

06

FIELD GUIDE / REPAIR

The One-Page Version

Many couples know the heavy silence after a fight, when neither person knows how to move toward the other without making things worse, and most end it in one of two ways: an apology they do not yet mean, which restarts the argument, or a wait that lets the distance harden overnight. Dr. John Gottman found that what separates lasting couples is not fewer fights but repair attempts, any word or gesture that lowers the tension, and an apology is only one item on that list. The order most people assume is backward. You do not fix the fight to feel close; you get close first, and then the fight becomes something two people can fix together. Think of the two of you on opposite banks of a river. Somebody has to lay the first plank, and it does not have to be the whole bridge, only one board laid from your side once your body has calmed down, which takes about twenty minutes and only works if you stop replaying the argument while you wait.

Three ways the conversation can begin:

01 | From the doorway: “Hey.”

02 | From the kitchen: “I’m making tea. Want one?”

03 | From the other end of the couch: “I’m still upset, and I don’t want to go to bed like this.”

If one of those comes from your partner first, the whole job is to step onto it, and “Okay” is enough.

This page is the short version of *Repair Without Apologizing First*. The full Field Guide adds every script, the worksheet and a one-page cheat sheet.

couples-conversations.com/fg-repair-first

One important note: This program is not in place of therapy or clinical treatment or diagnosis, but for education. Many relationships struggle with various issues; this is normal. However, they should always feel safe. If there are any mental health concerns, or concerns for safety, or if the relationship feels dangerous in any way, please seek professional support rather than continuing in this program. When in doubt, it is best to consult with a proper therapist.