



The Relationship Rescue Blueprint

How to Reboot Trust, Respect, & Compassion in 30-Seconds or Less

To say that we experience resistance, disagreement, and conflict in our lives is hardly surprising. To suggest we welcome these kinds of obstacles with open arms and glad hearts is another matter. It's easy to dream of a life liberated from the stress and strife of discord, dissent, and defiance. Yet, where would we be without challenges in our lives?

Think about it. What if, in your very first year, you figured that taking your first step was just too hard? If learning to talk or play with others was a bridge too far? If you decided to shun anyone who wasn't *exactly* like you?

It's easy to see moments of resistance, disagreement, and conflict as unpleasant inevitabilities we want to snuff out and flush as quickly as possible. But what if, in our rush to vanquish our foes, we deprive ourselves of opportunities to learn more about ourselves and those we care for most? If we miss out on refining our understanding of the world and our experience of it?

The Relationship Rescue Blueprint starts from the premise that something of great importance to us can be found at the core of *every* interaction we experience.

Momentous interactions bringing us pleasure and joy. Everyday interactions all but slipping past our awareness. Disruptive interactions where misunderstanding, opposition, and discord rule the day. We will learn *something* from them all. *What* we learn depends on our expectations, intentions, and mindset.

You've heard about people growing through adversity? This is about that.

The Relationship Rescue Blueprint walks you through a 3-step process for replacing old reactions of arguing, avoiding, and abdicating with new responses rooted in curiosity, confidence, and compassion. In the Blueprint's first step, **SPEAK YOUR HEART**, you create a link between where you're starting and where you want to go. In the second step, **EXPRESS VULNERABILITY**, you model the kind of behavior and intentions you're aiming for in your upcoming conversation. And with the last step, **CALL TO ACTION**, you extend your invitation to get going right now.

While this Blueprint leaves the details of the subsequent conversation up to you, a few helpful tips for following through are provided at the end to get you started and keep you on track.

When it comes down to it, your goal is simple: to improve a relationship that has recently suffered a setback. If that describes where you are right now, then **The Relationship Rescue Blueprint** is for you.

Step 1: SPEAK YOUR HEART

In this first step you create a link between where you're starting and where you want to go:

1. You begin by expressing regret for what happened in your last conversation. Expressing regret is different from apologizing or taking responsibility for what happened. It's simply a matter of saying you'd like for something to have turned out differently. How would your short and sweet version of the following go if this applies to you?

I'm sorry how our last conversation went.

If you *were* responsible for how that last conversation went – if it really was all on you, then this is where you'll want to be taking clear ownership for what happened. Again, stay short and sweet. There will always be room to express the depth of your regret and remorse once you've completed initiating this conversation. For now, try something straightforward, like "I apologize for how our last conversation went."

2. Acknowledge the best intentions of the person you're speaking with. Whatever words may have been last exchanged in the heat of the moment, let them know that, at the end of the day, you trust their motives and end purpose. How would you feel most comfortable expressing the following?

I know you mean well and only want what's best.

Suppose this is something you find uncomfortable or unable to. If so, this may not be the conversation you want to have at the moment. Instead, consider how your trust was compromised – and what accountability steps you may need to be completed to regain confidence in their intentions.

3. Express appreciation for your relationship and share *your* best intentions. What's the nature of your relationship? Is this person your friend? Your son? A business partner? What's the quality of this relationship that you appreciate most when it's at its very best? Where do you want it to go? What's the subsequent significant development you'd like to see?

You're a <great/dear/...> <friend/sister/...>, and I want to do everything I can to make sure that we continue getting along better than ever.

Here's the complete *SPEAK YOUR HEART* step of the Blueprint. What's your version?

I'm sorry how our last conversation went. I know you mean well and only want what's best. You're a <great/dear/...> <friend/sister/...>, and I want to do everything I can to make sure that we continue getting along better than ever.

Step 2: EXPRESS VULNERABILITY

In this second step, you model the kind of behavior and intentions you're aiming for in your upcoming conversation:

1. Take a moment to reflect upon how, all things considered, you would have preferred to have handled your part in your recent conversation. This isn't the

time to find justifications or excuses for your inability to lead the conversation to the kind of conclusion you'd have preferred. No matter what you encountered in the course of that discussion, you're considering it from the perspective that you remain completely responsible for your thoughts, words, intentions, emotions, and actions.

The person you'll be speaking with may or may not be able to share this perspective. That's up to them. Whatever their understanding may be, this is an opportunity for you to show them what someone taking ownership of their responsibilities looks and feels like.

Given your reason for completing **The Relationship Rescue Blueprint**, chances are that you would prefer to have handled yourself differently during your last conversation. So, how does your version of the following go?

I'm not happy with how I reacted the last time we spoke.

2. Give the words you've just written depth and nuance by briefly saying what precisely you were unsatisfied with about your behavior. The level of detail is up to you – just keep it brief. The example below gives a couple of possibilities. Alternatively, you might go for something even more simple and straightforward, like "I over-reacted."

One thing to consider avoiding is mentioning your emotional reaction. Saying something like "I became furious" easily triggers a defensive reaction along the line of "It's not my fault if you got angry!" You want to go for something uncontroversial. So clearly, saying something like "You made me really angry" is a total non-starter.

Once done, you want to wrap up by expressing the positive outcome you would have preferred, leading to your version of the following:

I started <arguing/turning off/making it all about me/> when what I really wanted to do was find out what you want and help if needed.

Here's the complete *EXPRESS VULNERABILITY* step of the Blueprint. What's it in your own words?

I'm not happy with how I reacted the last time we spoke. I started <arguing/turning off/making it all about me> when what I really wanted to do was find out what you want and help if needed.

Step 3: CALL TO ACTION

In this last step, you extend your invitation to get going right now:

1. Your last step is to make your current intention of taking a second shot at your conversation explicit. How would you say the following?

I'd still like to do that if it's good with you.

2. For your follow-up conversation to have any chance of success, you're going to need their buy-in. Here's where, in your own words, you open that door...

Does that seem like a possibility?

Here's the complete CALL TO ACTION step of the Blueprint. How does your version go?

I'd still like to do that if it's good with you. Does that seem like a possibility?

Here's **The Relationship Rescue Blueprint** version in full. What's yours?

I'm sorry how our last conversation went. I know you mean well and only want what's best. You're a <great/...> <friend/sister/...>, and I want to do everything I can to ensure that we continue getting along better than ever.

I'm not happy with how I reacted the last time we spoke. I started <arguing/turning off/making it all about me> when what I really wanted to do was find out what you want and help if needed.

I'd still like to do that if it's good with you. Does that seem like a possibility?

BONUS:

The Relationship Rescue Blueprint Follow-Up Tips

1. Perhaps the best single tip to keep in mind is for you to focus on listening. Think of yourself as a human vacuum cleaner. You want to suck up everything this person is thinking and what they're looking to achieve.
2. So listen. Just take it all in, whatever it is, without judgment. Your person may be surprisingly perceptive. They may be totally out to lunch. Their words may sound naive, calloused, or downright insulting – it doesn't matter: you want to get the good, the bad, and the ugly out into the light of day.
3. When they're done speaking, ask for clarification on anything you don't understand or agree with. Ensure you have a clear understanding at any step by paraphrasing what you understood and accepting any corrections offered.
If necessary, consider bringing in your inner 3-year old, the one that keeps asking "Why?" each time an answer is given. You want to find the underlying motives behind whatever you're unsure of or uncomfortable with. Keep asking until you hear something you get and value. Your foremost goal is to establish common ground from which you'll be able to collaborate together.
Once all your questions are answered, keep asking if there's anything else they want to say until the answer is "No."
4. Remember that you're not obligated to get everything sorted out in a single conversation. If you feel ready to follow through with any feedback in a way that respects the intentions, you've established in your version of **The Relationship Rescue Blueprint**, go for it. If not, let them know you appreciate their words, and they've given you a lot to think about. You look forward to following up with them once you've had an opportunity to show their words the consideration they deserve.
5. To wrap up, consider thanking them for taking you up on your call to action and invite them to share any further thoughts that may come up later. If possible and applicable, suggest a follow-up date.