

Grace and Repair

in the Parenting Journey

This exercise is based on the work of Brianna Edwards, LMHC, RTP
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As we move through life and all our relationships, there is often conflict and things that can easily “rupture” relationships. This is certainly true in the parent-child relationship. Conflicts and differing opinions can easily move to arguments that lead us farther apart.

What is a rupture? It is simply a break in the connection between two people. There are many different types of ruptures that occur:

- *Broken Trust*
- *Miscommunication*
- *Bodily harm/abuse*
- *Verbal Hostility*
- *Absence*
- *Physical or Emotional Distance*
- *Mis attunement*
- *Etc.*

There are lots of examples of how ruptures occur in family life:

- *Your daughter’s grades are slipping. You criticize her and tell her she needs to do better. She feels hurt and sad.*
- *Your baby keeps crying...and crying. You tried changing her diaper and comforting her, but she isn’t soothing.*
- *You tell your son to stop playing video games and clean his room. He says no and ignores you. You feel angry and disrespected.*
- *Your teen is lying and making poor choices. You argue and yell at each other frequently.*

You have to ask yourself: What happens inside of YOU when there is a rupture?
Do You...

- *Shutdown?*
- *Feel anxious?*
- *Try to fix it?*
- *Cry?*
- *Get angry?*
- *Hold a grudge?*
- *Yell?*
- *Blame?*
- *Withdraw?*
- *Feel helpless?*
- *Feel overwhelmed?*

Rupture is inevitable. There is no way to avoid it, so it is critical to become good at, and comfortable with repair.

How to Repair: Reconnecting after a rupture.

The goal of repair is to restore an emotional connection that is safe and soothing to the child or teenager. Repair takes work & intentionality. And for many of us, it does not come naturally. It is your job, as the parent, to lead and initiate repair with your child. It is not your child's responsibility.

SO THEN...

How do we lead our teens and repair them in a way that honors God?

AVOID THIS:

- *The silent treatment*
- *Blaming*
- *Shaming/guiling*
- *"Pushing it under the rug"*
- *Pretending it didn't happen*
- *Defending yourself*

TRY THIS INSTEAD:

- *Pause & regulate yourself*
- *Initiate a conversation and LISTEN*
- *Own your role – your actions & your feelings*
- *Apologize and Forgive*
- *Create an action plan*
- *Playfully connect*

Sometimes, wounds are deep, and trust is destroyed. In these cases, repair takes time. Consistency + predictability in repair build a SAFE & TRUSTING relationship, which helps teens FEEL safe. This leads to a fulfilling parent-child relationship. Why would we expect our teenagers to be humble, vulnerable, apologize, & forgive if they don't see us do it?

We have to model the REPAIR behaviors we want to see our teens use. They are always watching & learning from you. They replicate your relationship patterns and habits (whether healthy or hurtful).

Reflection:

Write down five of your best God-given qualities or characteristics. Then reflect: When there is a relational rupture, do you compromise those five qualities?

It's helpful to keep the qualities in an accessible location to remind yourself of who you want to be as a parent or leader. We want to stay true to our Holy Spirit-driven selves.

Take time to reflect: What thoughts or behaviors do you have when you feel like you can't handle the hard things in your life or when it all feels overwhelming?

We can feel like a victim when things are hard, but the truth is that we always have choices.

There is always a choice to regulate!

- *Notice what is happening in your body*
- *What do you need to be present, grounded, and focused again?*
- *Target the needs of the nervous system*
 - *Deep breaths, walking, talking to a friend, hugging, crunchy snack, warm tea, gum, cold compress, ice on neck, etc.*
 - *Pray WHILE you are doing these things - not instead of!*
- *"Name it to Tame it"/Brain Dump*
- *Ask for help from a spouse or friend.*

In order to get better at regulation and repair, you may need to “re-parent” yourself.

BE CURIOUS: The next time you get overwhelmed and flooded with emotion, cling to curiosity. Ask yourself: “Is this about me, my child, or my history?”

GIVE YOURSELF EMPATHY: Instead of criticizing and judging yourself, extend compassion and grace to yourself for where you are at in your journey – that’s how we heal!

BE GENTLE WITH YOURSELF: Talk to yourself with kindness. Gentle touch. Forgive yourself. Acknowledge the wounded child within. Would you talk to a friend (or your child) the way you are talking to yourself? Would Jesus talk to you that way?

ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED: There is no shame in going to counseling.

Questions for Journaling/Reflection:

What does rupture look like in your family? Give examples.

What happens inside of you when there is a rupture? How do you compromise yourself?

How good are you at repair? Rate yourself from 1 to 10 and explain.

Was healthy repair modeled for you when you were growing up? Why or why not?

What is your “hard” in this season?

What do you feed (emotions, behaviors, etc.) when you feel overwhelmed?

What is an action step you can take from this teaching?