



OAK FORWARD · FREE TOOLS

The Rupture Roadmap

What to do when a conversation goes sideways

What's actually happening

A rupture isn't the disagreement itself. It's what happens in the middle of it — the second a conversation with someone you love stops being "us figuring this out together" and turns into "me protecting myself." It can start over something tiny. It happens in every relationship, even the good ones. The problem was never that it happens. The problem is what most of us do next.

Here's the process I've had to relearn, over and over, in my own house.

— JONATHAN WORRALL

NOTICE



SLOW DOWN



PAUSE



REGULATE

1

Notice it's happening.

Awareness is the whole game. Before anything else, just recognize: *this is a rupture, right now*. You can't manage what you haven't noticed.

2

Slow down.

The moment you notice it, slow everything down. Make sure you're not about to react purely from emotion.

3

If either of you is activated, pause and take space.

You don't have to resolve this in the heat of it. If either person is reacting from emotion, that's the signal to step back — not push through.

4

Focus on yourself. Regulate first.

Get calm before you try to get close. Write, work out, walk — whatever gets you level. Take the time you actually need until you can show up thoughtful and considerate, not reactive.

Coming back together

GET CURIOUS



CHECK MOTIVE



UNDERSTAND



SHARE & VALIDATE

5

Get curious about them.

While you're taking that time — and once you've calmed — turn your attention outward. Get genuinely curious about what the other person is feeling, and why.

6

Check your motive before you reach out.

You'll feel the pull to call, text, talk — or to stonewall and avoid. Ask yourself the real question: what's this reach-out actually for? Are you texting to calm *yourself* down, or to check on *them*? That difference is real. If it's about you, don't send it yet.

7

Come back together to understand, not to win.

When you do come together, come with one goal: help the other person feel seen, heard, and emotionally safe. Let them share without retaliation, reaction, or having their own words used against them later.

8

Speak your own feelings, not accusations.

Once you understand their side, share yours — but in "I" language. "I felt hurt when ____" instead of "you hurt me." Small shift, completely different effect.

9

Validate, stay authentic, work toward something mutual.

The more you validate what they're feeling and understand where they're coming from — showing up authentic and non-accusatory — the easier it gets to find a solution that actually works for both of you.

ONE THING TO PRACTICE

Work on increasing your awareness of when a rupture is happening, then slow things down and walk through this process. It won't feel natural at first — it requires changing behavior and breaking old patterns, and honestly, it's something I still work through today. But the more aware I am, the better I can self-regulate. The better I self-regulate, the better I show up — for myself, and for the people I love. And what happens over time is that you and the people you love actually grow closer.