

Rupture, Repair, and Reconnection

Student Workbook



Counseling and Psychological Services

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Welcome!

Welcome to **Rupture, Repair, and Reconnection**, a workshop intended to help you gain insight into recognizing barriers to repairing and practical ways to engage in repair whether it be with friends, peers, family, work colleagues, or romantic relationships.

The following includes psychoeducational information as well as activities from the workshop.

Should you wish to focus more in depth on any of your relationship-related concerns, you may debrief with a therapist following the completion of the workshop.

If at any time you feel you need additional support, please let your workshop leader know of contact CAPS at (805)-756-2511. You may also find additional resources online at **counseling.calpoly.edu**.



Responses to Conflict

What are your common responses to conflict? Highlight which ones you often engage in.

Fight	Flight	Freeze
• Blaming • Criticizing • Interrupting • Trying to prove that you are right • Raising your voice • Attacking someone's character	• Avoiding • Leaving without explanation • Changing the subject • Distracting ourselves • Ending the conversation abruptly	• Going blank • Shutting down • Feeling numb or confused • Agreeing simply to end the conversation • Becoming unable to speak

Reflection Questions:

1. Which response—fight, flight, or freeze—is most familiar?

2. What other responses do you have?

Responses to Conflict: Feelings

Fight	Flight	Freeze
• Annoyed • Irritated • Frustrated • Angry • Resentful • Infuriated	• Nervous • Worried • Insecure • Anxious • Fearful • Panicked	• Hopeless • Confused • Ashamed • Stuck • Numb • Paralyzed

What are your top reactive feelings? Do you tend to have feelings in the fight, flight, or freeze category?

Adapted from: <https://fiveminuterelationshiprepair.com/pdf/Workbook.pdf>

Responses to Conflict: Body Sensations

• Knot in your stomach or churning • Feeling hot or cold • Tightness • Shortness of breath • Constriction or pounding in chest • Lump in your throat • Weight on your shoulders	• Heavy feeling • Fluttering • Pain in your heart • Shakiness • Pressure • Muscle tension
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What are your top reactive sensations? Do you notice other body sensations not listed?

Adapted from: <https://fiveminuterelationshiprepair.com/pdf/Workbook.pdf>

Responses to Conflict: Reactive Behaviors

• Try to fix the problem with logic • Agree insincerely • Rationalize, intellectualize to avoid emotions • Make a joke • Ignore, pretend it doesn't matter or you didn't hear it • Distance yourself • Leave, walk out, move away • Withdraw • Act confused • Shut down or space out • Correct the other person • Debate • Defend yourself • Roll your eyes • Talk over or interrupt • Repeat yourself • Get sullen or sulk	• Mutter to yourself • Compare the other person to someone "better" • Label, judge, or name call • Lecture, judge • Pursue, push, pressure, or provoke • Talk loudly in a rushed tone • Ask for explanations through interrogation • Try to prove you are right • Blame • Yell, blow-up • Guilt trip
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Highlight what reactive behaviors you tend to engage in? Are there other behaviors not listed?

Adapted from: <https://fiveminuterelationshiprepair.com/pdf/Workbook.pdf>

Pause Phrases

- “I want to continue this conversation, but I need a moment.”
- “Can we slow this down?”
- “I am noticing that I am becoming defensive.”
- “Could we take a short break and return to this?”
- “I care about resolving this, and I do not think I can listen well right now.”

Important distinction:

A pause includes an intention to return. Disappearing indefinitely can feel like punishment or abandonment.



Ask For a Conversation

When You've Caused Harm:

- “I’ve been thinking about how I handled that conversation. Could we talk about it?”
- “I realize that something I said may have hurt you. I’d like to listen and take responsibility.”
- “I don’t feel good about how I reacted. Would you be willing to let me try to repair it?”
- “I owe you an apology. Is this a good time to talk?”
- “I think my words had an impact I didn’t intend. I’d like to understand how they affected you.”

When You Were Harmed

- “Something that happened between us hurt me, and I’d like to talk about it rather than let it build.”
- “I value our relationship, so I want to be honest about how that interaction affected me.”
- “Could we revisit something you said earlier? It landed differently than you may have intended.”
- “I felt some distance between us after what happened. Would you be open to talking about it?”
- “There’s something I want to share—not to blame you, but so we can understand each other better.”

Remember: Add in when would be a good time for the conversation? You both want to be regulated for the conversation.

Describe What Happened and Name the Impact

Use observable, specific language rather than interpreting the other person's character or intentions. Name the feeling/respect you had, the story you told yourself, and the need or value you hope for.

Sample Script:

When ____ (language or behavior that was harmful) happened, I felt ____ (feelings you had) because I told myself ____ (story you told yourself). What I needed or valued in that moment was ____ (need or value you hoped for).

Common Stories:

- I do not matter.
- I am going to be rejected.
- I can't rely on you.
- Everyone hates me.
- My needs are not important.
- People think I'm incompetent.

Needs/ Values might include:

- Respect
- Inclusion
- Clarity
- Trust
- Consideration
- Safety
- Belonging
- Reliability
- Being heard
- Autonomy
- Privacy
- Support

Practice

When _____
(language or behavior that was harmful) happened, I felt _____
(feelings you had) because I told myself _____
_____ (story you told yourself). What I needed or
valued in that moment was _____
(need or value you hoped for). _____
_____ (practical/relational consequences).

Take Responsibility for Your Actions

1. Describe your words or actions as objectively as possible, without justifying them or shifting the focus back to the other person.
2. When appropriate, apologize.



Make a Request and Invite Their Perspective

1. Identify what could help repair the situation or prevent the problem from happening again
2. Invite the other person to share their experience

Making a request examples:

- In the future, would you be willing to raise concerns with me directly? I would also like to understand how you experienced the situation.
- Would you be willing to let me know when plans change?
- Could we discuss concerns privately rather than in front of the group?
- Next time, could we take a pause before the conversation escalates?

Example language of inviting their perspective:

- How did you experience what happened?
- Is there something I may be missing?
- What would you need from me moving forward?

Repair Steps Overview

1. Identify conflict has occurred
2. Regulate/Pause
3. Ask for a conversation
4. Describe what happened and name the impact
5. Take Responsibility for your actions
6. Make a request and invite their perspective

How to Receive a Repair Attempt

- Pause and listen to notice if you are becoming defensive, angry, embarrassed, or shut down. Try to remain curious.
- Reflect what you heard: repeat the main message in your own words and check where you understood it accurately.
- Acknowledge the impact.
- Take responsibility and apologize.



Oops, Ouch, and Whoa

Oops: Use “**oops**” when you realize that something you said or did may have caused harm or did not reflect what you intended.” An “oops” should be followed by an effort to correct the behavior, not simply used to move past it.

Ouch: Use “**ouch**” when something another person says or does lands painfully. It signals impact without immediately attacking or assuming intent.

Whoa: Use “**whoa**” when the conversation is moving too quickly, becoming too intense, or becoming difficult to understand. “Whoa” is a request to pause, clarify, or regulate so that the conversation can continue more productively.



When Repair May Not Be an Appropriate Course of Action

Note: Every situation is nuanced, and these are some guiding factors to help you make a decision on what path may be the best option for you.

- When the person has been offered a chance to reconsider their actions and impact on others but does not want to be accountable.
- When a person is more concerned with gaining power through manipulating others, rather than being in a community with others to build collective power.
- When someone makes you feel unworthy and insists that you make yourself smaller, they don't feel intimidated by you.
- When the person dismisses your bid for connection in favor of continuing the conflict.
- When you are feeling activated or triggered and can recognize that you are no longer in a healthy headspace to call in.

Calling Out: making a more public comment intended to expose harm typically when there is a major power imbalance, public awareness to protect others, or challenge institutional power.

When call outs don't work:

- Demonize. You turn the other person into your enemy, resorting to personal attacks on their character, intelligence, and value.
- Defend. You become entrenched in your perspective and insist on the primacy of your view.
- Dictate. You prioritize your perspective on the conflict to the exclusion of how others are experiencing it.
- Distract. You throw curveballs and red herrings that aren't necessarily relevant but allow you to control the conversation.
- Deflect. You take no responsibility, shift blame to others and cover your role in conflict.

Calling It Off: Stepping back, ending contact, or establishing a firm boundary. This action may be appropriate if:

- The person continues the harmful behavior.
- They dismiss every attempt at accountability.
- They manipulate, retaliate, or demand that you make yourself smaller.
- The relationship is unsafe or chronically damaging.
- You do not have the capacity or desire to continue engaging.

References

Campbell, S. & Grey, J. (2015). *Five-minute relationship repair: Quickly heal upsets, deepen intimacy, and use differences to strengthen love*. New World Library.

Ross, L. J. (2025) *Calling in: How to start making change with those you'd rather cancel*. Simon & Schuster Paperbacks.

