



EVIDENCE-BASED COUPLES THERAPY

Gottman Method: Key Concepts

Over 40 years of research on what makes relationships thrive — and what tears them apart.

Dr. John and Julie Gottman's research has followed thousands of couples over decades, identifying the patterns that predict relationship success or breakdown with remarkable accuracy. The Gottman Method is not about eliminating conflict — it is about building the friendship, trust, and repair skills that allow couples to navigate conflict without destroying connection.

The Four Horsemen — and Their Antidotes

Horseman	What it looks like	Antidote	How to use it
Criticism	Attacking character: "You always..." "You never..."	Gentle Start-Up	"I feel ___ when ___. I need ___."
Contempt	Eye-rolling, mockery, superiority, sarcasm	Build Appreciation	Daily gratitude; notice what your partner does right.
Defensiveness	"It's not my fault." Counter-attacking.	Take Responsibility	"You're right, I could have handled that better."
Stonewalling	Shutting down, withdrawing, going silent	Self-Soothe	Take a 20-min break. Return calm, not to win.

The Sound Relationship House — 7 Levels

Love Maps Know your partner's inner world — their fears, dreams, stressors, and joys.	Fondness & Admiration Actively notice and express appreciation. Contempt is the opposite.	Turn Toward Bids Respond to small moments of connection — not just the big ones.
Positive Perspective Give your partner the benefit of the doubt during conflict.	Manage Conflict Dialogue about perpetual problems; solve solvable ones with compromise.	Make Life Dreams Come True Support each other's deepest hopes and aspirations.
Create Shared Meaning Build rituals, traditions, and values that belong only to you two.		

Bids for Connection	How We Respond
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Did you see that?" — sharing a moment • "I had the worst day." — seeking comfort • A touch on the shoulder — physical bid • "What do you think about...?" — intellectual bid 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turn toward: engage, acknowledge, respond • Turn away: ignore, stay distracted, dismiss • Turn against: criticize, mock, minimize • Goal: notice every bid and respond with warmth

Repair Attempts & The 5:1 Ratio

A **repair attempt** is any action that de-escalates tension during conflict — "I need a moment," a gentle touch, humor, or "I'm sorry, let me try again." Couples who use repair attempts successfully have significantly stronger relationships. The **5:1 ratio**: for every negative interaction during conflict, thriving couples have five positive ones. Small, consistent deposits into the emotional bank account matter far more than grand gestures.

The goal of the Gottman Method is not a conflict-free relationship. It is a relationship where both partners feel known, respected, and chosen — every day.