

COLLECTION

The Essentials of Applied Psychology

Saving Your Relationship

Communication, Crises, and Renewal



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Communication, Crises, and Renewal — The Gottman Method, NVC, and Practical Exercises

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To all those who have the courage to fight for their love, even when all seems lost.

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Introduction

When Love Falters

You are holding this book in your hands, and perhaps your hands are trembling a little. Perhaps you have just lived through a particularly violent argument — not necessarily physical, but the kind that leaves invisible marks, the kind after which silence hangs like lead in the house. Perhaps it has been months, even years, since you felt your relationship slowly dying out, without understanding exactly why or how to reverse the trend. Perhaps you are sitting in your car, in the supermarket parking lot, unable to go home right away because the atmosphere has become unbearable.

If so, know this: you are not alone.

Every year in France, approximately 130,000 couples divorce. But behind this cold statistic lie hundreds of thousands of other couples who suffer in silence, who hesitate, who wonder whether to leave or stay, who no longer know how to speak to this person they once loved — and whom they may still love, somewhere beneath the layers of resentment, fatigue, and accumulated disappointments.

This book is written for you. For you who have not yet given up, even if some days the temptation is strong. For you who are looking for concrete answers, not platitudes or ready-made formulas. For you who need to understand what has happened in your relationship before you can envision a future — together or apart, but at peace.

What This Book Offers

This is not a book of miracle cures. No book, however well-documented, can substitute for therapeutic work guided by a professional. I want to say this from the outset, with all the transparency you deserve: if your relationship is going through a severe crisis, if violence — whether physical, verbal, or psychological — has taken hold, reading this book will not be enough. It can serve as a first step, an awakening, a complementary tool, but it will never replace the personalized support of a qualified couples therapist.

What this book does offer, however, is a solid framework for understanding, grounded in decades of research in relationship psychology. You will find the work of John Gottman, the American researcher who spent more than forty years observing couples in his laboratory and who can predict with stunning accuracy — over 90% — whether a couple will divorce or stay together, simply by watching them discuss for fifteen minutes (Gottman & Silver, 1999). You will discover John Bowlby's attachment theory, which sheds new light on how our earliest relationships shape our adult love lives. You will learn about Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication, a remarkable tool that transforms reproaches into requests and accusations into expressions of needs.

But above all, you will find stories. Stories of couples that resemble yours — fictional, of course, but constructed from real clinical situations, from patterns I observe daily in my practice as a cognitive-behavioral psychotherapist. Stories that will allow you to recognize yourself, to name what you are experiencing, and perhaps to feel a little less alone in this ordeal.

And finally, you will find practical exercises, concrete and actionable, that you can complete alone or as a couple, at your own pace. Not theoretical or abstract exercises, but tools you can use this very evening, at the next difficult conversation, at the next moment of tension.

How to Use This Book

You can read this book in two ways. The first, the most obvious, is to read it in order, from the first to the last chapter. This is the approach I recommend if you are approaching relationship psychology for the first time, as each chapter builds upon the previous ones and the progression is designed to take you from understanding to action.

The second way is to go directly to the chapter that corresponds to your most urgent need. If you are overwhelmed by arguments, Chapter 3 on communication tools will provide immediate answers. If you are going through a crisis related to infidelity, Chapter 5 will specifically accompany you through this ordeal. If you feel that the wear and tear of daily life has extinguished the flame, Chapter 7 on emotional and intimate reconnection will be your entry point.

Whatever your approach, I invite you to take your time. This book is not a detective novel to be devoured in one night. It is a companion on the road, a working tool. Take notes in the margins. Underline passages that resonate with you. Return to certain chapters after a few weeks, when experience has enriched your understanding. And above all, do the exercises. Really. Not just read them thinking "yes, that's interesting" — do them, pen in hand, with honesty and kindness toward yourself.

A Word of Caution

As a cognitive-behavioral psychotherapist, I am trained to recognize the limits of my intervention. This book is a tool for information, awareness, and support. It does not in any way constitute a diagnosis, treatment, or therapy. The clinical cases presented are fictional and were created for educational purposes; any resemblance to real persons would be purely coincidental.

If you or your partner suffer from depression, severe anxiety, addictions, or if your relationship involves any form of violence, I strongly encourage you to consult a mental health professional. The resources at the end of this book will direct you to appropriate services.

This book assumes that both partners are consenting adults, engaged in a relationship where no form of violence is present. The tools proposed are not suitable for situations involving coercive control or abuse.

Outline of the Book

This book is structured in eight chapters that follow a logical path, from understanding to rebuilding:

Chapter 1 — Understanding the Relationship Crisis. We will define what a relationship crisis truly is and what distinguishes it from normal, healthy conflict. We will discover the famous "Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" identified by John Gottman — those four behaviors that, when they take hold, signal a real danger to the survival of the relationship.

Chapter 2 — The Origins of the Crisis. We will delve into the deep roots of marital difficulties: attachment styles inherited from childhood, unconscious family patterns, the erosion of daily life, and life transitions that weaken the bond.

Chapter 3 — Tools for Compassionate Communication. We will learn Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC), active listening, and concrete techniques for transforming your conversations from battlefields into meeting spaces.

Chapter 4 — Managing Conflict Without Destruction. We will address the central question of conflict management: how not to avoid disagreements (which are inevitable and even necessary), but how to navigate them without leaving scars.

Chapter 5 — Navigating Major Crises. Infidelity, bereavement, illness, unemployment, parental burnout: certain ordeals threaten the couple at its foundations. We will see how to face them together rather than against each other.

Chapter 6 — Rebuilding Trust. After the storm, how do you reconnect? This chapter is dedicated to the process of repair — slow, non-linear, but possible.

Chapter 7 — Reigniting Emotional and Intimate Connection. Beyond conflict resolution, a couple needs warmth, complicity, desire. We will explore the paths to reconnection — emotional, physical, and spiritual.

Chapter 8 — Building a Future Together. The final chapter looks toward the future: how to create a solid shared vision, how to prevent relapse, and how to make your relationship a space for mutual growth.

At the end of each chapter, you will find a summary of key points, a practical exercise, and suggestions for further reading to deepen the themes discussed.

Let us begin.
