



Rupture & Repair Roadmap for Therapists

A practical guide for navigating identity-based, cultural, or value-driven ruptures in session.

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1. Slow Down + Attune

Pause before reacting. Ground yourself. Make space for the client's emotional response.

Try:

"Let's pause—I want to make sure I'm really hearing you."

2. Validate the Emotion Before the Story

Acknowledge how the client feels before diving into meaning or analysis.

Try:

"That clearly brought something up for you—and I want to sit with that first."

3. Lead with Curiosity, Not Assumptions

Ask open questions to understand the client's perspective—**without defending or explaining.**

Try:

"Can you share what that meant for you—emotionally, culturally, or personally?"

4. Name the Rupture. Own the Impact

Acknowledge that harm may have occurred, **regardless of your intention.**

Try:

"I can see this didn't land well. I take responsibility for the impact."

5. Hold Boundaries with Compassion

Strong emotions are welcome. **Harmful communication isn't.**

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“It’s okay to be upset, even with me. I want to stay with you in this—but let’s keep it safe for both of us.”

6. Don’t Make It About You

Avoid centering your guilt or discomfort. **Focus on relational repair.**

Try:

“You don’t owe me your trust right now—I’ll keep showing up in ways that rebuild it.”

7. Reflect and Recalibrate

After session, reflect deeply. **Bring the rupture into supervision.**

Reflection Prompts:

- Where did I miss something due to my lens?
 - Was I curious or corrective?
 - What discomfort came up for me?
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8. Document with Integrity

Note the **emotional tone**, **client’s response**, and your **clinical plan**.

Example:

Client expressed distress in response to a therapist comment involving identity. Therapist acknowledged rupture, validated response, and invited continued dialogue.

9. Stay in the Work

Rupture is not failure—it’s **part of relational work**. Keep showing up.

Mantra:

Repair over retreat. Consistency over perfection.

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