

Guide to a Productive Repair Conversation

I. Preparation

1. Ask if the other person has space and capacity to repair over a specific event or disagreement.

- a. This is not as much a conversation about an event, as much as it is a conversation about the space between two people during an event. It is about the intangible bond and intimacy that was affected by this event.
- b. Both parties must want to do the repair. If it is one sided, no repair will happen.
- c. The sooner this repair happens to the event, the more likely it will not grow into bitterness or resentment.

2. Understand that you are going to engage in an Emotional Conversation.

- a. Both parties should evaluate and share their level of activation about this event AND where they are currently.
- b. If either person is currently above a 5 (on a 1-10 scale), wait to have this conversation or do grounding and somatic awareness exercises until they are at a 3 or below.
- c. Monitor your body's activation throughout this entire conversation and speak up when you are feeling your activation rise above a 5.
- d. Agree to a predetermined grounding / pausing activity or action so the other party can better support or understand what the other is needing for a pause to take place. Example: "I am feeling activated. Can we take 10 deep belly breaths together?" Or possibly a 2 min walk separately. Note: This should not be the end of the conversation. Your success is determined by coming back to the conversation.

3. Give the benefit of the doubt (both parties)

- a. Sit and look into their eyes and quietly take a few breaths together. Get curious about the person in front of you. You are about to get to know their inner workings better.
- b. Believe that the person in front of you loves you and does not actually want to hurt you.
- c. Remind yourself that they are doing the best they can with what they've got.
- d. Realize that they want to be here with you for having agreed to repair the bond.
- e. If you do not believe the above statements are true, the conversation will derail quickly. Reach out to a relationship coach for guidance and support if needed.

4. Decide who will go first.

- a. It is not important who goes first, because both will have an opportunity to share and to be supported.



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II. Repair Conversation

1A. Share vulnerably about how this event impacted you. (Person A)

- a. This is a time to share your truth. How you felt. How your body reacted to a comment/ action/ reaction. Focus on YOUR experience.
- b. Use “I feel” statements that paint a picture of your inner emotions in that moment. Example: “When you didn’t call me the other night, I felt alone and unseen.”
- c. Do not condemn, accuse, blame or place judgment.
- d. Keep the share to a specific event. This is not the time to deal with everything.
- e. Announce when you feel your share is complete.

1B. Listen Empathetically (Person B)

- a. Stay grounded and listen empathetically. This is by far the hardest part of having a successful repair.
- b. Posture yourself to communicate you are present and they are a priority to you.
- c. Strive to feel their experience FROM THEIR PERSPECTIVE. Get in their shoes.
- d. Keep your focus on their experience of the event.
- e. After the person has communicated that they are complete, take another breath, say “Thank You.” Nothing more. This communicates that you are respecting their inner experience without adding to or subtracting from it.

2. Cop to it (Person B)

- a. Take another breath together and give yourself the benefit of the doubt. You are a good person and are loved.
- b. Recognize the impact you had on the other person. Example: “I can see how my not calling you the other night made you feel alone.”
- c. This is not a time to make excuses, justify, apologize or defend yourself.
- d. Do not promise change. Do not derail the repair, this is NOT about your personal development or growth.

3. Reassure Your Partner (Person B)

- a. If the feelings they shared are not what you wanted them to feel, reassure them of this accidental communication. Example: “I did not realize that not calling you last night would make you feel alone and unseen, This was not my intention.”
- b. Communicate to them the feelings you do desire they feel with you. Example: “I do want you to feel important and seen by me.”
- c. Be careful with “I’m sorry” it can be broad and undermining to be a reassuring statement. If used at all, it is best at the end of an authentic reassurance.



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III. Switch Positions

- a. Check in on your level of activation. Take a breath and use your resources to lower your trigger so you can continue. The repair is not complete until the opposite partner has an opportunity to share as well.
- b. Make sure you are still giving the other the benefit of the doubt.
- c. Return to the Repair Conversation above and switch roles. Person B now shares while Person A listens empathetically.

IV. Check In

Find out if another round from both partners is needed. If so, start again at the Repair Conversation. If there is not a feeling of connection or feeling seen and heard, there may be more to process. Consider running through the steps again in hopes of finding some residual feelings that need attention. Deep wounds may need to be visited multiple times for proper repair to happen. Be patient with the process.

V. Lean into Intimacy

If both partners are now feeling heard and seen, ask if there is anything the other needs to feel closer. An example might be a hug or walk together or spending time together. This is a critical last step to bringing you closer. This action/activity/support should have nothing to do with the repair conversation or the original argument. It should be about moving forward and laying fresh groundwork into a deeper and more understanding relationship.

KH

Intimacy Coaching