**How to Make Repair Attempts so Your Partner Feels Loved**

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All couples argue. This is a fact supported by [decades of research](https://www.gottman.com/about/research/). We are all faced with unique cultural and social stressors which can result in external tensions spilling over into our relationship. We’ve learned to become masters of repair attempts, employing them **early and often** to resolve our disputes before they escalate.

With that said, early in our relationship we realized that not all repair attempts were effective, and that the success of a [repair attempt](https://www.gottman.com/blog/r-is-for-repair/) often had to do with how well it was tailored to the **other person**.

**What is a repair attempt?**

A repair attempt is any statement or action – verbal, physical, or otherwise – meant to diffuse negativity and keep a conflict from escalating out of control. Repair attempts are [a secret weapon](https://www.gottman.com/blog/repair-secret-weapon-emotionally-connected-couples/) of emotionally intelligent couples. John Gottman’s ground-breaking research shows “the success or failure of a couple’s repair attempts is one of the primary factors in whether [a] relationship is likely to flourish or flounder.”

**But what do we do when our repair attempts fall flat?**

For example, an ongoing tension over doing the washing up results in small, frequent blow-ups on D’s end, and leaves C struggling to make repair attempts, some of which fail horribly.

Sometimes C attempts to repair with physical touch, by hugging or kissing D. This is one of C’s [love languages](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/080241270X/ref%3Das_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=crobci-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=080241270X&linkId=702d80cc05beac4c7aaf238d8a0e2962), and so he interprets touch as a way to express affection in the midst of conflict.

While D appreciates touch in general, when he is physiologically flooded (his “lid is flipped”), his walls go up and to him touch feels like an act of aggression – even though he is aware that C’s touch is a repair attempt.

**Making repair attempts isn’t enough**

What our relationship has taught us is that the simple act of making repair attempts isn’t enough. Knowing your partner by [understanding their needs](https://www.gottman.com/blog/why-you-need-to-accept-your-partners-needs/), especially in the context of conflict, will help you find ways to more effectively de-escalate an argument.

**Know how your partner receives love**

Maybe your partner responds well to gifts, and so during a cool-down period after a fight you go buy them a flower or their favourite coffee drink. Maybe your partner craves affirmation, and so during a fight you seek to reassure them how much you love them, even when you’re angry about something they did.

Knowing how your partner receives love and what **they** need to repair from conflict is like having a secret weapon tailored just to them and their happiness.

Of course, simply making a good repair attempt doesn’t ensure success. It’s also dependent on your partner to **recognize** and **accept** the attempt. And if only one person in a relationship is habitually making the effort to resolve the conflict, the imbalance may take its toll over time. Both partners need to do the work toward dissolving negativity and, when possible, resolving conflict.

For D’s part, he knows that in the midst of conflict, C will feel comforted with physical touch – a comforting hand on his knee or a gentle arm around him. Sometimes there might even be a shoulder rub involved. D knows C’s main [love language](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/080241270X/ref%3Das_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=crobci-20&camp=1789&creative=9325&linkCode=as2&creativeASIN=080241270X&linkId=65e589a502289be7bbda47d95f0fc2f7) is quality time, so a productive discussion will involve a conversation when both partners are physically and emotionally present The magic is that once one partner makes a repair attempt, the other person feels better and usually responds in kind.

We may [never resolve](https://www.gottman.com/blog/p-is-for-problems/) our dish dispute, but we’re developing effective tools to lessen the conflict and get past it as quickly as possible so we can get back to staying connected. These efforts don’t always come naturally to us, but we’re learning that a significant part of love is simply **making the effort to repair, maintain, and grow the relationship**.

Love might be work, but it helps to remember that the more work we do, the more we deepen our love for each other.