL LIST NOW

- ☐ Licensed couples therapists
- ☐ Trauma specialists
- ☐ Sex therapists
- ☐ Addiction and mental-health providers
- ☐ Domestic-violence resources

Referral is a skill, not a failure. Build these relationships before you need them.

TEND YOURSELF

- ☐ Use supervision or consultation, and keep your own boundaries. You cannot facilitate regulation you do not have.

If someone is in danger: call 911. National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, or text START to 88788. Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988.