From Explanation to Repair

A structured communication process for understanding intent, acknowledging impact, reducing defensiveness, accepting responsibility, and planning meaningful repair.

COMPREHENSIVE CLINICIAN PACKAGE

Included	Designed for
Clinician guide and implementation sequence	Individual, couples, family, group, leadership, and restorative conversations when participation is voluntary and conditions are sufficiently safe.
Comprehensive adult/client worksheets	Individual, group, community, or case-management use
Adolescent adaptation where appropriate	Use with clinical judgment and developmental adaptation
Processing questions and progress review	Session use or structured between-session practice
One-page client quick sheet	Printable and digitally fillable

Professional scope and safety

This original educational resource supports professional conversation, reflection, skills practice, service planning, and documentation. It is not a validated assessment, diagnostic instrument, psychotherapy protocol, treatment-plan substitute, risk assessment, crisis plan, or emergency intervention. Clinicians and programs are responsible for determining appropriateness, obtaining consent, adapting language, protecting confidentiality, and following applicable laws, ethical standards, agency policies, and supervision requirements.

Do not use this worksheet to delay emergency evaluation or mandated action. If there is concern about imminent danger, abuse, neglect, exploitation, grave disability, medical instability, or another urgent safety issue, follow local emergency and organizational procedures.

Original content and permitted use

Clinician Guide

From Explanation to Repair helps participants distinguish explaining intent from repairing impact. It supports accountability, perspective-taking, boundaries, concrete repair, and follow-through without requiring self-condemnation or automatic agreement with every interpretation.

Best-fit uses

- Preparing for or processing a difficult conversation
- Identifying the difference between intent, behavior, impact, and responsibility
- Reducing defensive communication
- Developing specific apology and repair language
- Clarifying boundaries and observable follow-through

Use additional caution or choose another tool when

- There is intimidation, coercive control, stalking, active violence, retaliation risk, or a major power imbalance that makes direct repair unsafe
- One person is being pressured to forgive, reconcile, disclose, or accept blame
- The worksheet could interfere with mandated reporting, investigation, legal advice, workplace procedure, or specialized domestic-violence response
- A participant is too activated, intoxicated, impaired, or unwilling to participate voluntarily

Suggested implementation sequence

1. Assess safety and purpose
Clarify whether direct conversation is appropriate and what outcome is realistically sought.

2. Describe the event
Use specific behavior and context rather than character judgments.

3. Separate intent and impact
Allow intent to provide context without treating it as proof that no harm occurred.

4. Identify defensiveness
Notice explaining, minimizing, counterattacking, withdrawing, or demanding immediate forgiveness.

5. Clarify responsibility
Name what can be owned without overclaiming or accepting inaccurate allegations.

6. Design repair
Choose actions that address impact, restore reliability, or prevent repetition.

7. Follow through and review
Evaluate behavior over time rather than relying only on words.

Suggested processing questions

- What are you hoping the other person understands?
- What observable behavior is being discussed?
- How did intent differ from impact?
- What part can be acknowledged without qualification?
- What would repair look like to each person?
- What boundary remains even if reconciliation does not occur?
- What evidence over time would demonstrate meaningful change?

Conceptual influences

Conceptual influences include therapeutic communication, restorative practices, accountability, emotion regulation, and conflict-repair principles. This original worksheet is not mediation, legal advice, forensic evaluation, or a substitute for specialized violence intervention.

1. Clarify the Event and Purpose

Use one specific interaction. Determine whether direct repair is safe and appropriate.

What happened - observable words, actions, timing, and context

What I intended, hoped, feared, or was trying to accomplish

What impact was reported or observed - emotional, relational, practical, or safety-related

What I want from this process - understanding, accountability, boundary, repair, closure, or another outcome

2. Identify the Defensive Cycle

Defensiveness is understandable, but it can prevent accurate listening and responsible action.

Responses that appeared

- [ ] Explaining quickly
- [ ] Minimizing
- [ ] Counterattacking
- [ ] Blaming context
- [ ] Demanding proof
- [ ] Withdrawing
- [ ] Changing topic
- [ ] Apologizing to end conflict
- [ ] Seeking reassurance
- [ ] Other

What I was protecting when I became defensive

How my defensive response affected the conversation

What I did not fully hear or acknowledge

What would help me stay present without accepting something inaccurate

3. Responsibility Without Self-Condemnation

Responsibility focuses on conduct, choices, effects, and future action - not global worth.

What I can clearly acknowledge

What remains uncertain, disputed, or requires clarification

Context that matters but does not erase responsibility

Boundary between healthy accountability and excessive/self-destructive blame

4. Build the Repair Statement

A repair statement should be specific, impact-aware, and supported by action.

Acknowledgment: What I did or failed to do

Impact: What I understand about how this affected you or the situation

Responsibility: What I can own without excuse or counterattack

Repair: What I will do now

Prevention: What I will change, practice, or monitor

Respect for autonomy: What choice, time, space, or boundary belongs to the other person

5. Follow-Through and Evidence of Change

Repair is evaluated through consistent behavior, not pressure for immediate forgiveness.

Specific action, responsible person, and completion date

Support, skill, supervision, treatment, or environmental change needed

How progress will be observed without surveillance or coercion

When and how follow-up will occur

What happens if the agreement is not followed

Adolescent Adaptation

Use developmentally appropriate language and avoid forcing face-to-face repair. Adults should model accountability and maintain appropriate authority without humiliation.

Use with developmental and family-system awareness

- Clarify whether the young person has a real choice about participation
- Separate rule enforcement from emotional coercion
- Do not require forgiveness, affection, or public apology
- Consider peer, family, school, online, and cultural context
- Follow safety and reporting requirements

What happened - words and actions, not labels

What I meant or wanted

How the other person may have experienced it

What I can honestly take responsibility for

What I can do to repair or prevent a repeat

Adult support without taking over

Adults should use the same standards: describe behavior, acknowledge impact, avoid humiliation, offer appropriate choices, and demonstrate follow-through.

Progress Review and Clinical Integration

Use this page to review what changed, what remained difficult, and what should happen next. Avoid treating worksheet completion as proof of clinical improvement.

What did the client notice or understand that was not clear before?

What skill, action, referral, support, or environmental change was attempted?

What was the observable result? Include client-reported benefit, burden, or unintended effect.

What barriers, cultural factors, accessibility needs, risks, or contextual pressures affected the result?

What should be continued, modified, stopped, or referred for additional support?

Clinical documentation note: objective summary, client voice, intervention, response, and follow-up plan.

A Five-Part Repair Conversation

Use only when a direct conversation is appropriate and sufficiently safe.

1. ACKNOWLEDGE - What did I do or fail to do?

2. IMPACT - What impact can I recognize without debating intent?

3. RESPONSIBILITY - What can I own clearly?

4. REPAIR - What specific action can address the impact?

5. PREVENTION - What will change, and how will follow-through be visible?

BOUNDARY - What choice, time, space, or limit belongs to the other person?

Use this page as a conversation and reflection aid. It is not a diagnosis, assessment, safety plan, or substitute for individualized professional care.