



Attuned Rupture Repair

Speaking for the Baby Campaign

The attuned-rupture-repair cycle describes the everyday experiences in relationships of connection, disconnection and reconnection.

Parents and babies cycle through this process many times across the day (and night!). Successfully navigating this cycle strengthens bonds by building trust that when things become wobbly, stability can be found again with each other.

Attuned

An attuned state is a connected state; connected by being 'in tune with' each other. In the context of babies, it is the parent's responsibility to attune to their baby, rather than expecting the baby to attune to the parent. This means the parent observes and interprets how the baby is feeling and reacts accordingly. Through attunement, the parent and baby share an emotional bond, and the parent is able to recognise and participate in the baby's emotional state, whether it is happiness or distress. Here's an example of attunement in this illustration showing mum and baby enjoying each other with tickles.

Rupture

Attunement is not a permanent or continuous state. Instead, being tuned in with another person occurs in fleeting moments, and naturally comes to an end. This ending is often in the form of a rupture. A rupture is an inevitable moment of misunderstanding or misalignment that causes a disconnection. Some ruptures are mild, like little misunderstandings, other ruptures can be big like conflict.

Attuned-Rupture-Repair Cycle

Attuned



Attuned-Rupture-Repair Cycle

Rupture



Attuned-Rupture-Repair Cycle

Repair



In this next illustration we see that baby needs a break from playing and interacting with mum; baby cues mum by turning their head away and closing their eyes. Baby is trying to downregulate from the stimulation of play. Mum misses the cue and continues tickling and making demands on baby to look at her. Mum's response is understandable because they were having a good time together and she wants it to continue. But baby needs a break to recover and has clearly signalled mum.

Repair

When baby continues to look away, mum realises what baby needs and shifts into the repair moments. She provides opportunity for emotional reconnection (the repair) by slowing down and respecting baby's need for a break. She places her hand on their chest. All of this provides soothing comfort for baby, allowing them to recover before coming back to mum for another cycle of attuned connection.

The Importance of Rupture and Repair in Relationships

The rupture and repair cycle plays a crucial role in maintaining healthy relationships. Whenever we experience moments of misunderstanding or disconnection with another person, it becomes important to seek opportunities to reconnect. This process creates a healing moment and communicates the message: 'oops, we got off track, but we can get back on track again'.

Ruptures are simply a part of life. It is natural that we will not always understand our babies perfectly—sometimes they are hard to read. There will inevitably be occasions, even in small ways, when we misunderstand, or cannot attend to baby's needs as quickly or as effectively as we would like.

Repair is the antidote and strengthens trust in the relationship.

Most parents are quite good at repairing and reconnecting with their baby after a misunderstanding or when they haven't been able to meet their baby's needs. This process helps to comfort the baby and forms a solid foundation of trust.

Parents can support this process by following their baby's lead and observing their behaviour. Babies will show signs when something has changed for them or when they need something different.

As time goes on, parents become more skilled at reading their baby's cues. With experience, recognising moments of rupture—those brief disconnections—becomes more straightforward. Practicing repair and reconnection can also become easier as parents learn how to comfort and meet their baby's needs, opening the way for genuine reconnection.



Written and created by **Dr Bronwyn Leigh** with illustrations by **Jess Racklyeft** for the **Centre for Perinatal Psychology**