Breakout 2 — Parenting Skills — Training in Love, Repairing in Grace

One sentence for the board: Children do not need a perfect parent. They need a present, consistent parent who repairs honestly when they get it wrong.

Purpose	Build practical parenting skills for recovery — structure, consistency, calm discipline, connection, and honest repair — for clients who are parenting now, parenting from a distance, or preparing to reunite with their children.
Who chooses this group	Curriculum groups meet separately for men and for women. Breakout groups are coed unless otherwise specified. Placement for participants who do not fit a men/women split follows the participant's stated preference, confirmed with staff for safety and privacy. Nothing about a participant's placement is disclosed to the group. Any participant who is a parent, grandparent in a parenting role, expectant parent, or working toward reunification. No participant is asked about custody, court, or case status in group. The stated preference stands unless a stated safety reason requires a private conversation. Safety and privacy are the only criteria.
Length	60 minutes
Materials	Paper and pens for every client, whiteboard or flip chart and markers, and the topic resources named in this outline

Time	Segment	What happens
0–5 min	Welcome	Ground rules, confidentiality limits, right to pass.
5–30 min	Teaching	Connection before correction, structure and consistency, calm discipline, and repair.
30–45 min	Discussion	Prompts below, focused on practices — not on anyone's case

		or custody situation.
45–55 min	Practice — one routine, one repair	Clients design one daily routine and draft one repair conversation in writing.
55–60 min	Close	Takeaways, any staff follow-up promised is noted.

Teaching points

- Connection comes before correction. A child who feels seen and safe can hear guidance. Spend connection on purpose — meals, play, listening without a phone in hand — before the moments that require discipline.
- Structure is love made visible. Predictable routines for waking, meals, school, homework, and bedtime lower conflict for children and for the parent in recovery, whose own day also holds steadier inside structure.
- Consistency beats intensity. A few clear household expectations, stated calmly in advance, with known and proportionate consequences, followed through every time — that teaches more than a loud reaction delivered once.
- Discipline means teaching, not venting. Correct the behavior, name the expectation, keep your voice and body calm, and separate the child's worth from the child's action: “You are loved. That choice is not how we do things here. Here is what happens next.”
- Repair is a skill, and children learn it by watching it. When — not if — you lose your temper, miss a promise, or return to an old pattern, go back: name what you did without excuses, say you are sorry, state what you will do differently, and follow through. An honest repair builds more trust than a pretense of perfection.
- Parent at the distance you actually have. A call kept, a letter sent, a visit shown up for sober and on time — consistency in small kept promises is the work of reunification, wherever a family is in that process. Facilitators teach the parenting; they do not advise on any court or case matter.

Discussion prompts

- “What is one routine that made you feel safe as a child — or one you wish you had had?”
- “Where does discipline go wrong most often: unclear expectations, inconsistent follow-through, or a parent's own exhaustion? What helps each one?”
- “What does a good repair actually sound like, word for word?”
- “What is one small promise to a child that a parent can keep this week, exactly as promised?”

Practice — one routine, one repair (10 minutes)

1. Write one daily routine you will build or strengthen: the time, the steps, and what could knock it off course — and your plan for that.

2. Draft one repair in writing: what happened (no excuses), the apology, what will be different, and the follow-through you can actually deliver.
3. Volunteers may read a draft aloud for group feedback on wording. No one reads about a real child by name.

Check with staff/counselor before acting on any repair draft, especially where safety, court, or a no-contact order is involved. No amend contacts unless a reviewer clears a specific one. Never role-play a real victim.

Facilitator boundaries — Parenting Skills

- Never ask about or comment on custody, visitation, court dates, or case plans. Refer those questions to the client's own case contacts and program staff.
- If a client shares something that suggests a child may be unsafe, follow program procedure and any reporting duty that applies — the same day. Do not investigate in group.
- **Warrior close:** Close in grace: "You cannot parent yesterday again. You can parent today — present, consistent, and quick to repair. That is how trust is rebuilt: one kept day at a time."

Sources & Evidence

Clinical evidence: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Essentials for Parenting — evidence-informed parenting practices including positive communication, structure, and discipline that teaches. Strengthening Families Program — a family skills program with an evidence base in prevention and family strengthening; named here as background for the structure-and-connection approach, with no outcome promised for this group.

Recovery-support evidence: SAMHSA. Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Family Therapy. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series 39 — family involvement, support for recovery, and relapse-prevention planning with family where appropriate and safe.

Note: No outcome is promised for any group in this packet.