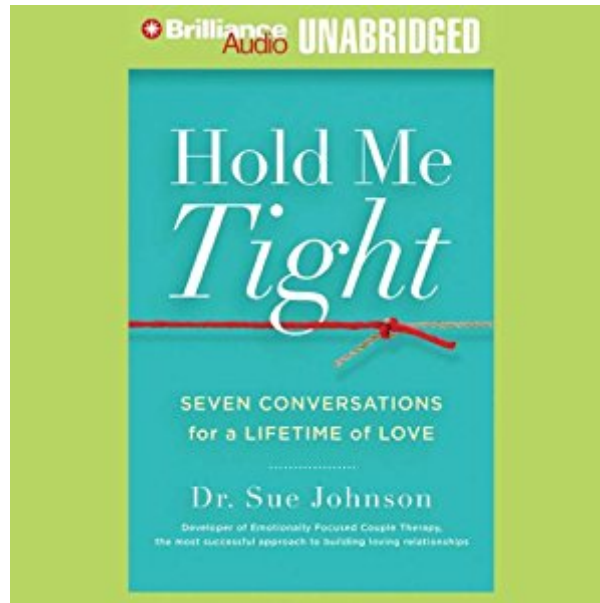


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# Hold Me Tight: Seven Conversations For A Lifetime Of Love



## Synopsis

Are you looking to enrich a healthy relationship, revitalize a tired one, or rescue one gone awry? We all want a lifetime of love, support, and companionship. But sometimes we need a little help. Enter Dr. Sue Johnson, developer of Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy and the best couple therapist in the world, according to bestselling relationship expert Dr. John Gottman. In *Hold Me Tight*, Dr. Johnson shares her groundbreaking and remarkably successful program for creating stronger, more secure relationships. The message of *Hold Me Tight* is simple: Forget about learning how to argue better, analyzing your early childhood, making grand romantic gestures, or experimenting with new sexual positions. Instead, get to the emotional underpinnings of your relationship by recognizing that you are emotionally attached to and dependent on your partner in much the same way that a child is on a parent for nurturing, soothing, and protection. Dr. Johnson teaches that the way to enhance or save a relationship is to be open, attuned, and responsive to each other and to reestablish emotional connection. With this in mind, she focuses on key moments in a relationship—from Recognizing the Demon Dialogues to Forgiving Injuries—and uses them as touch points for seven healing conversations. These conversations give you insight into the defining moments in your relationship and guide you in reshaping these moments to create a secure and lasting bond. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

*Hold Me Tight* teaches couples how to hear their partner's deepest concerns, "are you there for

me", "am I really important to you", "is our relationship secure and solid" when those concerns are expressed through criticism or content. It reminds partner's that all communications are attempts to connect, no matter how badly delivered. In this way, Susan Johnson teaches couples to read below the surface of a complaint down to the attachment need being expressed underneath. When attachment needs can be faced and processed directly, couples feel closer. Johnson offers couples in couples counseling an adjunctive support system in addition to the therapy hour. Hold Me Tight is also an excellent resource for couples working things out on their own. It provides a clear and solid guideline for repairing hurt and restoring connection. I am recommending it to the couples in my practice, and the reports coming back about how helpful and transformative Johnson's approach is have been glowing!

The problem with therapy and relationship books is that they are all the equivalent of medieval "medicine." There is no science, no data-driven outcomes, no predictive hypothesis testing and hence no real progress. Every practitioner has their own set of nostrums, some helpful and some absurd, just like every witch-doctor has his own set of feathers and fetish items. Step forward Sue Johnson. Although she has taken only baby-steps towards a true scientific model of attachment relationships, it's welcome progress indeed. Unlike the vast majority of her peers, she grasps that our behaviors have been fashioned by selection pressure over the millennia. She looks for why such behaviors should have adaptive value, and this enables her to side-step the mumbo-jumbo of co-dependence, inappropriate behavior, etc. and get right to the heart of what seems to be going on between couples when their relationship is in trouble. For people who want confirmation that their partner is "too clingy" or "too cold" or whatever, this is not the book for you. Nor is it a "why you should be strong and suck it up" book. It is about our basic needs, our need for at least one other adult human being to be there for us when we need it. It is about why we're wired up to be that way, what kinds of behaviors result from this hard-wiring, how things can go wrong, and how things can be fixed. At the heart of the book is Johnson's vision of us as all needing at least one refuge, one place of safety and support in an otherwise indifferent and cold universe. Unfortunately, for most people, marriage or an equivalent domestic relationship fails to provide this refuge because we keep misunderstanding our partner's needs and impulses - and very often we misunderstand our own too. Johnson recognizes the futility of trying to change communication patterns or patterns of surface behavior when the fundamentals remain unaddressed. She walks the reader through the stages of self-understanding and then partner-understanding. She uses simplified examples from her own case histories (sometimes rather too glib) to demonstrate behavior patterns and how they can be

modified and improved so that both parties can get closer to the heart of the matter. Eventually, we'll arrive at a soundly-based science of interpersonal behavior that uses mathematical models to (i) elucidate, and (ii) predict our behaviors, at which point we'll have the possibility of truly effective therapy and also understand the fundamental limits of therapy. After all, there are plenty of things in this world that can't be fixed no matter how hard one might try. But until that day arrives, Johnson's book is a welcome precursor and a valuable tool for anyone who cares about their relationships and hopes to find a true loving refuge in which lasting love can be recrafted every day.

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is currently in fashion among couples therapists, and Sue Johnson is one of its chief architects. In *Hold Me Tight*, which is offered as a guide (including exercises at the end of each chapter) for couples to work through EFT on their own, Dr Johnson presents "seven conversations for a lifetime of love." When all of the clever labels designed to help promote the brand are stripped away--"the demon dialogs," "freeze and flee," "hold me tight"--the advice comes down to this: communication with your partner in which you can be vulnerable, risk showing your frailties, and make yourself emotionally available should open the door to reciprocity by your partner and communication of deep emotional intensity, an opportunity for sharing, bonding, and building trust. Communication in which partners are closed and defensive, on the other hand, closes the possibility for genuine emotional connection and can set off destructive spirals of recrimination and defensiveness, leading in turn to feelings of alienation and separation and, in the most severe case, dissolution of the relationship. Any of us who has ever done "work" on ourselves or on our relationships has heard this before, and we understand the fundamental wisdom of trying to get in touch with ourselves, with our feelings, and of having the courage to give our partner access to those inner-most, most intimate places, to be willing to stand before our partner emotionally naked, trusting that they will not take advantage of our vulnerability, that they will not reject us, that they will, in a healthy relationship, embrace us. For those who have not yet gotten to this place in the program, Sue Johnson's explanation is as lucid and usable and sensible as any, though the writing is sometimes clumsy--a social-scientific researcher trying to bring her work to a popular audience perhaps. The stories, while they may all be accurate representations of therapy sessions Dr Johnson has had with clients, seem pat and contrived, each one resolves neatly as if in a television drama: "Oh, Ricky, I'm sorry." Here's the basic formula: In therapy, one partner complains about the behavior of the other; the indicted partner reacts badly causing the complaining partner to suddenly open up and reveal the hidden significance of their hurt. On seeing the complaining partner so vulnerable and exposed, the indicted partner has an epiphany, allows his/her heart to

open completely to the complaining partner, there is a warm embrace, literal and/or metaphorical, and the relationship is on the road to recovery. In a concluding chapter, Johnson is honest that the moment just described is not a permanent or even a guaranteed cure: relationships require continuing work on the part of both parties. Even so, at least in *Hold Me Tight*, Johnson fails to acknowledge the possibility of cases in which this moment never occurs, cases in which at least one partner is so deeply guarded emotionally that his or her reaction to the other partner's vulnerability cannot be the healing embrace, but even greater defensiveness and withdrawal. Such an admission wouldn't be good for book sales. *Hold Me Tight* depends on optimism. One very valuable feature of *Hold Me Tight*, a lesson that many of us, even those of us who have done some "work," may not have heard often enough: Sue Johnson is in league with a growing number of therapists and counselors coming from a number of different perspectives, determined to undermine forty years or so of thought that has told us that self-sufficiency is a hallmark of mental health; that our goal should be to get ourselves to a state where we do not need a relationship; that then, and only then, are we truly ready for a relationship. Anything short of a relationship built on mutual self-sufficiency is mere co-dependency. Johnson and others argue that we are hard-wired for connection, and they rely on some findings of contemporary neuro-science to bolster their argument. One only wonders how we would have ignored Maslow's hierarchy of needs, which features "belongingness and love" so prominently, for so long. Some of us will find it a relief, in our imperfect condition, to at last, be given license to seek a relationship without the foregone judgment that because we want it, we are unhealthy, and because we are unhealthy, any relationship we enter must therefore be unhealthy. Parts I and II of *Hold Me Tight* give the reader the "seven conversations for a lifetime of love" that are the core of Johnson's book. Part III seems tacked on. It includes special cases, such as the chapter on trauma, and a concluding chapter, but the fundamental formula remains the same: one partner risks vulnerability; the other partner recognizes the real emotional content of behaviors and offers a healing embrace. The consistency of the theme raises the question Are these special cases really special after all?

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