

**Relationship
Repair**

Process



Relationship repair is a highly important and complex topic. Couples or close relations can easily build up resentment with each other, that often gets pushed under the carpet. This could be out of fear of creating disharmony or causing anger and distance between them. But disturbances that are not dealt with do not go away.

It is guaranteed that in any significant relationship, there will be misunderstandings, conflict, and broken connection. It is important to know that this will happen and that it is not an indication that there is something fundamentally wrong with the relationship. It does become a problem, however, if we do not communicate and repair the disconnection. In general, repair and clearing starts with teaching each person to understand that for the health of the connection, it is important not to allow conflicts, resentments, or distance to grow without being addressed.

This repair process is a deep and meaningful way to reconnect after a disconnection has occurred. It requires you to stay very present with yourself, and to take responsibility for yourself and your feelings. There are two steps for repair. The first is what we call, the internal process whilst the second part is the repair process. This means taking the moments of conflict and disconnection as opportunities to go inside. Start the internal process by making the following steps:



The Internal Process

- 1. What is the provocation and disturbance?** What inner wounds or hurts have been triggered? What specific action or in action part of the other person provoked your anger, disappointment, frustration or hurt. And our focus is to take responsibility for how are you may have contributed to the conflict and mistrust. And see what lessons you need to learn.
- 2. Take time to feel the disturbance;** the anger disappointment or hurt. Can you also feel it in the body? Notice if you have a compulsion to do something, like attack back, or hurt the other. Or tell the other they are wrong or they need to change.
- 3. What is your expectation in this situation that is not being met right now?** Expectations repel, yet vulnerability attracts.
- 4. What fears does this situation bring up?** What fears come up when this expectation is not being met? Anger is a cover for fear, so look deeper for the fear.



5. **What is the basic need*** that I fear will not be met which this situation is provoking? Validate this basic need. Getting in touch with this need or needs that are arising in the situation that disturbs us, is in order to understand ourselves more deeply and develop more compassion for ourselves. It is not to justify how the other person should change.
6. **Take time to feel the pain** the situation is bringing up in you. Once you are able to identify which needs are not being met, then allow yourself to feel the pain of each time in the past by this need was not being met. And be as specific as you can with the pain from past experiences. And then look for the pattern that you are creating in your relationships today.

List of some basic needs:

The need for safety, protection, security. The need to feel autonomy and to feel supported in that autonomy. To feel validated in your feelings. To feel touched with presence and sensitivity. To you have your no respected. To feel listened to, taken in and heard. The need for honesty, and commitment. Relaxation and playtime.



The Repair Process

When you feel complete with the internal process, you can begin the second step or the repair process. You can only start the conversation, if you have truly allowed yourself to go deeply into the first stage, and when you are no longer activated or charged. This way, when you approach the other person, it is with the intention to create more love and connection, rather than blame or with attack.

You begin by committing to yourself to share without, blaming, attacking or accusing the other. Or wanting to fix or change the other. If you still want to do any of these, go back to the internal process. If needed, talk to a friend or speak with your counsellor before you approach the repair process.



1. **Initiating:** Say to the person that there is something you would like to share. And you would like to know if he/she has the space and time to listen. If they are not available now, ask when might be a good time.
2. **Observation:** When the other person has time and space to listen, explain the specific action he or she did or did not do, what they said or did not say that provoked, disturbed, or hurt you. Reference a comment, or action very specifically that happened and stay true to the facts without interpretation or analysis. Be concrete and specific.
3. **Feeling:** Explain the feeling that this action (or inaction) brought up in you. What they did or did not do, or what you said or did not say, “I felt hurt, disconnected or angry”, and “I would like to reconnect with you and repair”. Avoid saying “you made me feel”, instead say “I felt”. Use short and concrete sentences.



4. **The Wound:** Explain that the situation that you have experienced, has triggered memories and emotions from your past. And how this situation brought up a deep wound of an unmet need that has been provoked in prior situations/relationships and has its origin in your childhood. This way your partner will understand that this is your process. “When x happened, or you said y, a basic need of mine got activated inside of me. And I am scared that this need will not be fulfilled. So, it opens up the wound inside of me, of all the times in my past when this need was not fulfilled or met”. And state your need. (See list of needs above *)
5. **The Response:** Ask the person what he or she heard. Ask how he or she feels about it. Make sure this is a request and not a demand. One way to make sure it is not a demand, is to become aware if you are open or willing to receive a ‘no’ from the other. So, if you receive and ‘no’, and you get angry, you are coming with a demand to the other person. Make sure your question is specific, so that the other is clear what you’re asking.
6. **Switch:** Now it is time to invite the other person to share, following the exact same steps. We suggest that each person’s sharing is limited to 10 minutes.



*This exercise can also be done between friends, where one of the people becomes the representative for the actual person who there is a need for repair. You might do this if the other person is not available or when you simply want to explore your own feelings before meeting with the other.

Conscious relating is one which is steeped in respect and caring. Each person has enough inner space to “be with” the disappointments and miscommunications which naturally arise without getting lost in blame, endless processing or conflict. Both can take in the relationship with a wide-angle lens, feeling and caring for each other without getting lost in the narrow focus of their own needs and wants. The communication is marked by honesty, integrity, and reliability.

Taken loosely from Marshall Rosenberg – “Nonviolent Communication”

