Rupture and Repair
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NMAIMH competencies addressed:

Reflection
- Regularly examines own thoughts, feelings, strengths, and growth areas; discusses issues, concerns, actions to take with supervisor, consultants or peers
- Remains open and curious
- Uses reflective practice throughout work with infants/young children and families to understand own emotional response to infant/family work and to recognize areas for professional and/or personal development

Communicating
- Actively listens; asks questions for clarification

It is through repairing our relationships that we, as relational beings, grow.

What is this concept of rupture and why is it so important to repair it? A rupture is something that occurs within all relationships where there is an experience of discord, dissonance, disharmony, or disruption. For the supervisory relationship, the rupture can be defined as a breakdown in the collaborative process (Safran & Muran, 2006). Disruptions are inevitable in all relationships because it is impossible for one person to be completely attuned to another all of the time. Safran believes that repairs are particularly important because the rupture-repair process reflects the fundamental dilemma of human existence: the innate desire for relatedness and the reality of separateness.

In our work as reflective supervisors, we have ongoing opportunities to experience the pleasure that comes from true connections with the people we supervise. We also have the joy that occurs as we walk through the reflective process with others as they develop a greater understanding of themselves and the families they work with. Stress and/or tension can also occur in those relationships. That tension may occur, for example, when we rescue supervisees vs. empowering them to find their own answers, when we overidentify vs. being objective, or when we react to our supervisees from our own unrecognized issues or feelings. Within any of these examples is the potential for
miscommunication, misunderstanding and misattunement. As a supervisor you
may feel a lack of connection with your supervisee to be a clue that something is
going on. The supervisee may feel the tension and pull away even further,
adding to the lack of connection. The repair process focuses on recognizing the
signals of misattunement as the first step. After the recognition is clear, the next
steps are to acknowledge the error and explore the topics or feelings that
precipitated the rupture. Repair is a collaborative process, and although it can
be initiated by either participant, it is not uncommon for it to be initiated by the
supervisor. The repair, although difficult, can strengthen the relationship.
Anticipating and honoring differences creates an atmosphere that allows
disagreements to be openly explored (Johnston & Brinamen, 2006).

In *A Practical Guide To Reflective Supervision*, there are some suggested
guidelines for discussing difficult topics and guiding principles for repair of a
rupture. Repairing relationships can be scary, overwhelming and difficult, yet as
relationship-based humans, it is part of who we are and what we do.

**An Idea To Try...**

In reflecting on this rupture and repair process, think about a supervisee with
whom you are experiencing or have experienced some disharmony. What comes
up for you when you think about initiating a conversation with this person? Do
you have a pit in your stomach? Do you want to run and hide? Do you want to tell
that person off? Whatever feelings might come up are okay - it’s what you do
with them that is most important. What might you need to be able to have an
open, honest, reflective and respectful conversation with that person? Who can
help you in this process?

**References/Additional Resources**

Washington, DC: Zero to Three.