

# Relationship Recipes

Try three of our favorite recipes for productive conflict management and a happy, healthy relationship!

## RECIPE

### Self-Soothing

*Physiologically flooded?  
Need a break from the conversation?  
The perfect chill can be achieved with this  
research-inspired self-soothing recipe.*



#### Ingredients:

- 1 Hand signal or code word to signify flooding  
Distance for at least 20 minutes
- 1 Favorite place, calming thought, or soothing activity  
Deep breaths

## YIELDS

*Physiological soothing, calm, and the ability to rejoin the conversation.*

## Instructions:

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### Step 1

First, identify if you're feeling flooded. Flooding has a number of indicators, including increased heart rate, irregular breathing, and fight-or-flight response.

### Step 2

If you're feeling flooded, communicate this to your partner with words, a neutral hand sign, or code word.

### Step 3

Take a break from the conflict for at least 20 minutes. This is how much time it takes to calm your body, according to science.

### Step 4

Practice focusing on your breath. It should be deep, regular, and even. Usually when you get flooded, you either hold your breath a lot or breathe shallowly. So, inhale and exhale naturally.

### Step 5

Practice doing an activity that calms you for at least twenty minutes. This could be something like reading a book, going for a walk, or listening to music.

### Step 6

Once calm, you are ready to resume the conflict conversation. Return to the conversation and approach resolution with your partner.

RECIPE

# Softened-Startup

*Use this recipe early and often when conflict arises. John Gottman says, "94% of the time, the way a discussion starts determines the way it will end."*

*Try this recipe to start softer!*



## Ingredients:

- Self-awareness
- 1 "I feel" statement
- 1 Positive need, plus more to taste
- Focus on the present

## YIELDS

*A productive conversation, an understanding of each other's thoughts and feelings, and met needs.*

## Instructions:

### Step 1

Begin the conversation with an "I" statement to describe what you feel and what you need. When you start sentences with "I" instead of "You," you are less likely to be critical, which, as we know from criticism, would immediately put your partner on the defensive.

For example, instead of saying "You are not listening to me," you can say, "I don't feel heard right now."

#### When in doubt, try this formula:

I feel \_\_\_\_\_  
about \_\_\_\_\_  
and I need \_\_\_\_\_.

### Step 2

Focus on how you're feeling and what you need, not on accusing your partner. Both of you will stand to gain something from the conversation, and you will likely feel that you are hearing and understanding each other more.

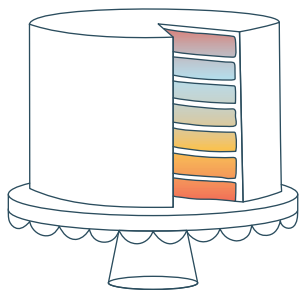
### Step 3

Describe what you see and feel in the situation. When you do this instead of accusing or blaming your partner, your partner is more likely to consider your point of view and what you need, and they will likely try harder to deliver the results you are hoping for with this approach.

### Step 4

Be polite and appreciative. Just because you are in conflict with your partner doesn't mean that your respect and affection for them has to diminish. Adding phrases such as "please" and "I appreciate it" can be helpful for maintaining respect and emotional connection during a difficult conversation.

## RELATIONSHIP RECIPES



### RECIPE

# Seven Principles

*Layer the seven principles for a love you can savor for a lifetime.*

*Add the ingredients in any order and let your creativity shine!*

## Ingredients:

- 1 Love Maps Card Deck
- 2 Partners willing to work on their relationship
  - Love for your partner
- 1 Conflict
- 1 Dollop of dreams
  - Gottman's Seven Principles

### YIELDS

*An understanding of each other,  
a strengthened foundation,  
and lasting love*

## Instructions:

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*Layer each of the Seven Principles.*

### Step 1

#### **Enhance Your Love Maps**

Love Maps are your ongoing and ever-evolving understanding of your partner's world. Who is their best friend? What type of dressing do they like on their salad? What are their life dreams? Update your Love Maps regularly.

### Step 2

#### **Nurture Your Fondness and Admiration**

Fondness and admiration are two of the most crucial elements in a rewarding and long-lasting romance. Having fondness and admiration for your partner means acknowledging that they are worthy of respect and love, and cherishing them. Notice the good things your partner is doing as well as the traits you love about them and call them out regularly.

### Step 3

#### **Turn Towards Each Other Instead of Away**

In a relationship, couples are always making "bids" for each other's attention, affection, humor, or support. A partner responds to a bid by either turning towards or turning away. A tendency to turn toward bids for connection is the basis of trust, emotional connection, passion, and a satisfying sex life.

### Step 4

#### **Let Your Partner Influence You**

This doesn't manifest as "anything you say, dear". Instead, it looks like respecting and honoring each other, taking your partner's feelings and opinions into account, and making your significant other a partner in decision making. Members of a couple who take the other partner's preferences into account and are willing to compromise and adapt are happiest.

### Step 5

#### **Solve Your Solvable Problems**

A solvable problem within a relationship is about something situational. A solution can be found and maintained.

## RELATIONSHIP RECIPES

### Use these five tactics to solve your solvable problems:

1. Soften your start-up (*see the softened-startup recipe!*).
2. Learn to make and receive repair attempts, or behaviors that maintain the emotional connection and emphasize “we/us” over individual needs.
3. Soothe yourself and each other (*see the self-soothing recipe!*).
4. Compromise and find common ground.
5. Process any grievances so they don’t linger and keep the focus on shared concern for the well-being of the relationship.

### Step 6

#### Overcome Gridlock

Gridlock is a state in which your argument with your partner has come to a standstill because you both disagree on how to move forward. Gridlock is caused by perpetual problems, or problems that center on either fundamental differences in your personalities, or fundamental differences in your lifestyle needs. Overcoming gridlock does not mean solving, giving in, or losing. It simply means accepting, acknowledging, and discussing the issue without hurting each other... then moving forward.

### Step 7

#### Create Shared Meaning

Relationships aren’t just about raising kids, splitting chores, and making love. They can also have a spiritual dimension that has to do with creating an inner life together—a culture rich with symbols and rituals, and an appreciation for your roles and goals that link you and lead you to understand who you are as a couple.