



What do you say to repair things after a fight?

Cut out the card along the dashed line (6 by about 4 inches). Say one line, then stop and listen. Use your own words when they come.

Repairing after a fight

1. Own the specific thing: "I raised my voice. That was on me."
2. Offer one concrete change for next time.
3. Mid-fight: "I don't want to win. I want us on the same side."
4. Picture it through the eyes of someone who loves you both.
5. Then reach back to normal: breakfast, a walk, a hand on the shoulder.

All the lines, and when to use them

I raised my voice when you said I'd forgotten the tickets. That was on me, and I'm sorry. (Your first move after things cool down. Naming the exact behavior shows you know what you did, which a general "sorry about earlier" does not.)

I don't want to win this. I want us back on the same side. (In the middle of the fight, when you notice it has become a contest. It is a short, honest signal that can lower the heat without settling anything yet.)

Can we call a do-over on last night? I'd like to have that conversation again, and do it better. (The fight was about something real that still needs discussing. A do-over separates the topic from the way you handled it.)

Next time I feel that wound up, I'm going to tell you I need a minute instead of firing back. (After you have owned your part. Saying what you will do differently is the offer of repair, and it is more believable when it is specific.)

I tried to picture how last night looked to someone who loves us both. I think they'd see two tired people who each wanted to be heard. (A day or so later, when you can step back. Describing the fight from outside can make it easier for both of you to soften.)

I'm still a little sore, but I'm not angry anymore. Want to get breakfast at that place on Fifth? (The morning after a fight that was mostly talked through. Honest about where you are, and a small, ordinary invitation back to normal.)

What would help you feel like we're actually past this? (You have apologized and things still feel off. Asking beats guessing at what repair looks like for them.)

Thank you for saying that. I'm going to need a day before I'm fully myself again, and that's not me punishing you. (When you are the one receiving the apology but are not ready to be warm yet. It accepts the repair without pretending you are fine.)

My one takeaway is that I'll stop bringing up money after 10 at night. What's yours? (Closing the loop once you are both calm. One concrete lesson each keeps the next disagreement from replaying this one.)

Phrases to avoid

"I'm sorry you feel that way.": It apologizes for their reaction, not for anything you did, and usually sounds like a refusal to take responsibility.

"I'm sorry, but you started it.": The "but" cancels the apology and restarts the argument about who was worse.

"Can we just forget it?": Skipping the repair saves an awkward minute, but the unfinished fight tends to come back attached to the next one.

"I said sorry. What more do you want?": It treats the apology as a payment that ends the matter. Your partner may need time, or a change, before it feels finished.

Leading with "Will you forgive me?": Asking for forgiveness first puts the work on them. In the apology research it was the least important part, so lead with ownership instead .

If you are afraid of your partner, scripts are not the answer: call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or text START to 88788. In danger, call 911.