

Repairing Harm Age 15 Summary

Why Repairing Harm?

15-year-olds are redefining their identity as they contemplate upcoming adulthood. They are seeking independence, defining who they are and will be as they approach adulthood, and navigating how and by what principles they will make decisions. They will naturally test limits and break rules to understand where they draw boundaries. When they do, they require support on how to repair a relationship or item. After all, even adults struggle with the capacity to right a wrong. This skill is developed over time and requires a lot of practice.

STEP

1



Get Your Teen Thinking by Getting Their Input

- You can ask them about how they are feeling.
 - *"I noticed your face got red. So, when you said unkind things to your sister, were you frustrated?"*
 - *"I saw your friend leave you after school to talk with someone else. I wonder if you are feeling sad?"*
- You can also ask them about how they think others might be feeling.
 - *"Your sister cried when you said those unkind words to her. How might she be feeling?"*
 - *"When your friend walked away, how do you think they felt?"*
 - *"When you said that to me, how do you think that made me feel?"*

Trap: Remember that teens can be susceptible to any judgment. They will notice the tone and feeling behind your words. Avoid letting the question turn into an accusation. Remember to stay calm. Remind yourself that the goal of the question is to help your teen uncover feelings.

STEP

2



Teach New Skills

- Understanding your feelings and behaviors when your teen misbehaves is a great way to start. It will help you know what they are learning to do.
- Model behaviors (and your teens will notice and learn!).
- Teach positive behaviors. Teens need to learn the positive behavior that can replace inappropriate behavior.
- Establish logical consequences when expectations are not met.

- Practice deep breathing to calm down.
- Brainstorm coping strategies and make a list together, such as hugging a pillow, reading a favorite book, walking outside or riding a bike, getting a glass of water, talking to a friend, writing in a journal, or listening to music.
- Normalize expressing feelings. Teens need a safe, caring environment to share their feelings.
- Teach assertive communication through I-messages such as “*I feel _____ (insert feeling word) when you _____ (name the words or actions that upset you) because _____.*” “*I feel sad when you say hurtful things to your brother. It hurts his feelings.*”

Tip: Deep breathing removes the chemical that has flowed over your brain, allowing you to regain access to your creativity, language, and logic rather than staying stuck in your primal brain. Deep breathing with your teen can be a powerful tool anytime, anywhere when they feel overwhelmed with heated emotions.

Trap: Though it can sometimes feel like it, there are no “bad” emotions. Every feeling is a vital message from ourselves. Because feelings are instant, we always have the opportunity to reinterpret our response.

STEP
3



Practice to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Use “I know you can...” statements like “*I know you can make amends with your friend.*”
- Accept feelings (even ones you don’t like!): “*I hear you’re upset. What can you do to help yourself feel better?*”
- Offer limited and authentic choices. “*Do you want to talk to her directly or write her a note?*”
- Recognize effort: “*I notice how you went back to your sister to talk to her after you yelled at her. That’s how you heal the relationship.*”

Tip: After a tough day, your teen may be internally beating themselves up for what they did and said earlier. So, end the day with love. They need to hear that you love them NO MATTER WHAT on those days.

Trap: Don’t constantly repeat yourself when teens are angry or upset. Teens often need more time to calm down, regain perspective, and move on. Be sure to wait long enough for your teen to show you they can take steps to self-manage. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they can do what you need.

**STEP
4****Support Your Teen's Development and Success**

- Ask key questions to support their skills: *"You will see Julie today. You were upset about your last interaction. How will you repair the harm of your words yesterday?"*
- Learn about development. Each new age and stage will present differing challenges, including stress, frustration, and anger.
- Promote an "I can" belief. Teens must hear that you believe in their ability to mend their relationships.
- Support friendships. Close friends can be a source of empathy and support for teens.
- Follow through on logical consequences to repair harm when needed.

**STEP
5****Recognize Efforts**

- Notice even small successes: *"I noticed you fixed the neighbor's chair. That's taking responsibility."*
- Recognize small steps along the way.
- Build celebrations into your routine. Consider a hug when an effort to repair harm has been made.

Tip: Be specific. "Good job" does not carry much meaning. However, a specific compliment about a pointed behavior—"You took some deep breaths when you got frustrated. I love seeing that!"—can promote more of the same.

Trap: If you focus only on outcomes—"You didn't argue with your sister today," for example — you miss the chance to influence the process. It is better to say, *"You were helpful today. I appreciate that."*

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