Bids for Connection

Relationships: Noticing and Answering Small Reaches for Attention

A bid for connection is any small attempt to get another person's attention, interest, or support. Psychologist John Gottman named bids in his research on couples, and he and Julie Gottman have taught the idea to couples for decades. A bid can be a comment, a question, a touch, or a sigh. How you answer these small moments, again and again, shapes how close you feel. This worksheet helps you spot bids and practice turning toward them.

1 Three ways to answer a bid

Turning toward Engaging with the bid	You notice the bid and respond with interest, even in a small way, like a nod, a question, or a smile.
Turning away Missing the bid	You ignore the bid or don't notice it, often because you are distracted or busy. The other person is left hanging.
Turning against Pushing the bid back	You respond with irritation, criticism, or sarcasm. The other person may stop making bids to avoid getting hurt.

Why does this work? *Bids are how people check, many times a day, whether someone is there for them. In Gottman's studies of newlyweds, the couples who were still together years later had turned toward each other's bids far more often than the couples who split up. Each small "yes" builds trust that adds up over time.*

2 What bids can look like

The bid	Turning toward	Turning away	Turning against
"Look at that bird outside."	*"Oh, wow, what kind is it?"*	*Keeps scrolling on their phone.*	*"I'm trying to read. Can you not?"*
A sigh after a long day.	*"Rough day? Want to talk?"*	*Says nothing and turns on the TV.*	*"You're always complaining."*

Bids are easy to miss when they are quiet, like a hand on your shoulder, sharing a meme, or asking "What are you up to?" They happen with friends, family, and coworkers too.

A bid someone made to me recently, and how I answered it:

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**This worksheet provides information but is not a substitute for therapy. It works best with guidance from a professional.*

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3 Bid log

For a few days, notice bids between you and someone close to you. Write down bids you made and bids you received, and how each one was answered.

Day	The bid (who made it, what it was)	How it was answered	What I could try next time
Tue	*My partner asked how my meeting went*	*Turned away, I was on my phone*	*Put the phone down and ask a follow-up question*

4 Turning toward more often

Bids I make that others might miss:

Example: I send my sister articles when I really want to catch up

One way I will turn toward someone's bids this week:

Nobody catches every bid. If you notice a pattern of turning away or turning against in your relationship, a couples therapist can help you both reconnect.

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