

## Relationship Renewal

Here is an action-oriented approach requiring willingness and follow-through.

### 1. Dr. Sue Johnson-*Assess the Problem*. In: Hold Me Tight.

We all need reassurance and physical support/touch throughout our lives. Its absence may damage our connection to a loved one. Here are clues about how the connection broke down.

- A couple exercise to explore problem patterns: “[S/he] Demands-[S/he] Withdraws,” “S/he Criticizes-S/he Defends” or “Freeze-Flee.”  
“The more I \_\_\_\_\_, the more you \_\_\_\_\_, and then the more I \_\_\_\_\_, and round and round we go.” (p. 88).
- An exercise where the couple finds the “raw spots.” Johnson suggests exploration: “In this incident, the trigger for the raw feeling was \_\_\_\_\_.  
*On the surface, I probably showed \_\_\_\_\_ . But deep down, I just felt \_\_\_\_\_ . . . What I longed for was \_\_\_\_\_ . The main message I got about our bond, about me or my love was \_\_\_\_\_* (p. 109).

### 2. Dr. David Burns-*Fix the Problem*. In: Feeling Good Together.

A foolproof way to fix relationship problems is to find something in the other person’s view to agree with. Always start there, not with defending or explaining. A memory device: DEAR.

- Disarming Technique-Even when it appears “unfair” or “unreasonable,” “find some truth in what the other person is saying” and then say back their key idea in a way they find satisfying (p. 98).
- Empathize-Carefully tell the other person *your sense of what the person is thinking and feeling* that contributed to the issue or problem.
- Assert-Only *after* the steps above are taken “Express your feelings (and wishes) openly . . . and tactfully, using ‘I feel’ statements” (p. 261).
- Respect- “Convey caring and respect, even if you’re feeling frustrated or annoyed” (ibid.).

### 3. Dr. John Gottman-*Maintain the Fix*. In: Seven Principles for . . . Marriage.

The “Magic Five Hours” for each week suggests rituals to maintain/deepen growth.

- Check-in daily, “how’s your day look?” 10’/week.
- Compliment each other-show “admiration” and “appreciation” 35’/week.
- Touch each other-“kiss, hold, grab, and touch each other during the time you’re together . . . kiss each other before going to sleep” as you “let go of any minor irritations that have built up over the day” 45’/week.
- Have a “stress-reducing conversation” (take turns listening without comment or criticism, create solidarity) 1 hour and 40’/week (p. 88).
- Have a “date night” each week (can be inexpensive) 2 hours/week. 2/21

