

FRICTION

INTERPERSONAL The Two-Word Reset

The Experiment: The Repair Rehearsal

Duration: One week

Time required: 2-3 minutes of preparation, 5 minutes for reflection (per conversation)

Goal: Practice this now, so “I’m sorry” is available to you later, especially when you’re tired, embarrassed, or defensive.

Step One: Pick Your Repeat Rupture

Write one sentence that starts with: “When I’m under pressure, I tend to . . .”

Examples: *interrupt, get terse, go silent, correct people publicly, multitask while someone’s talking, yell.*

Step Two: Write Three Apology Versions (10 Seconds / 60 Seconds / 10 Minutes)

You’re building muscle memory.

The 10-second reset (in the moment): “I’m sorry—I just [behavior]. That wasn’t okay. Let me try that again.”

The 60-second repair (soon after): “I want to name something: I [behavior] in [context]. I’m sorry. That likely landed as [impact guess]. What did it land like for you? And what would help repair this?”

The 10-minute repair (bigger miss): “I’ve been thinking about [specific moment]. I’m sorry for [behavior] and for the impact it had. I’m not going to explain it away. Here’s what I’m going to do now to repair: [concrete action]. And here’s what I’m changing going forward: [specific commitment]. Is there anything I’m missing?”

Step Three: Rehearse the Delivery Like a Leader, Not a Defendant

Before you speak, do two slow exhales and drop your shoulders. Your job is to send “safe enough” through your tone, pacing, and face, not just your words.

Step Four: Add One Question

Choose one:

- “What did that land like for you?”
- “What would help here?”

Then listen without correcting their experience.

Step Five: Close the Loop Within a Week

Follow up: “I said I would do X. I did it. Is there anything else you need from me on this?”

This is where trust starts to come back.