Helpful Tools for Healthy Communication

in Marriage/Relationships

- Gottman-Inspired Tools
  - Listen actively and non-defensively: Repeat back what you heard to ensure you've understood accurately.
    Empathise, rather than judge.
  - Give and accept repair attempts: These are efforts to de-escalate conflict; e.g., a gentle touch, an apology, or saying "Can we have a do-over?"
  - Express what you need: Use "I feel..." or "*I need...*" statements.
    Share appreciation, not just grievances.
  - Check-in regularly: Ask each other open-ended questions, e.g , "How are we doing as a couple?"
- Emotionally Focused Communication
  - Be vulnerable: Open up about your feelings or needs, and acknowledge each other's emotional experiences.
  - Respond with empathy: Show you understand and care about your partner's feelings. Simple responses like *"I hear you"* go a long way.
  - Stay present: Give your partner your full attention. Avoid distractions.
  - Resolve issues together: View conflict as a shared problem, not a battle to win or lose. Focus on understanding and supporting each other.

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Gottman, J. M., & Gottman, J. S. (2020). *The seven principles* for making marriage work: A practical guide from the country's foremost relationship expert (2nd ed.). Harmony Books

Johnson, S. M. (2019). Attachment theory in practice: Emotionally focused therapy with individuals, couples, and families. Guilford Press.

Helpful Tools for Couples

Practical tools for healthier, deeper, and happier relationships.

Helpful Tools to Try

- **Active listening**
  Show your partner they matter by listening to understand, not to respond.
- **Speak calmly**
  When upset, pause, breathe slowly, and speak with kindness.
- **Validate feelings**
  Naming emotions ("I hear you, you're feeling...") softens conflict.
- **Repair after rupture**
  Reconnecting after hurt builds trust. Offer a genuine apology if needed.
- **Nurture your connection**
  Rituals of love matter. Make time for little acts of care and fun.

A gentle reminder

Conflict is normal in relationships.
Repair is more important than perfection.

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Helpful Tools for Neurodiverse Relationships

In neurodiverse relationships, differences in communication, sensory needs, emotional expression, and energy can easily be misunderstood. These *tools support* understanding, safety, and connection — *without trying to change who anyone is.*

Helpful Tools to Try

Different Nervous Systems
Each person experiences stress, emotion, and connection differently — neither is "wrong."

Explicit Communication
Clear, direct language reduces confusion, guessing, and resentment.

Repair Over Intent
Impact matters more than intention. Repair builds trust after misattunement.

Energy & Sensory Awareness
Overstimulation, fatigue, or shutdown can affect connection and conflict.

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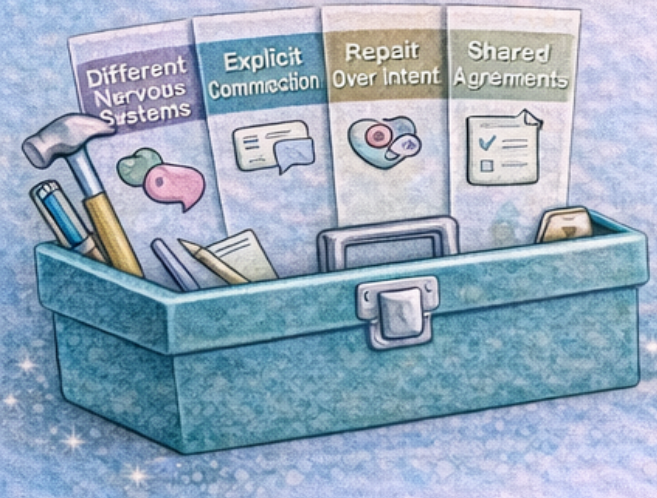
Shared Agreements
Agreed ways of communicating, pausing, and reconnecting reduce repeated conflict.



Gentle reminder:
Understanding and repair matter more than getting it "right."

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