

# FIXING FRACTURES

The background of the cover is a dark, textured blue. On the right side, there is a large illustration of a broken ceramic jar. The jar is primarily blue and white, with intricate gold-colored repair lines (kintsugi style) tracing the cracks. A large, jagged hole is visible in the side of the jar. Above the jar, a wooden lid with a woven pattern is shown. At the bottom of the cover, several broken shards of the jar are scattered on a dark, flat surface.

*Restoring  
shattered  
relationships  
in business  
and in life*

**Douglas R. Bouey**  
realized with Lois Wozney

*foreword by Susan Scott,  
author of 'Fierce Conversations'*

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at [Douglas@DougBouey.com](mailto:Douglas@DougBouey.com)

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Edited by	Lois Wozney
Artwork by	Alejandro Anaya
Layout by	Jana Rade

## Foreword

I was incredibly honored when Doug invited me to write the foreword to this wonderful book. And it IS wonderful. There is so much pain from fractured relationships, when trust is lacking. When we've lost a relationship that was important and valuable, the aftermath is ongoing and deadly. Thoughts about the loss distracts us, dominates our thoughts, hurts, even makes us sick, literally. If we pretend it's in the past and we can just move on without a backward glance, our failure to do our best to regain the relationship feels like an integrity outage. And this is true for all those around us... within our companies, our families. The "wound" is real and is in the way.

Those familiar with my work know that I believe our most valuable currency isn't money, charisma, fluency in 3-letter acronyms, or pedigree. Our most valuable currency is relationship – emotional capital – which we gain or lose, one conversation at a time. In fact, the conversation *is* the relationship. In *Fixing Fractures*, Doug provides a clear and compelling roadmap for the needed conversation, not only to restore a relationship that fell off the cliff, but to greatly enrich it, improve it, deepen it.

This book is for anyone – that would be you and me – who wants to resolve a difficult, daunting, persistent and occasionally volatile issue with someone important to their success and happiness.

And may I add that I love the way Doug writes. This is not a dry book with a professorial tone. It is human, real and often humorous. You'll learn about "sucker's tennis", be warned about a "flight into health" and enjoy such wisdom as: **"We don't teach this to provide you with tools for more enlightened blaming!"**

Heaping handfuls of gratitude for this book, Doug!

**Susan Scott**

*June 2021*

FierceInc.com

Facebook: Susan Scott Fierce

Fierce Conversations – Achieving Success at Work & in Life,  
One Conversation at a Time

Fierce Leadership – A Bold Alternative to the Worst "Best"  
Practices in Business Today

Fierce Love – Creating a Love That Lasts, One Conversation  
at a Time (January 2022)

“In nature, the evolution of growth and life cannot continue without differences and opposition. Yet the root cause of most failures in relationships and organizations is our inability to relate to these natural forces in a positive and effective way.



We relate to:  
change as a threat  
differences as a problem  
opposition as an attack

We relate poorly to each other because we relate poorly to the processes of nature.”

–*John Konstanturos*

## An invitation

Friends: we come together for a solemn and noble purpose  
– to liberate good people from prison.

It's a prison two people entered after something happened. They had been parties in an important relationship – one that was very meaningful to both. But there was a misfire, and their formerly free and easy association broke down. Walls came up. Positive interactions were either cut off or became hard labor. There seemed to be no chance for it to change. It was bad and set to stay that way.

Relationships between humans that work well are key to constructive living. When they go sideways, they get messy, crabbed, fraught with angry grudges, feuds, impasses, resentment, regret, guilt... Most of us have experienced the sudden chill of a damaged bond with someone who matters. Have you? Few of us have learned how to fully restore a fractured relationship to one that's whole and vibrant.

Do you find yourself no longer able to interact easily with a certain colleague, relative, friend? Is there a business player with whom you shared a mission but who has broken with you? Has someone you were once close to become standoffish or distant? If so, you're only human. And if you mourn that loss and want to do something about it, you've arrived at the right place.

This book is a guide to help you set a relationship fracture right. It promises resolution. It aims your sights beyond mere settlement and helps you shoot for the moon:

- A contentious dilemma, thoroughly disarmed
- A conclusion to the issue, without loose ends left to fester
- A future where the matter never comes up again

There is nothing exactly like it.

*Kintsugi – the metaphor on the cover*

*Kintsugi* – only the Japanese could conceive an art form centered on breakage and repair of something precious. Kintsugi involves dropping a porcelain container as a starting point. And Kintsugi is an entirely apt analogy for what this book enables you to do... take a vessel of great value that seems irrevocably, hopelessly broken and put it back together, in a form more noble and admirable than it was prior to breaking.



How is it done? The Japanese traditional art encompasses gathering the pieces, then painstakingly refitting, and gluing them together with using a gold mortar. Perseverance is the byword. Through extravagant patience, care, and rising above difficulty and obstacles, the damage is made whole.

For this book, a ceramic bucket can represent the trust, warmth, and interdependence between two parties. This 'trust bucket' has been shattered. Using the Resolution Protocol, it is reassembled. Truth is, the wonder of that bucket becomes much more evident with the renaissance

that began the moment it shattered. An exquisite solvent for sadness will be applied. The gold of dedication will become the glue of restoration.

This book is about transformation. In undertaking the discipline you will discover here, you accept and elevate what we all must suffer by our presence in the world. You will lift yourself above woundedness and see a relationship differently – in a way that's much more connected to what matters.

The outcome is a creation to joyfully behold, and newly cherish. A relationship broken, made whole and much better, more resilient and magnificent than it ever was before.



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## A handbook

This is a handbook – a set of instructions for how to solve specific problems between people. You picked it up because you are curious and perhaps eager to learn how to fix a messy situation with an important person.

As a handbook, this slim volume includes just enough background for you to understand the *what* and *why* of getting to the bottom of a gnarly situation. But mainly it is written so you can also get right to the *how* and *when*. It is a practical guide and a ready reference for anyone to use.



This is an approach to settling serious, daunting problems between people. Can it work in all situations? Look to the Appendix where I describe a few situations where it shouldn't be attempted. Nevertheless, it's suited to bringing *most* fragmented situations to closure.

It consists of four central components, working together:

- **The Relationship Mindset** – an orientation to human interaction that frames and nurtures interpersonal connections
- **The Resolution Protocol** – an eight-step structured process to guide an intense resolution talk
- **The Pre-Work** – indispensable advance preparation
- **The Flow** – a way to chair and steer the conversation

### How to use this book

Step by step, I guide you through the phases of resolution. Along the way you pick up the tools to apply to your own situation. Each chapter:

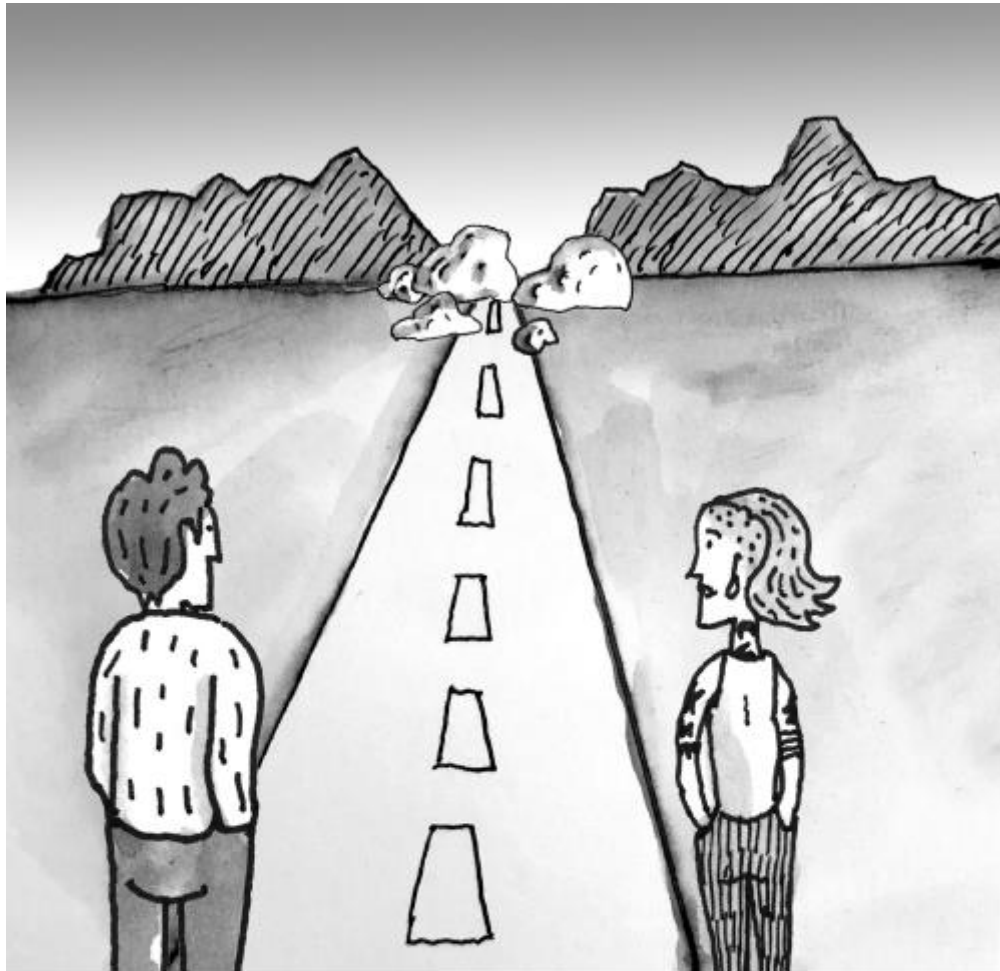
- Explains a component of the Resolution Protocol or expands on an aspect of the Relationship Mindset
- Outlines the preparation required
- Discusses some practical realities
- Illuminates useful concepts with clarifying stories
- Builds your resolution skills and confidence

A summary of key points in all the chapters is provided in the Appendix for ready reference later.

After this has landed with you, consider reading Susan Scott's *Fierce Conversations*. She and I are much aligned on the purpose of resolution conversations – to interrogate reality, provoke learning, tackle tough challenges, enrich relationships.

Are you willing to change your perspective to achieve a result you greatly desire? To make things right with a person you really care about?





## The travelers and the journey

Fact: a relationship is fractured and needs to mend.

Fact: the Resolution Protocol sorts out the messy situation so that the parties prosper together once again, and the cause of the break never recurs.

This book asks you to take a journey – a set of constructive steps along a defined path where you first examine the break, then re-set and secure it so it can heal properly. Your time is spent on the road to your destination, not waiting for a miracle in hospital!

As with any venture into uncharted territory, you need courage to stay the course and face the issues, your fellow traveler, and yourself.

We designate two characters on this resolution passage.

*The Initiator*

This is you – the person devoting time to learning the Resolution Protocol and who is courageous enough to initiate and conduct a serious talk regarding a rift with...



*The Very Important Person (VIP)*

This is your counterpart, the other person on the path with you. I call them the VIP because you care about them and their worth so much that you are willing to traverse deep valleys to restore your once-close tie with them. By that measure, naturally they are a VIP. They remain so despite how cross you have been about what happened between you, or how often you have been sorely tempted to write them off.



### It all starts with you

If you want to use this approach to fix a relationship in your life that's gone askew, you must first know what the Resolution Protocol requires of you. You can certainly do this, but your eyes must be open to the effort required to rectify the breakdown.

It's not enough to go only partway along the path, or just dip your toe in the process. To achieve resolution, you must take on the discipline, commit yourself to the entirety and stay the course – from raising the issue through to celebrating its conclusion.

The Resolution Protocol is a proven way to sort out such situations so that they never recur – that's the true test of resolution. The relationship fracture is healed.

You too can attain that high bar by following the steps and guidance in this book. It won't be an argument about who's right. It will be an intense discussion to break down the prison walls, get to the roots of what went wrong, and do what it takes to make it right.

What do you need most? Undaunted courage. Enough to not only face the issue, and your other party, but most importantly, to face yourself.

Situations that demand such exemplary drive to confront are onerous, complex, and gritty messes, like the story of David and Leonora that is woven through this handbook. As with them, if the pain of your fracture is acute, and the relationship important enough, you will rise to the challenge of this journey.



*If you're looking for a quick way to deliver an ultimate defeat, to finish off another person with a masterful stroke, this isn't the book for you.*

## Congratulations

You chose this book because despite the risks and your fears, you have decided to put matters right. You realize that if you don't act to heal this break, you'll regret it for the rest of your life. You won't go unprepared on this trip. With this book as your guide, you'll feel ready and able to take on this deeply important conversation.

The Resolution Protocol is simple but robust. It is designed for tough situations. **It works** because you put your whole heart and mind into it. You agree to head into unfamiliar territory and expose your vulnerability along the way. Much depends on your ability to be authentic, to deliver the messages of this process and maximize the potential for change.

With all that, walking through a tough situation and taking it over the finish line to resolution is one of the most **satisfying** things you will ever do in life. It's profound. These conversations often become etched in the memories of the parties, and are turning points in their lives.

Let me introduce you to David and Leonora, executives of Dugmore Foods. You'll get to know their story as we follow along their resolution journey, and see the process as it unfolds. While this story is focused on a business scenario, use of the Protocol isn't restricted to that domain. It applies between relatives, friends, neighbors, spouses...wherever relationships that matter arise.



### The moment it came to a head

On this day, David is leading an Operations Forum meeting, where a group of four are readying for a production run of Almond Sky – one of Dugmore Foods’ prime offerings. They are going through the critical readiness checklist for a run set to proceed later that day. When they review supply quantities, Leonora – the logistics lead – offhandedly mentions, “We might be short on flour.” Sarah rolls her eyes. Fernando looks askance. The atmosphere quickly gets heavy in that second-floor boardroom.

David’s guts turn to water. This run is for is their lead product and backorders are accelerating! Leonora’s unconcerned remark just lays there, as if someone has thrown a carcass on the table.

David’s thoughts knot up, and he thinks to himself...

*“Here we go again! Am I going to have to fire this hotshot...?”*

*Wait a minute. I can’t! She’s my peer. And she’s family.*

*What’s going to come down on me when I have to tell the President about this...? I can’t just say nothing! Leonora’s so good most of the time, but this last-minute rabbit-out-of-a-hat stuff makes me crazy! I can’t stand it...!”*

### Backgrounder - David the reliable



Dugmore Foods manufactures healthy snack foods. David is the Vice President, Operations, and came to the company by a fairly circuitous route.

His parents were strict Baptists, rooted firmly in a mid-west corn farming region. He was raised with simple values: school, hard work on the farm... the straight and narrow way.

He completed high school, played slotback on the state-championship football team, then went off to the University of Nebraska. He tried out for the varsity team but injured his knee and didn't make the final cut. He nevertheless swallowed his disappointment, and buckled down to study mechanical engineering. He married Alicia, his high school sweetheart, in his final year of studies. Her family later moved to California.

Going west had never been in his post-graduation plans. He had hoped to hire on with a global firm, work from a significant office, perhaps NYC, and travel widely for project work. Unfortunately, he graduated into a very tough employment market and had to scan for other opportunities.

He landed in the food production world by dropping back a few yards. He needed to get his career rolling; the first baby was on the way. An employment ad for a nutrition company showed up in his search results and he reluctantly considered changing his game plan. California? Okay...

He applied for a position in an Orange County food processing plant, where they sought someone with experience, but not necessarily a degree. He really needed a job,

and talked the recruiter into presenting his resumé as a candidate. As it turned out, the hiring executive was more impressed with his farm background than anything else, and gave him a chance. She would not be disappointed.

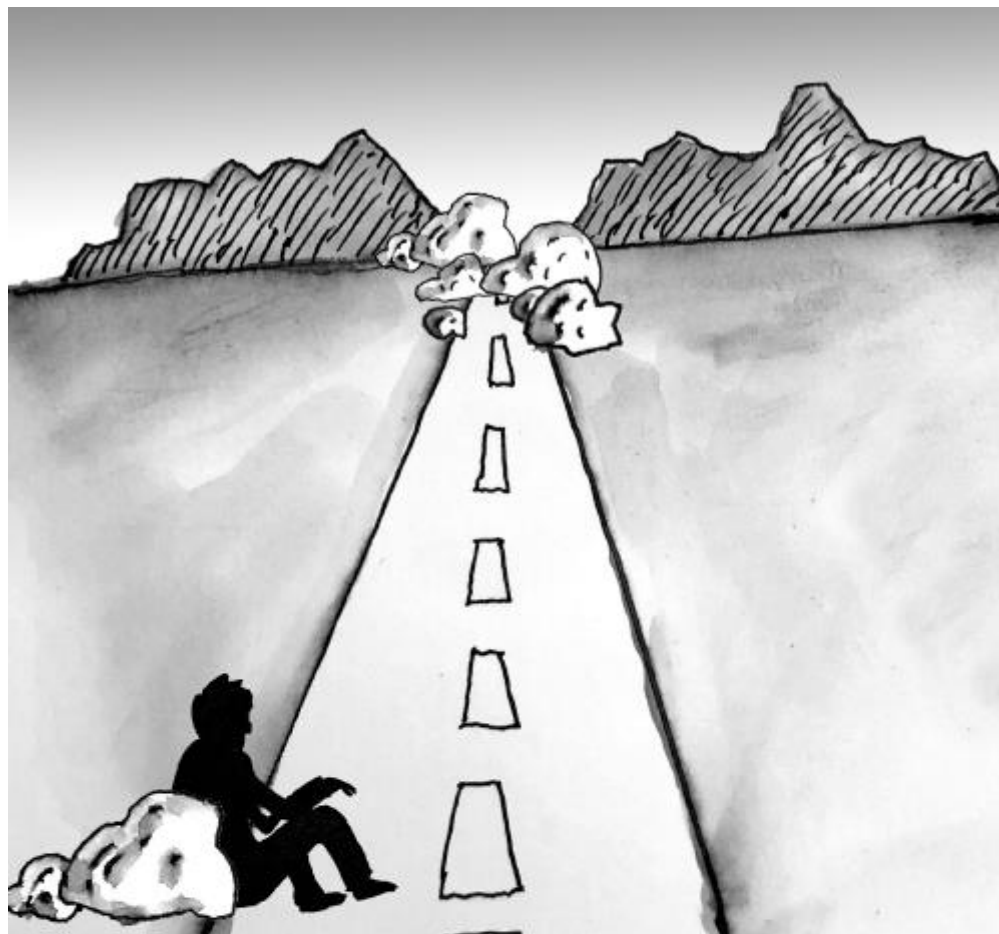
David brought his strong work ethic and decency to this new position and got settled in the Basin. His star career took off as the company was bowled over by his initiative, ingenuity, and results. He capped out quickly, however. His sense of loyalty battled with his need for income, and the head hunters were calling.

He had been in California for five years when Alicia's father called. Ron had built up Dugmore Foods, a significant firm headquartered in Orange County. David had been averse to getting in bed with his father-in-law's company ever since he got involved in the same field. He wasn't sure he could deal with family dynamics on top of a demanding job. But Ron had been following David's rise closely, and was convinced that family loyalty would only enhance the impact a hardworking, educated player like David could have at Dugmore.

When Ron offered him a position, David was impressed by Dugmore's image and product array centered on healthy snacks. It aligned well with Alicia's increased focus on family fitness, and for their kids – now aged four and six – to be raised with the most nutritious foods.

So, despite his reservations about working for relatives, he went for it... moved over to Dugmore. They had a larger-scale plant, his solid strength in process management led to promotions, and he rose quickly in the ranks. When he was put in charge of production, he organized and smoothed out everything in what had formerly been a somewhat

confused process. It increased delivery reliability, and the firm's fortunes rose. The VP designation followed. His reputation and career success were based on that bankable dependability...



## When is it time?

The Resolution Protocol is designed specifically for people in truly tough binds. It's too intensive a process to use for an everyday slight disagreement, a minor contretemps, or even a fair-sized quarrel. How do you know you need to have one of these resolution talks? When should you bring out the heavy artillery... this intentional approach?

*“Because the heart is  
bigger than trouble*

*And the heart is bigger than doubt*

*The heart some times needs a  
little help to figure that out.”*

---

– CONNIE KALDOR  
\*WOOD RIVER\*

Everything that occurs in a relationship fills or draws down on your metaphorical *bucket of trust*. You come to expect an individual to react a certain way, and count on an unstated belief – right or wrong – that you will interact with each other in a reliable, regular style. You extend implicit trust and hope it will be honoured.



A serious situation doesn't usually arise overnight. You sail along having comfortable exchanges that fill up that bucket. But you start to get hints that something is not right. And then one day, a truly problematic episode occurs. Your trust bucket fractures catastrophically and drains dry. **You feel betrayed.**

When trust is badly compromised, you might notice:

- The precipitating situation just wouldn't go away. It pops up and is on your mind whenever you're reminded of that person or situation.
- You find yourself reprocessing the lead-up to the break. Suggestions that it was coming had been manifesting for some time. You recognize

just how off-track your relationship had become before trust broke.

- Now it swirls within you. You dwell on what happened, what was said and done. You ruminate over what could or should have occurred, or how you might have avoided such a hard landing with this person.
- You rationalize and justify your own stance, persuading yourself that you were right and the other person was wrong.
- You think of rejoinders or clever retorts you might have made. If you had come up with the right one at the critical moment, you might have headed off this mess. But it's too late.
- Damage has been accumulating since the break. That assessment crystallizes a need in you to take a definitive step and intervene, before things go from bad to worse. Not just between the two of you, but for others as well – in the business, among friends or family. Many are adversely affected, treading carefully around the matter. Meanwhile, performance is dropping, needed collaboration becomes impossible, events where you both are present are strained and forced, and attention is diverted from the real purpose. A whole bunch of folks are dancing around your dysfunction.
- The realization hits. *This is worse than I thought. I'd better do something.*

Recognize yourself in these descriptions? It's time to study the Resolution Protocol and get to work preparing for a very consequential conversation.

Seize the opportunity, initiate a resolution talk, and be glad of it for years to come. Or turn away, ignore those pesky barbs, and resign yourself to spiralling, distancing negativity. It's up to you.