Your working model of love · About 4 minutes

Let Actual Care Update the Picture

Allowing one credible action to matter without asking it to settle everything

This weekend, Sonia knew the plan early enough to make one of her own.

Dev learned that work might run late and told her promptly. He asked whether she still wanted to meet. She chose another evening, and he accepted the change. In this fictional relationship, that is different from the weekends when she was left waiting.

She can recognize the difference and remain angry about those earlier occasions. She does not have to choose between “Everything is repaired” and “Nothing counts.”

Attachment theory describes working models as expectations that can be revised through relational experience.[1] That gives us a way to think about change without pretending that one considerate action rewrites a history.

An apology, a promise and follow-through supply different information. “I understand why it hurt” may acknowledge an injury. “I’ll tell you earlier next time” describes an intention. Telling you earlier is the action itself. Repetition gives a change more weight than an appealing statement alone.

For Sonia, “This weekend was handled differently” is accurate. It leaves room for a broader conversation about how their time is treated. It also allows her to notice that she could make another plan, rather than spending the afternoon waiting.

Dev’s response to her choice matters. Had he given notice and then pressured her to meet anyway, the event would need a different description. Wanting to see improvement should not make us overlook the part that still costs us our say.

Sonia may feel relief, sadness or very little. She need not produce gratitude to demonstrate that she has recognized the effort. Dev may hope it means more, but she cannot honestly supply trust on demand.

You can examine the scene by asking what actually changed. Sonia received notice and chose a different evening. What remains unfinished? Earlier disruption, lingering hurt and the question of whether the new conduct will continue. Neither list needs to erase the other.

Sometimes there is no new action to consider. A vivid hope or convincing promise is still about the future. At other times, a real improvement arrives after someone has already decided to leave. They can acknowledge it without renewing the relationship. No additional chance is owed in unwanted or unsafe contact, and an apparent understanding does not itself establish safety.

Where continuing contact is wanted, allowing a genuine change to register can make the picture more accurate. This may involve a little risk: you are noticing something welcome without knowing whether it will last. The alternative need not be wholehearted trust. You can keep watching the pattern while allowing this weekend to have been different.

Sonia has a weekend she can plan around, one piece of experience to put beside the earlier waiting.

Another weekend will come. Sonia can take pleasure in having been considered and let the next arrangement tell her something more.

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Companion reading · The Love We Expect, the Love We Can Receive

Full pathway companion · included with paid learning
Pathway introduction: Your working model of love (public introduction; full modules require access).

Sources and further reading

[1] Fraley, R. C. (n.d.). A brief overview of adult attachment theory and research. University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Source.

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