

JUNIOR AND SENIOR INFANTS

Parent Support Sheets

Lesson 8: Repairing Friendships

Lesson Summary:

During today's lesson, the children practised our Assertiveness Mantra and created solutions to "not okay" actions in friendships. They practised cooperative and assertiveness skills during a STEM activity, building a friendship house with their classmates.

Try It At Home Activity: "Friendship house"

This "Try It At Home" activity leads on from our "Friendship House" activity in class. We encourage you to sit with your child/the child in your care while they fill in their friendship house picture. Afterwards, we have listed some questions you can ask them to begin a discussion on the benefits and challenges of friendships.

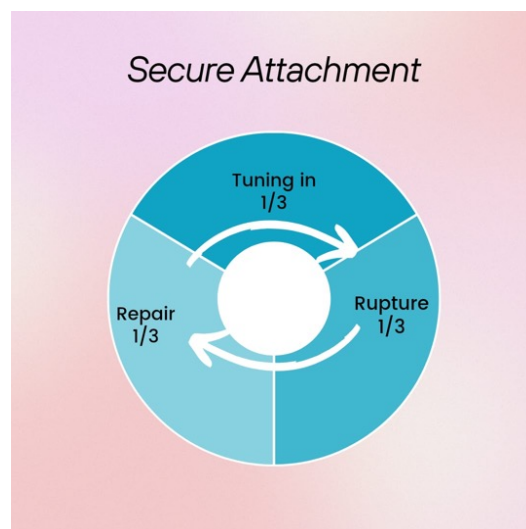
Dr. Malie and Linsey's Top Tips:

We can help our children to understand that all friendships can come with challenges, as we are all unique individuals with our own thoughts and feelings. By modelling healthy repair after ruptures in our own relationship with our child, we can help them to learn that this is a normal part of relationships. Dr. Malie describes a "Formula for Secure Attachment" below:

Formula for Secure Attachment

Infants develop a secure attachment when the parent is sensitive to their signals and responds appropriately to their needs in a "good enough" way. When I talk about "good enough" parenting and building a secure attachment with your child, I explain this formula so parents are clear that perfection is neither possible, nor is it desirable:

Secure attachment = 1/3 Tuning into your child + 1/3 Rupture + 1/3 Repair



Lesson 8: Repairing Friendships

1. **TUNING IN:** Attuning to your child/the child in your care's needs, or the "dance of attunement" is the basis of secure attachment. It relates to the parent/caregiver reading the need behind the child's behaviour, being with them in their big feelings, and taking the next step in a well-choreographed dance. It is this beautiful dance which creates a balanced relationship, introducing the child to a trustworthy world, enabling them to take risks and seek comfort from relationships. Attunement just needs to be "good enough" to help a child to feel safe and secure. As parents and caregivers, our ability to dance depends on our capacity to look after our wellbeing and our own experience of feeling soothed by another. This helps us to self-soothe, and improves our ability to read our child's cues. If we're feeling emotionally drained, we find the dance of attunement harder and we can end up mixing up the steps or not dancing at all!
2. **RUPTURE:** Relationship ruptures arise naturally in every family, and are the result of challenges in a parent and child reading and responding to each other's cues. Sometimes the child isn't communicating how they really feel, and sometimes the parent might be feeling overwhelmed, making it difficult to attune to each other. Ruptures happen in every human relationship; it's how we intentionally repair these which matters to children.
3. **REPAIR:** Repairs provide a valuable opportunity to strengthen our relationships with our children and models for them how healthy relationships work. There is such beauty in repairs. This is the fertile ground upon which you can help your child/the child in your care to understand what it means to be human, to make mistakes, and to make amends. Repair builds a new healthy brain pathway, where through a parent modelling a repair, the child learns to expect that repairs are possible in all relationships.

For example, if you think you could have managed a stressful situation with your child/the child in your care in a calmer way, there is huge power in you saying to them:

"I'm sorry I didn't listen / shouted at you / was impatient earlier, my feelings were very big at the time and taking a deep breath would have helped me to understand you better".

If possible, try not to follow your apology with "BUT you shouldn't have..." because that turns it into a reprimand rather than a repair moment. Explain your role, model calm and containment, and leave it at that. There is plenty of time for a "learning moment" again.

***Practical tip:** Given that ruptures happen in all relationships, help your child/the child in your care to explore how to repair difficulties with their siblings and friends and encourage them in their efforts.

Resources:

- Niall Breslin "Where is my Mind" podcast with Malie Coyne on Rupture and Repair:
<https://irepod.com/podcast/where-is-my-mind-5/rupture-and-repair-with-dr-malie-coyne>
- Ruptures and Repairs Trust-Based Relational Parenting Tips:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lwtgzkelY00>