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After a Fight: Couple's Repair Cheat Sheet

Use this together once you are both calm enough to listen, reflect, and stay out of the fight.

THE GOAL Understand + repair, not prove who is right. Take turns: speak -> summarize -> validate -> switch.

1 FEELINGS

Name what you felt.

"I felt _____."

Do not argue with the feeling or explain your intention.

2 YOUR REALITY

Describe your experience without blame.

Speaker: "From my perspective..." Listener: "What I hear you saying is..."

Validate: "It makes sense that you felt..." Ask: "Did I get it? What am I missing?"

3 TRIGGERS

Name what made the moment especially sensitive or intense.

"This connected to an older feeling/experience of _____."

"The story I started telling myself was _____."

4 RESPONSIBILITY + APOLOGY

Own your contribution without adding "but."

"My part was _____." "I regret _____."

"I'm sorry that I _____."

5 PLAN FOR NEXT TIME

Ask for one realistic change + name what you will do differently.

"Next time, it would help me if you _____."

"Next time, I will _____."

6 CLOSE THE LOOP

Agree on the plan and identify anything still needed for repair.

"What I still need is _____."

Our plan: _____

IF EITHER PERSON IS TOO FLOODED TO LISTEN:

Pause and return when both can participate without attacking, shutting down, or trying to win.

THE REPAIR PATH

1. **CALM** — Pause if flooded
2. **SHARE** — One reality at a time
3. **UNDERSTAND** — Summarize + validate
4. **OWN** — Take responsibility
5. **REPAIR** — Make a plan

Adapted from the Gottman Institute's "The Aftermath of a Fight/Regrettable Incident" exercise. Simplified for in-session or at-home use.