

2-MINUTE TIP: RELATIONSHIP REPAIRS

CRUCIAL COUPLE RELATIONSHIP REPAIRS

Step on the Brakes!

- When conflict starts, do the two of you keep escalating until you're both angry, silent, or stewing for hours? Or do you stop, repair, and reconnect?

What Are Repairs?

- Repairs are words or actions that "put on the brakes" – moments when one partner tries to stop the downward spiral of conflict and move toward connection.
- Couples researcher John Gottman found that lasting relationships aren't free of conflict – they're built on the ability to repair after it.
- A repair attempt is any statement or action – silly or serious – that prevents negativity from escalating out of control. These can be verbal, emotional, accepting, validating, or soothing gestures that say, "We're more important than this fight."
- In Gottman's studies, stable couples recognized and accepted each other's repair attempts about 86% of the time, while distressed couples did so less than one-fifth of the time.

Bids for Repair (and Connection)

- A "bid for repair" is a special kind of bid for connection – an effort to reconnect emotionally in the middle of tension. It may sound or look like:
"Let's take a break." "I don't like how we're talking right now." "Can we try that again?"
"We're on the same team." "I'm sorry – that was uncalled for."
- Even a gentle hand squeeze, a smile, or a light joke can signal: "Let's stop fighting." Even clumsy repair attempts matter – what counts is the intention to reconnect.

Accepting Repair Attempts

- When your partner offers a repair, listen for the offering beneath the words.
- Be open to stopping the conflict. Respond with curiosity rather than defensiveness:
"Okay, let's take that break." "You're right – this is getting too heated."
- Remember: fighting to "win" means defeating your own partner. That can't end well.
- Repairs fail when partners are too emotionally flooded – physiologically overwhelmed – to think calmly. Take a break to self-soothe before trying again.
- The Emotional Climate Matters-- Repairs succeed best in relationships rich in positive sentiment – where kindness, affection, humor, and appreciation are common. These daily habits create the emotional safety that lets repair attempts work.
- It's not the absence of conflict that predicts lasting love, but the presence of repair and reconnection after it.

The next post will be on making a Relationship Repair Toolbox.

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