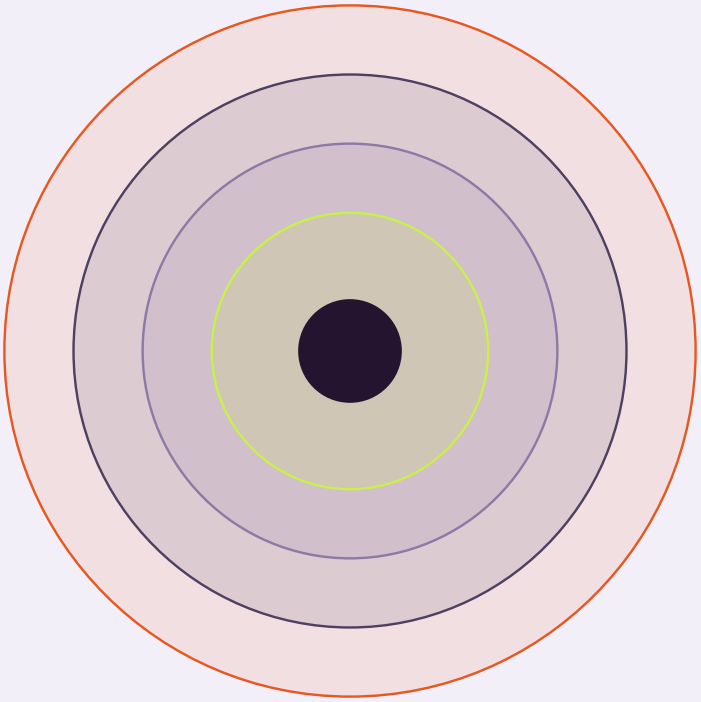


The Hold Me Tight Workbook

A reading of the book by Sue Johnson (2022)

1. ACTION BOOK

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ABOUT THIS EDITION

This is HourLife's reading of The Hold Me Tight Workbook, in our own words. It is not a substitute for the book.

BEFORE YOU START 01

The book in a minute

The couple's companion to Emotionally Focused Therapy — the seven conversations, worked through with exercises, scripts and shared reflections, so two people can stop fighting about the dishes and start talking about whether they can reach each other.

Below are the 8 ideas HourLife readers vote up most, each in our words with a note on what it asks of you, and then the steps that put them to work.

WHAT READERS KEEP

The takeaways

1 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Almost every fight is the same fight: are you there for me?

The subject on the surface changes weekly. The question underneath it — can I reach you, do I matter to you — is the one that actually gets answered.

2 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

The enemy is not your partner. The enemy is the pattern the two of you fall into.

EFT's central move is putting the cycle in the middle of the table so both people can look at it together instead of at each other.

3 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

There are only three bad dances: Find the Bad Guy, the Protest Polka, and Freeze and Flee.

Naming which one you're in is most of the work, because each has a different exit and mistaking one for another makes it worse.

4 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A distancer is not indifferent. They are overwhelmed and trying not to make it worse.

The workbook spends real time on this because the pursuer almost always reads withdrawal as not caring, which is precisely the wrong conclusion.

5 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

A.R.E. you there for me? Accessible, Responsive, Engaged.

Three concrete tests that turn a vague sense of distance into something you can actually ask about and answer.

6 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Anger is the noise raw spots make. Under it is nearly always fear.

The exercises push you past the secondary emotion, because your partner can respond to your fear and can only defend against your contempt.

7 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

One unhealed moment of unreachability can outweigh a decade of good days.

Attachment injuries do not fade with time or good behaviour; the workbook treats forgiving them as a structured conversation, not a decision.

8 HOURLIFE TAKEAWAY

Good sex follows safety. It does not create it.

Johnson puts the bedroom conversation late in the sequence on purpose, because desire in a bonded pair is a downstream measure of felt security.

PUT IT TO WORK

Your action book

Do the setup steps once, then keep the habits going. The setup changes your week; the habits keep it changed after the first good one.

The download puts this whole reading and a printable action book in one PDF: the setup checklist, then a page of real calendar days for each habit, starting on the day you choose.

SET UP ONCE

- [ ] Map your cycle on one sheet of paper
- [ ] Name which of the three dances is yours
- [ ] Write down your raw spots and where they came from
- [ ] Take the A.R.E. inventory separately, then compare
- [ ] Agree a stop-word for when the cycle starts

KEEP UP DAILY

- [ ] Ask for what you need in one soft sentence
- [ ] Repair the small ruptures within a day
- [ ] Hold a six-second kiss and a real hug daily

30 days · Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Part two, after the reading, prints each of these as a page to fill in by hand.

THE LAST WORD

Before you go

Pick one step from the action book and do it today. An idea from a book starts to count once it changes what one ordinary day looks like.

PART TWO

The action book

Change the setup once, then keep it up. 5 setup actions to do once, and 3 habits to mark each day for 30 days.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026

Print it, or write on it in any PDF app.

SET UP ONCE

The setup checklist

Each of these is done once. Do one a day, and check it off when it is done.

☐ SETUP 1

Map your cycle on one sheet of paper

When I feel ___, I usually ___, and then you ___, which leaves me feeling ___.

Both partners fill it in separately, then trade. The point is a shared picture of the loop, not agreement about who starts it.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 2

Name which of the three dances is yours

Find the Bad Guy is mutual blame; the Protest Polka is one pursuing and one withdrawing; Freeze and Flee is both gone quiet.

Write down the last three fights and see which one they all were.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 3

Write down your raw spots and where they came from

The two or three moments that reliably wound you — being dismissed, being not chosen, being told you're too much — and the earlier history that made them sore.

Share the history, not just the trigger.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 4

Take the A.R.E. inventory separately, then compare

Score accessible, responsive and engaged for yourself and for how you think your partner would score you.

The gaps between the four numbers are the whole conversation.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

☐ SETUP 5

Agree a stop-word for when the cycle starts

One neutral phrase either of you can say — "we're in it" — that means pause, not concede.

Agree in advance what happens next: twenty minutes apart, then back at the table, with a time named.

MY VERSION

DONE ON

DAILY HABIT 1 OF 3

Ask for what you need in one soft sentence

Fear first, then the ask: "I get scared you've checked out, and I need you to tell me you're still here." No preamble, no history, no case for the prosecution.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 ○	12 ○	13 ○	14 ○	15 ○
16 ○	17 ○	18 ○	19 ○	20 ○	21 ○	22 ○
23 ○	24 ○	25 ○	26 ○	27 ○	28 ○	29 ○
30 ○						

December 2026

MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT	SUN
	1 ○	2 ○	3 ○	4 ○	5 ○	6 ○
7 ○	8 ○	9 ○	10 ○	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 2 OF 3

Repair the small ruptures within a day

The workbook's Hold Me Tight repair is short: name the moment, name what you felt, say what you wish you'd done.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP

DAILY HABIT 3 OF 3

Hold a six-second kiss and a real hug daily

Long enough for the body to register the other person is there.

Nov 11 - Dec 10, 2026 · 30 days · circle each day you do it

SMALLEST VERSION

CUE

WHERE

November 2026

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December 2026

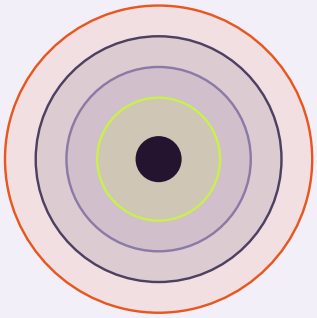
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EACH FRIDAY

WHAT HELPED

WHAT GOT IN THE WAY

ONE CHANGE TO THE SETUP



Love is not the icing on the cake of life. It is a basic primary need, like oxygen or water.

SUE JOHNSON