

The Parent I Couldn't Be:  
*Repairing Bonds After Rupture or Neglect*  
Video Course  
Dafna Lender, LCSW

Video Course  
CPD hours: 6



Online video access remains available for 1 year or 3 years from the date you receive the video course, depending on the ticket type.

*Sarah's phone buzzed with a text that made her stomach drop: "You catastrophically failed me as a mother. I'm done."*

*It wasn't the first time her 23-year-old daughter Emma had said something cutting, but this felt different. Final. Sarah stared at the message, remembering the little girl who used to crawl into her bed during thunderstorms, paint pictures of rainbow families, and once say, "Mommy, you're my best friend."*

*"I don't even know when it all went wrong," she whispered in her first therapy session. "We used to be so close. But somewhere along the way... every conversation became a battlefield. She pulls away, I chase harder. I try to explain myself, she gets angrier. I feel like I'm losing her completely."*

*Sarah wasn't alone in this struggle. Down the hall, another parent was facing her teenage son's fury over the years she'd spent drinking instead of showing up to his games. Across town, a couple sat in marriage counselling, their bond fraying under the strain of opposite parenting styles that left their children caught in the middle. And in yet another room, a mother and her 14-year-old daughter, still living together, barely made eye contact—every exchange escalating into a shouting match.*

*Different stories. Same truth: despite their love, these parents felt they had failed their children and no longer knew how to bridge the gap.*

### **The Hidden Epidemic: Parental Rupture in the Therapy Room**

Therapists encounter them in every practice: parents whose relationships with their children have become sources of profound pain rather than connection.

**These are not "bad parents" — they are often wounded parents, carrying their own histories of trauma, addiction, anxiety, or emotional absence. They may still live with their children or have long since been cut off. But they share a terrible recognition: their own wounds, limitations, or failures have damaged the very relationships they most treasure.**



And here's the challenge: conventional therapeutic approaches often prove insufficient when the damage feels entrenched, when children have learned to protect themselves by pulling away, when every attempt at repair seems to deepen the rupture.

The neurobiological reality is that children's nervous systems are exquisitely attuned to parental regulation. When parents operate from chronic dysregulation—whether through hyperactivation (urgency, desperation) or hypoactivation (collapse, shame)—children adapt by creating protective distance. This is not pathology; it is survival.

### **Beyond Behavioural Fixes: Repairing at the Nervous System Level**

Traditional therapeutic approaches often focus on communication skills, boundary negotiation, or insight-based processing. While valuable, these presuppose a foundation of nervous system safety that may not exist in ruptured relationships.

Before language, before insight, before reconciliation — there is regulation.

**Polyvagal theory** (Porges, 2011) explains how neuroception — the unconscious detection of safety or threat — governs all relational engagement. **Interpersonal neurobiology** (Siegel, 2012) shows that connection is embodied through nervous system states. And research in **earned security** (Roisman et al., 2002) confirms that adults can move toward secure attachment through sustained attunement and co-regulation — even decades after the original rupture.

### **IAFT-informed Post-Rupture Repair approach**

Dafna Lender's model recognises that repair requires more than good intentions — it demands targeted skills that most therapists have never been taught:

- **Regulation-First Intervention** – Stabilising the parent's nervous system before relational repair is attempted.
- **Trauma-Informed Accountability** – Helping parents take responsibility without sliding into shame or defensive reactivity.
- **Developmental Attunement** – Understanding the child's protective strategies as adaptive, not defiant.
- **Strategic Reconnection** – Rebuilding trust incrementally, whether the child lives at home or apart.

### **What You Will Learn**

Across two evenings, you will gain advanced, actionable skills for guiding parents through the emotionally charged process of repairing bonds after rupture:

- **Identify rupture typologies** — distinguish between neglect, emotional unavailability, and conflict-based distancing and adapt interventions accordingly.
- **Assess the parent's regulation baseline** — spot patterns of hyperactivation (chasing, over-explaining) and hypoactivation (withdrawal, shame collapse) that sabotage repair attempts.
- **Work with defensive narratives** — help parents move from self-justification or blame toward an integrated narrative that takes responsibility while sustaining hope.
- **Decode the child's protective stance** — reframe withdrawal, silence, or anger as adaptive self-protection rather than rejection, creating space for empathy.
- **Apply regulation-first repair techniques** — teach parents to initiate contact only from a grounded, non-demanding state, using micro-interactions to rebuild trust.



- **Use “attunement pivots” in real time** — interrupt misattuned moments during sessions to model co-regulation and corrective emotional experiences.
- **Integrate developmental attunement** — tailor repair strategies to the child’s age, developmental stage, and current relational capacity.
- **Manage grief over “time lost” — supporting parents in acknowledging missed years while staying engaged in present repair**
- **Navigate co-parenting fractures** — work with couples whose differing parenting styles have contributed to rupture, creating a united approach to repair.

By the end of this training, you will be equipped to confidently hold space for high-stakes, high-emotion repair work — even when history, hurt, and mistrust run deep.

### About Dafna Lender

Dafna Lender, LCSW, is one of the foremost authorities in attachment-based reparative work. A certified trainer in Theraplay® and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), she has spent over 25 years working with families others had written off. Her IAPT-informed Post-Rupture Repair approach synthesises the precision of attachment science with the courage to remain present in the face of profound relational pain.

### The Clinical Imperative

This work serves a large but underserved clinical population: parents who recognise their failures and want to repair, but lack the nervous system capacity to create the safety repair requires. Whether the child is 5 or 35, whether the relationship is strained but ongoing or completely severed, the same principle applies — regulation enables relationship.

### Returning to Sarah

Sarah’s breakthrough came not from finding the perfect words, but from learning to regulate before engaging with Emma. Instead of chasing harder when Emma pulled away, she offered steady presence without demand.

Her first regulated message was simple: *“I’m thinking of you. No response needed. I’m learning to be a different kind of mother.”*

Emma didn’t reply immediately. But she didn’t block the number either. Three weeks later: *“I see you’re trying.”* Not forgiveness — not yet — but a shift. The first crack in the wall.

Because the most profound repair often begins not with apologies, but with parents learning to become the secure base they never were — no matter how late in the story that transformation happens.

### Transform Your Clinical Practice

These are the clients who test the limits of our therapeutic optimism—parents whose pain runs deep, whose regret feels overwhelming, whose hope flickers even as it refuses to die. They arrive in our offices carrying years of accumulated failure, desperate for guidance that most therapeutic approaches cannot provide.

This training offers you the clinical sophistication and neurobiological precision required to accompany them into territory that conventional practice often deems impossible. To maintain therapeutic faith when the relational narrative appears concluded. To guide transformation when others see only irreparable damage.



Working with ruptured parent-child relationships demands specialized competencies that most training programs simply do not address. Dafna's IAFT-informed Post-Rupture Repair approach provides a systematic, evidence-based methodology for navigating this complex clinical terrain—whether you're supporting individual parents, working with couples whose parenting conflicts threaten their marriage, or facilitating actual repair conversations between parents and children.

**Join us live and discover how to help parents not only recognize their failures but transform them into the foundation for deeper connection than they ever thought possible.**

#### **About the speaker**

**Dafna Lender, LCSW** is an international trainer and supervisor for practitioners who work with children and families. She is a certified trainer and supervisor/consultant in both Theraplay and Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP), as well as an EMDR therapist. Dafna's expertise is drawn from 25 years of working with families with attachment in many settings: at-risk after school programs, therapeutic foster care, in-home crisis stabilization, residential care and private practice. Dafna's style, whether as a therapist or teacher, is combining the light-hearted with the profound by bringing a playful, intense and passionate presence to every encounter.

Dafna is author of Integrative Attachment Family Therapy (2023) and the co-author of Theraplay the Practitioner's Guide (2020). She teaches and supervises clinicians in 15 countries in 4 languages: English, Hebrew, French and Spanish.

Dafna has been teaching about the polyvagal theory and the use of social engagement system since May 2020. This includes co-teaching a workshop with Dr. Stephen Porges in May 2020 and with Peter Levine at the Somatic Experiencing Conference May 2022. Dafna instructs clinicians and parents to apply polyvagal theory in a practical way to increase self-compassion, co-regulation and connection between dyads. Dafna incorporates Polyvagal theory as part of the Level Two Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy training as well as in her teaching of Integrative Attachment Family Therapy.

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