Relationship Misattunement Repair Guide

Scripts for rebuilding connection after emotional rupture

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Important note

This resource is intended to support understanding and good practice in neuro-inclusive workplace design. It provides general guidance and does not constitute legal, medical, or clinical advice. Organisations should apply the principles in line with their own policies, regulatory obligations, and professional judgement.

Misattunement happens in every close relationship… especially when one or both people are neurodivergent.

Rupture does **not** mean the relationship is broken.
It means nervous systems lost sync for a moment.

Repair is what restores safety.

First: a crucial reframe

Repair is not:

- an admission of fault
- an apology competition
- a full post-mortem
- emotional processing on demand

Repair **is**:

- re-establishing safety
- signalling care
- restoring connection
- reducing threat

You can repair **without agreeing on everything**.

When repair is possible

Repair works best when:

- emotions have settled (even slightly)
- no one is in active shutdown or meltdown
- there is some capacity for listening

If either person is still overwhelmed, **wait**.
Timing matters more than wording.

Step 1. Name the rupture (without blame)

Purpose: acknowledge disconnection so it doesn't linger silently.

Scripts

- "I think we lost each other earlier."
- "That didn't go well, and I want to reconnect."
- "I feel like we were out of sync."

Avoid:

- "You overreacted."
- "You misunderstood me."
- "This is your RSD."

Naming the rupture reduces threat.

Step 2. Re-establish safety first

Before explaining anything, signal safety.

Scripts

- "You're not in trouble."
- "I'm not angry right now."
- "I care about you and us."
- "This isn't about blame."

Safety must come **before** meaning.

Step 3. Own *your* part (without over-owning)

You don't need to take responsibility for everything… only your side.

Scripts

- "I spoke too fast."
- "I pushed for an answer when you were overloaded."
- "I didn't realise how intense that landed."
- "I should've paused."

This models accountability without collapse.

Step 4. Validate impact (not intention)

Validation doesn't mean you meant to hurt them.
It means you recognise the impact.

Scripts

- "I can see how that felt harsh."
- "That makes sense given how overwhelmed you were."
- "I get why that landed as rejection."

Avoid:

- "That wasn't my intention." (too early)
- "I didn't mean it like that." (minimises impact)

Impact first. Intent later… if needed at all.

Step 5. Clarify gently (optional)

Only if there's capacity.

Scripts

- "What I was trying to say was…"
- "Can I clarify something without pressure?"
- "This isn't to correct you… just to add context."

If clarification escalates emotion, stop.

Repair > explanation.

Step 6. Name what helps next time

Keep this collaborative and small.

Scripts

- "Next time, it would help if we paused sooner."
- "Can we agree on a signal when things get too much?"
- "If I notice shutdown starting, is space or reassurance better?"

This builds **future safety**, not rules.

Step 7. Close the repair clearly

Don't leave repair hanging.

Scripts

- "I'm glad we talked."
- "I feel more connected now."
- "We don't have to resolve everything today."

Clear endings help nervous systems settle.

If the other person can't repair yet

Sometimes they're not ready… and that's okay.

You can still signal safety:

- "I'm here when you're ready."
- "We don't have to fix this now."
- "I care about you even if we're quiet for a bit."

Repair can be **asynchronous**.

Common repair blockers (and what to do instead)

Blocker	Try instead
Defending your intent	Validate impact
Explaining too much	Slow down
Forcing resolution	Pause
Keeping score	Reset focus to safety
Avoiding entirely	Name rupture gently

For ND relationships specifically

Misattunement is more likely when:

- processing speeds differ
- sensory load is high
- RSD is activated
- shutdown or meltdown interrupts communication

This does **not** mean the relationship is unhealthy.

It means repair needs to be **explicit**, not assumed.

Gentle reminders for supporters

- You don't have to fix everything
- Repair doesn't require perfect words
- Trying counts
- Pausing counts
- Care can be shown quietly

Repair is a skill… not a personality trait.

Closing note

Connection isn't built by never rupturing.

It's built by **returning**, again and again, with care.

Repair says:

"Even when this is hard, you matter to me."

And for nervous systems shaped by past misunderstanding, that message is deeply regulating.