

A COACHING MASTERCLASS ON

POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS



WORKBOOK



POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY INSTITUTE

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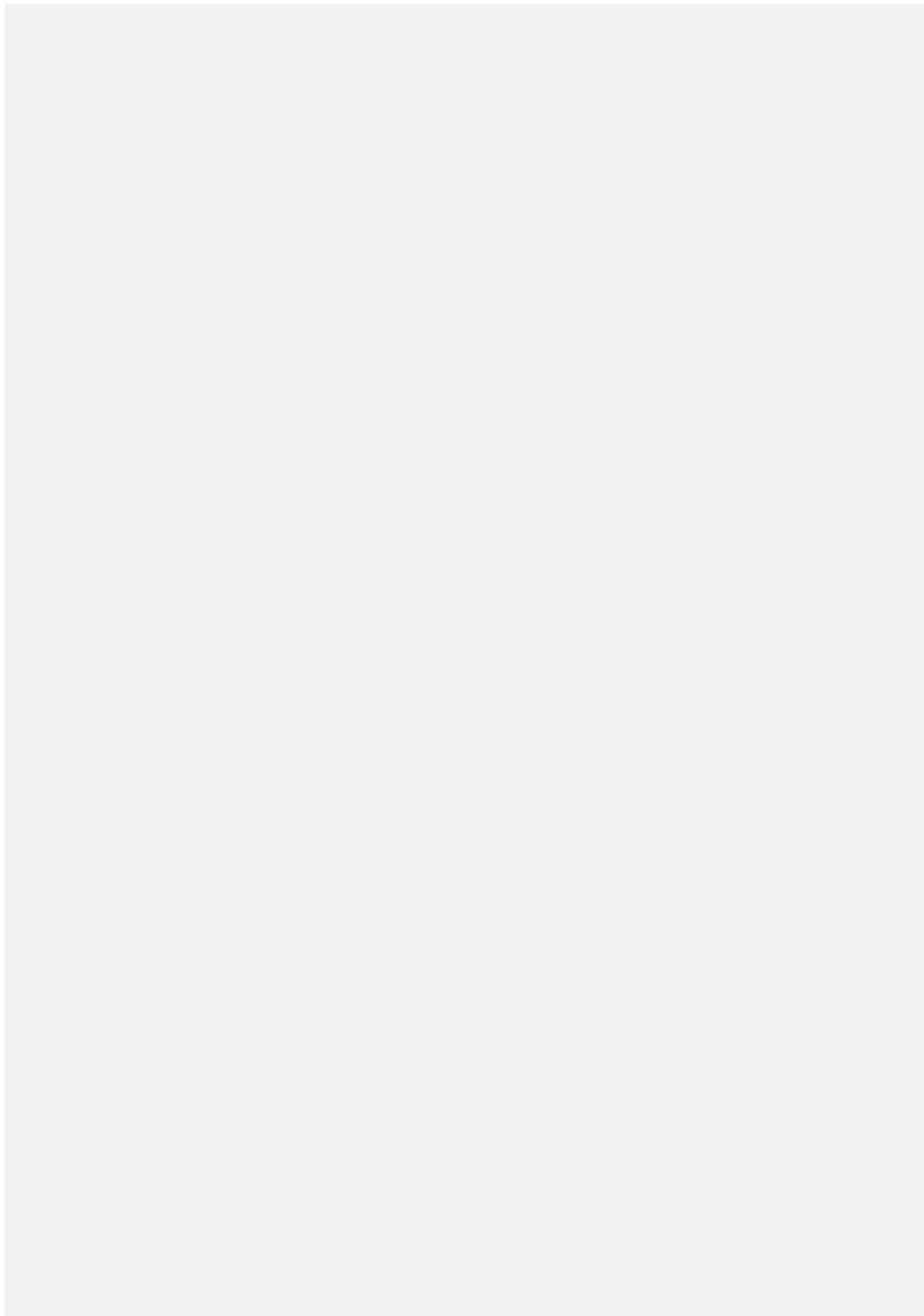


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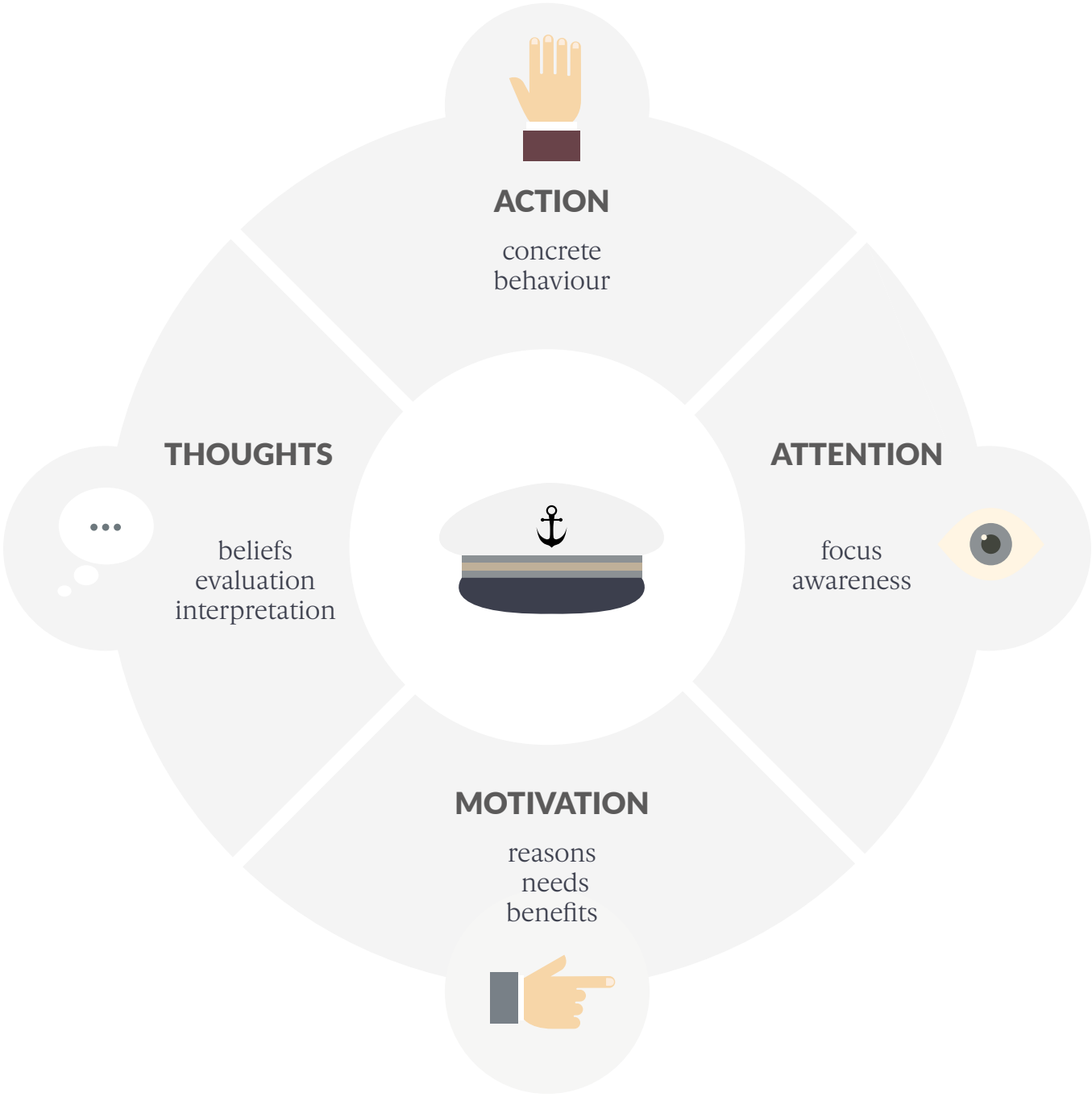
■ YOUR PERSONAL GOALS

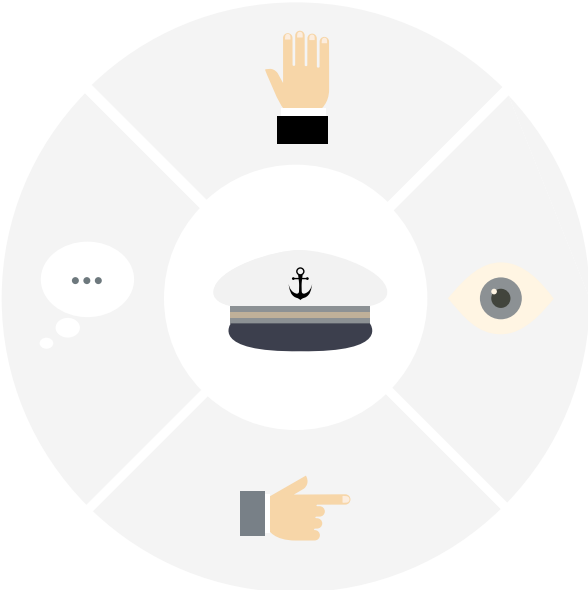
What would you like to learn in this masterclass?



■ THE SAILBOAT METAPHOR





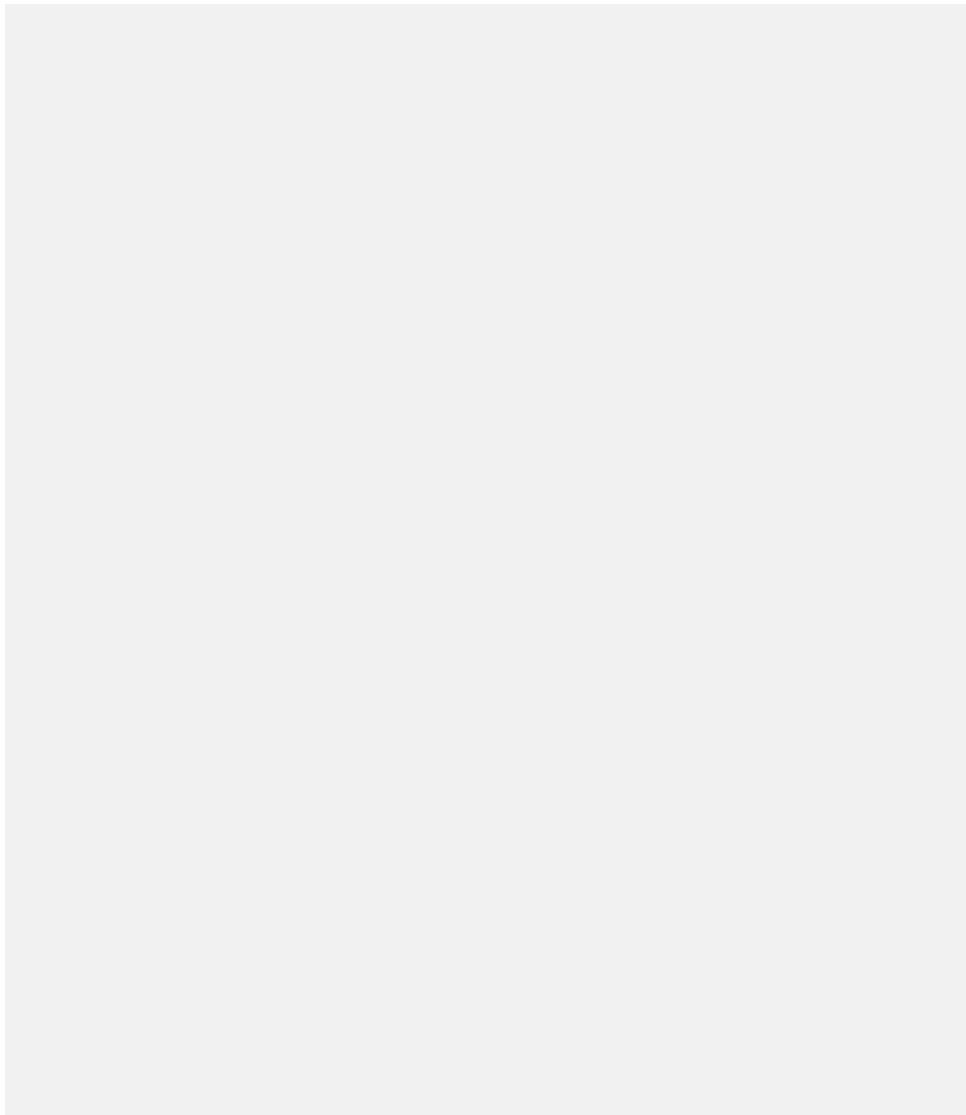


■ THE STATUS OF YOUR SAILBOAT

Ask the other person to use the sailboat metaphor to describe how he or she is currently doing. You may ask the following questions:

- What is the current status of your sailboat?
- How would you describe your current journey?

Invite the other person to speak as much as possible in terms of the different elements of the sailboat and their interaction.



■ SOCIAL SUPPORT ANALYSIS

The literature on social support offers a meaningful way to categorize different types of positive relationships. Scholars have made a distinction between four different types of supportive relationships (Argyle, 1992; House, 1981; Wills, 1985). First, people in the individual's social network who offer empathy, concern, affection, love, trust, acceptance, intimacy, encouragement, or caring provide emotional support. They provide warmth and nurturance and let the individual know that he or she is valued. Second, people who provide advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information engage in informational support. The information they provide can help the individual solve problems or reach goals. Third, people who provide financial assistance, material goods, or services provide instrumental support. This form of social support encompasses the concrete direct ways in which these people assist the individual. Fourth, people who provide a sense of social belonging provide companionship support. These people are companions with whom you can engage in shared social and leisure activities.

► GOAL

The goal of this tool is for clients to identify the people in their life that provide the four primary types of social support. The insights that result from this exercise can be used to help the client cope with difficulties and/or realize goals.

► ADVICE

- In this exercise, four different types of social support are addressed. When explaining the meaning of these types of support, the practitioner may use concrete examples of each type of support in order to clarify the meanings of the types of support and their differences.
- When a client has a high quality social support network, a possible by-effect of this exercise is the experience of gratitude. Clients may become aware of and grateful for the fact that they are rich in terms of social contacts. It can be valuable for clients to take some time to reflect on this experience and discuss it with the practitioner.
- When a client has a low quality social network, this exercise may increase the client's awareness of a need to invest in more positive and supportive relationships. In this case, the practitioner may look for ways to support the client if he/she wishes to deepen and/or expand his/her social network.
- It is important to note that each member of the client's social support network usually does not provide all types of support at all times. Practitioners should therefore not focus on people in the social network of the client who offer all

types of support. Whether an individual offers one type of meaningful support is more important than whether this individual offers all types of support.

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► INSTRUCTIONS

The goal of this exercise is for clients to identify the people in their life that provide the four primary types of social support. The insights that result from this exercise can be used to help the client cope with difficulties and/or realize goals.

Step 1. Identify the people that offer emotional support

Emotional support are the people in your social network who offer empathy, concern, affection, love, trust, acceptance, intimacy, encouragement, or care. They provide warmth and nurturance and let you know that you are valued.

Invite the other person to name the people in his or her social network that can offer emotional support. List them in the Support Analysis Form on p. 13 under “Emotional support”.

The following questions can be used to help identify these people:

- With whom can you share your most private worries and fears?
- With whom can you totally be yourself?
- Who is genuinely interested in you?
- When you feel lonely, who can you talk to?
- Who do you feel really appreciates you as a person?
- Who will comfort you when you need it most by holding you in their arms?
- Who accepts you totally, including both your worst and your best aspects?
- Who do you feel truly loves you deeply?

Step 2. Identify the people that offer informational support

Informational support are the people who provide advice, guidance, suggestions, or useful information to you. The information they provide can help you to solve your problem or reach your goal.

Invite the other person to name the people in his or her social network that can offer informational support. List them in Support Analysis Form on p. 13 under “Informational support”.

- Who can you turn to for advice about handling problems?
- Who can you turn to for advice about how to reach your current goals?
- Who can you really count on to give you useful suggestions that help you avoid making mistakes?
- Who may share useful insights that can help you reach your goals? This might, for example, be a person who has already reached this goal.

Step 3. Identify the people that offer instrumental support

Instrumental support are the people who provide financial assistance, material goods, or services. This form of social support encompasses the concrete, direct ways in which these people assist you.

Invite the other person to name the people in his or her social network that can offer emotional support. List them in Support Analysis Form on p. 13 under “Instrumental support”.

The following questions can be used to help identify these people:

- Who can you turn to for help with practical issues?
- Who can you turn to for financial support?
- Consider the practical issues that you find difficult or burdensome to do yourself. Who can help you with this?

Step 4. Identify the people that offer companionship support

Companionship support are the people who give you a sense of social belonging. These people are your companions - you can engage with them in shared social activities.

Invite the other person to name the people in his or her social network that can offer emotional support. List them in the Support Analysis Form on p. 13 under “Companionship support”.

The following questions can be used to help identify these people:

- Who do you enjoy spending time with?
- Who are the people with whom you (regularly) go out and do things?
- Who are the people you can have fun with?
- Who do you share a passion or interest with?
- Who are the people who enjoy the same things you do?

Step 5. Linking the four types of supportive relationships to personal goals

Ask the client to think of a goal that he/she is trying to reach. Which of the four types of support is/are considered most helpful in the pursuit of this goal according to the client? Who are the people in the client’s network that are able to provide this type of support? How might they assist in realizing the desired changes?

Support Analysis Form

<p>A) Emotional support</p> <p><i>People who provide love and care for your client.</i></p>	<p>B) Informational support</p> <p><i>People who provide information or advice needed to solve problems or reach goals.</i></p>
<p>Names:</p>	<p>Names:</p>
<p>C) Instrumental support</p> <p><i>People who provide financial assistance, material goods, or services.</i></p>	<p>D) Companionship support</p> <p><i>People who engage in shared social activities.</i></p>
<p>Names:</p>	<p>Names:</p>

■ BUILDING SOCIAL CAPITAL

While definitions of social capital vary, within health and behavior research the term has been defined as “the sum of durable, trustworthy, reciprocal and resource-rich network connections that are used as an asset to empower a society and its members” (Chen, Stanton, Gong, Fang, & Li, 2008; p. 306). Stated simply, the social capital of an individual is his or her accumulated positive network connections.

In the same way that financial capital can be considered a form of wealth that increases with investment and depletes if not periodically reviewed, so too can social capital (Putnam, 1993; Fukuyama, 1995). To invest in one’s social capital, an individual must interact with others through work or play, sharing personal information, visiting each other, joining social organizations, and participating in social events. In other words, it is not enough to simply have a social network; rather, the creation and maintenance of social capital require deliberate attention and investment.

► GOAL

The goal of this exercise is to help clients expand their social capital by paying deliberate attention to the four main components of high-quality interpersonal relationships: the quantity, strength, intensity, and density of social connections.

► ADVICE

- When asking clients to list the most important people in their social network (step 2), these can include both “virtual” connections and real-life connections. The key point during this step should be that any connection can be included so long as they are considered to be an important part of the client’s social network.
- Some clients who are active on social media may claim that they have over 200 connections. Obviously, this size is hard if not impossible to manage off-line, and it remains questionable whether these are “real” connections that contribute to the client’s social capital. Clients who are active on social media should know that step 2 includes a selection of people in their network, namely those that the client perceives to be most relevant in their lives. It is important to keep in mind that social capital is subjective. While some clients may consider 15 connections as too many, others may feel that this number is not even close to being enough. During the exercise, stress that it is not about what the client believes is normal or appropriate. Rather the focus should be on their personal experience.
- When clients address possible solutions for factors that reduce their social

capital, the practitioner may assist them by offering suggestions and exploring different options.

- In exploring options to increase the client's social capital, the practitioner may focus on exceptions. For instance, when exploring ways to increase the number of the client's connections, the practitioner may ask questions such as, "Have there been times when you did not feel lonely? When did this occur? Who were the people that were part of your network back then? Are they still part of your network? Is it possible to reconnect with these people again?" Note that people the client felt connected with in the past do not necessarily have to be present in his or her life today. For example, if a client says, "I really wish my brother was around; he understood me", it is the practitioner's task to explore ways of meeting this need in present relationships. The practitioner could ask, "What was it about your relationship with your brother that helped you through times of trouble? Are there other people that may help you to meet this need?"
- Often, clients who have too many social ties find it difficult to reduce the size of their network. First, excluding people from one's social network can be painful. Clients may fear that turning down a request to meet could hurt the feelings of others. Second, clients may anticipate strong negative or even aggressive reactions from others when they decrease their investment in them. The fear of such reactions may motivate clients to keep certain relationships alive, even if they are no longer perceived as valuable. Third, having an extensive social network can be part of the client's believed identity. A client may have internalized beliefs that link sociability with "being good enough". For these clients, being accepted and liked by others "proves" that they are worthy. Maintaining a large social network can be a way to keep self-esteem levels stable. The idea of reducing the social network may trigger feelings of fear, as this can be perceived as a reduction in self-worth. A common theme connecting these three avoidance motives is fear. A powerful way for clients to act despite this fear is by helping clients to connect to their values. The practitioner may ask questions such as, "What are you currently missing because of your (over-)investment in these relationships? Are there relationships that you would like to invest more in? How is your current pattern of relationship investment helping or preventing you from doing so?" When clients are convinced of the necessity to cut down their social ties, it is often helpful to take small steps. Rather than instantly ending a relationship, clients may experiment with reducing the frequency of interaction or begin with the dissolution of relationships they feel least connected with.
- To assist clients in improving the quality of their relationships, the practitioner is advised to focus on time investment and relationship management skills. High-quality relationships require time investment. A client with excellent social skills may fail to build high-quality relationships if he or she is unwilling

to invest sufficient time and energy in this relationship. Likewise, a client who is willing to invest ample time in relationships may still perceive them as of low quality when his or her social skills are insufficient. Social skills, such as self-disclosure, kindness and curiosity, are essential for the creation of lasting relationships that are perceived as valuable by both parties.

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► INSTRUCTIONS

The goal of this exercise is to help you to expand your social capital by paying attention to the four main components of high-quality relationships: the quantity, strength, intensity, and density of social connections.

Step 1. Understanding social capital

What is Social Capital?

Social capital is about the benefits that you gain from your connection with others. If your social capital is high, the people in your social network can offer benefits such as providing support in difficult times, helping you to relax, assist you in achieving your goals, and so on. Before you can enjoy the benefits of a strong and long-lasting social network, social capital must first be developed through the four building blocks of high-quality relationships, namely the *quantity*, *strength*, *intensity*, and *density* of social connections (see fig. 1 below).

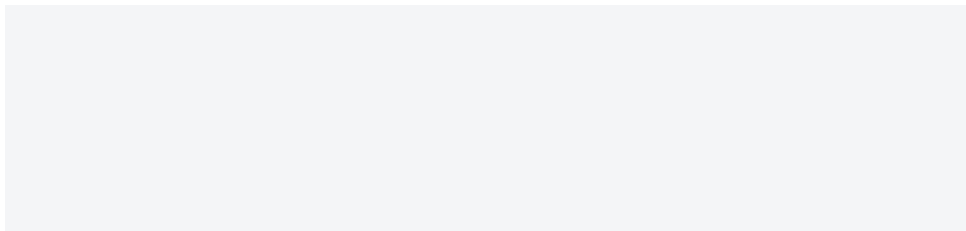
Fig. 1. Summarized explanation of the four dimensions of high-quality relationships.



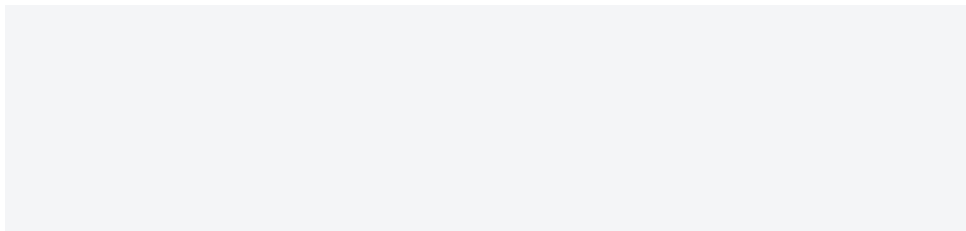
Step 2. List the most important people in your social network.

Think of the most important people that you consider to be part of your social network. These can be “virtual” online connections and real-life connections. The main thing to remember is that these are the people you consider important enough to be part of your social network. List them below.

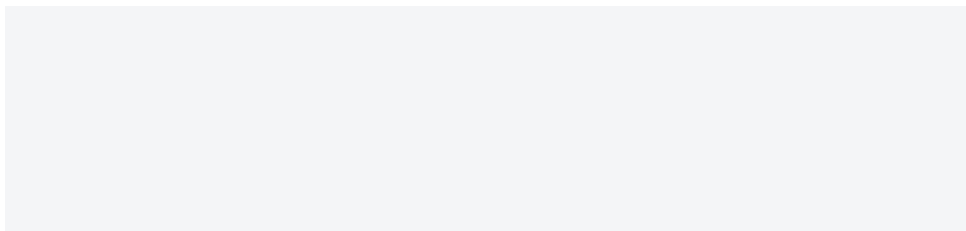
Close friends



Romantic relationships



Friendly co-workers



Family members

Neighbors

Sports teams

Professional organizations

Other (please specify)

Now that we have introduced the idea of social capital, let's consider your social capital. In the following steps, we will address each of the four elements that require your attention in order to improve your social capital.

Step 3. Analyzing relationship quantity

Social capital is influenced by the number of connections you have within your network. You might assume that having more relationships will lead to more social capital. However, in reality, maintaining connections takes effort. After all, you cannot give the same time and attention to 30 people as you can to 5.

The ideal number of connections is highly personal - what counts as “enough” for one person might not be the same for another. Some people prefer to have a large social network, while others are happy with a few close relationships.

The following questions and statements are related to the number of social connections you have in your network. Please answer as honestly as possible; there are no right or wrong answers. As you complete the questions, think about the number of connections you have in your social network and the effect this may have on the quality of your relationships.

Consider the people you listed in step 2, and please answer the following questions:

1a. Do you feel you do not have enough connections?

1b. If so, what do you consider to be a reason for this?

1c. What do you consider to be the consequences of having too few connections?

1d. What steps can be taken to increase your number of connections?

2a. Do you feel you have too many connections?

2b. If so, what do you consider to be a reason for this?

2c. What do you consider to be the consequences of having too many connections?

2d. What steps could you take to decrease the number of connections?

Step #4 Analyzing relationship Strength

The *strength* of social connections is the extent to which the people in your network provide you with support, affection, and a sense of closeness. People with strong social bonds tend to spend more time together and are more likely to help others in their network.

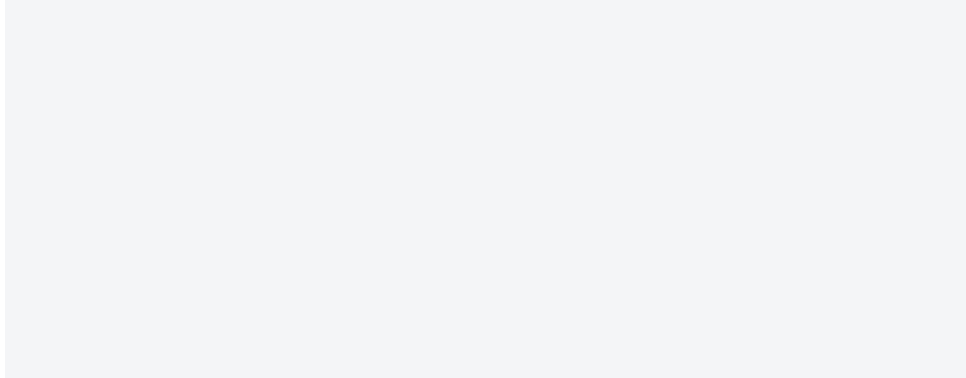
The following questions are about the strength of your social connections. Please answer as honestly as possible; there are no right or wrong answers. As you complete the questions, think about the extent to which your relationships offer affection, a sense of togetherness, and support.

Consider the people you listed in step 2. Who are the people you feel most strongly connected with? These are the people you trust, who appreciate you and who you would turn to if you needed support. Simply put, these are the people you feel closest to.

Consider the people you listed in the previous question. These are the people in your network that you consider your “strong connections”. Do you feel you have enough strong connections?

If not, what do you consider to be a reason for this?

If not, what actions can you take to strengthen your connection with others?

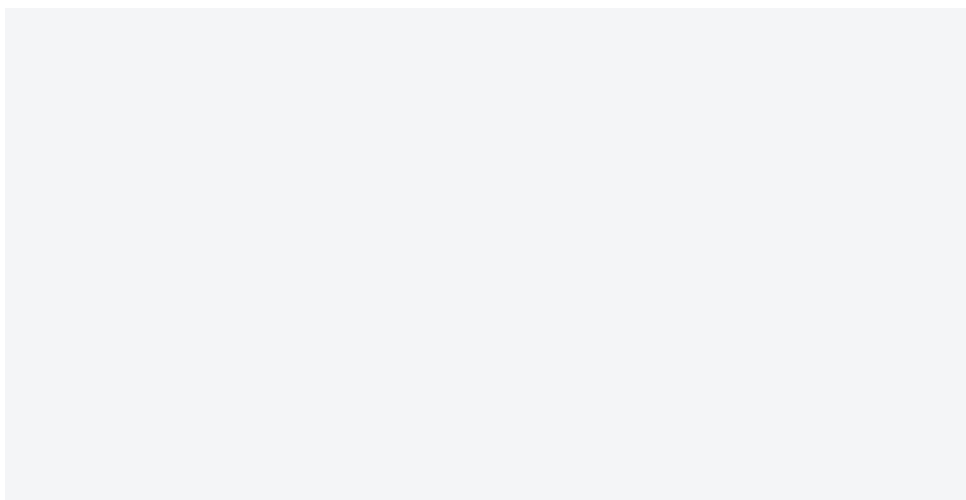


Step #5 Analyzing Relationship Intensity

The *intensity* of social connections is about how often you and other members of your network interact with each other. You may find that you spend more time with people who offer little in return while committing less time to those you value most. When this happens, your connections can become weakened.

The following questions are related to the intensity of your social connections. Please answer as honestly as possible; there are no right or wrong answers. As you complete the questions, think about the people in your network who you feel most connected to.

1. Who are the people in your network that you spend the most time with?



2a. Are there people in your network that you currently do not spend a lot of time with, but you would like to spend more time with? If so, who?

2b. If so, what do you consider to be a reason for not spending enough time with them?

2c. What could you do to spend more time with them?

3a. Are there people in your network that you currently spend a lot of time with that you would like to reduce?

3b. If so, what do you consider to be a reason for spending too much time with them?

3c. What could you do to spend less time with them?

Step #6 Analyzing Relationship Density

The *density of social connections* is all about how each person in your network is connected to you and also to each other. The more people in your social network who know and interact with one another, the stronger your network will be. Put simply, the connections you have in common with others are the glue that holds social networks together.

An added benefit of having common connections is that it is much easier to spend time with multiple people at once. When people in your network are already

connected to each other, meeting up as a group rather than meeting individually is much more likely.

The following questions are about how members of your social network are connected to one another. Please answer as honestly as possible; there are no right or wrong answers. As you complete the questions, think about the different ways members of your network are connected to each other and the strength of those connections.

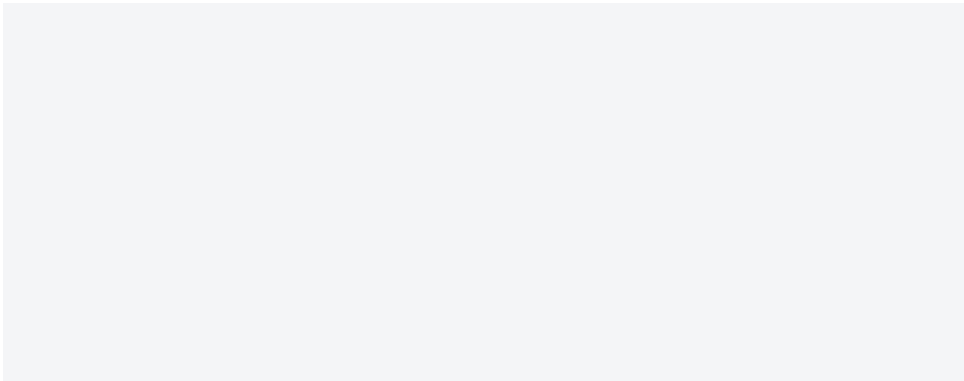
Consider the people you listed in step 2, and please answer the following questions:

1. On a scale of 1 to 10 (where 1 means that none of your social connections know or interact with each other and 10 means that all of your social connections know or interact with each other), how would you rate your network? In other words, how strong is the “glue” in your social network?

2a. Would you like the people in your network to be more connected, so that they would know each other better?

2b. If so, what could be the benefits of the people in your network being more connected with each other?

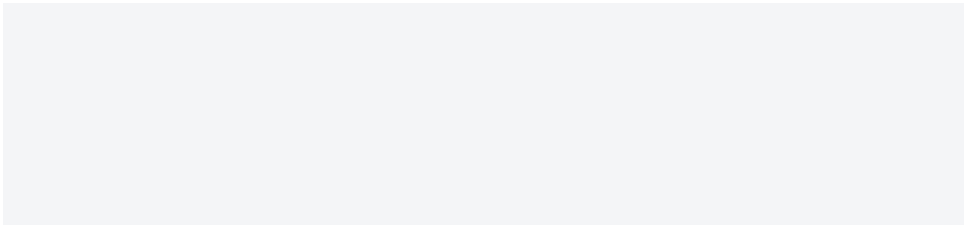
3. What could you do to increase the connection among your network members (for example, you could organize events and invite people from different groups, look for members with the same interests, or invite a friend to a yoga class that you are already taking with another friend)?



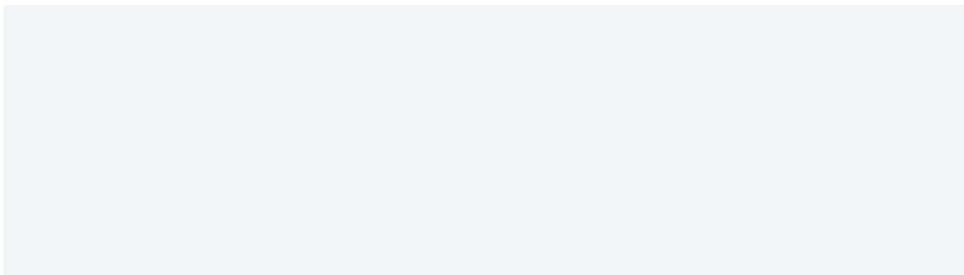
Step #7 Total Evaluation:

Looking back at all the four elements:

How would you rate your social capital?



If you feel you could increase your capital, which element(s) need(s) attention?



What is the smallest step that you can take this week to increase your social capital?

■ THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE

▶ STEP 1

List below the 4 most significant people in your social network. These are the people you feel you have a close, deep and involved relationship with.

Person #1

Person #2

Person #3

Person #4

▶ STEP 2

For each person, indicate how much time you spent with him or her last month. If last month is not a representative period of your life, you can also consider how much time you generally spend with these people.

Use the 10-point scale below to indicate how much time you spent, where 1 means you did not spend any time with them and 10 means you spent a lot of time with them.

Person #1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Person #2 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Person #3 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Person #4 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

■ SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS SCALE

Please indicate from 1 (= strongly disagree) to 6 (= strongly agree) how you believe the following statements to be in your case:

	<i>Strongly disagree</i>					<i>Strongly agree</i>
1. I feel disconnected from the world around me.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. I feel so distant from people.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. I have no sense of togetherness with my peers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. I don't feel related to anyone.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. I catch myself losing all sense of connectedness with society.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. Even among my friends, there is no sense of brother/sisterhood.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I don't feel I participate with anyone or any group.	1	2	3	4	5	6

Higher scores on the questionnaire reflect less social connectedness.

Total Score:

Average Score (Total Score /8):

■ TESTING LOW SOCIAL SUPPORT BELIEFS

Whereas social support refers to actually receiving support from others, perceived social support involves the belief that social support is available if someone were to reach out for it (Sarason, et al., 1983). Prior research indicates that in general, perceived social support is associated with improved physical and mental health (House, Umberson, & Landis, 1988; Lakey & Cronin, 2008; Uchino, 2009), and is related to better outcomes during times of stress (e.g., Wethington and Kessler, 1986). Interestingly, perceived social support is only modestly related to actual support received from others (Dunkel-Schetter & Bennett, 1990; Sarason, Shearin, Pierce, & Sarason, 1987). Moreover, perceived support, but not received support, has been found to predict coping effectiveness, adjustment outcome, and psychological and physical well-being (Blazer, 1982; Hobfoll, Nadler, & Leiberman, 1986; Wethington & Kessler, 1986). Moreover, perceived support is more essential than received support in predicting adjustment to life stress (Wethington & Kessler, 1986). These findings stress the importance of considering the person's beliefs about support, in addition to the support that is actually received. In this exercise, clients will explore how they feel about the amount of support that is available to them from others in times of need and then examine how accurate this so-called perceived social support is.

► GOAL

This tool was developed for clients who believe that not enough support is available to them from others in times of need. The goal of this tool is to examine these beliefs and compare them with actual support. Thus, this exercise may benefit clients with low perceived social support because these clients might either realize that their beliefs are inaccurate, or they are confronted with the fact that they indeed have little supportive relationships. In the first case (i.e., the client learns that their beliefs are inaccurate), clients will be pleasantly surprised to realize that they do in fact have people in their life that help them and that they have perhaps overlooked this help in the past. In the second case (i.e., client's beliefs about a lack of support is confirmed), the practitioner may then address low social support in therapy (e.g., work with the client to create ways for them to expand their social network and/or learn to enlist help from others).

► ADVICE

- Important note: this exercise is for clients who believe they have little if any social support in their life. Clients with high perceived social support will not benefit from this exercise. In fact, by putting their beliefs to the test, those with

optimistic beliefs about support may find out that their beliefs are unjustified, which could be harmful. In line with the research literature, one's belief in available support is more predictive of well-being than actual support.

- Clients with low perceived support beliefs tend to overlook the supportive actions of others, as they are not perceived as such. Relatively small gestures, such as asking how the individual is doing by text message, are typically overlooked. For these clients, it is important to stress that they should list every kind of action performed by others that is related to the current problem they are facing.
- Practitioners should realize that the client's beliefs about social support may or may not accurately reflect reality. For some clients, the negative beliefs regarding social support are backed up by unhelpful past or current experiences and may accurately reflect a low level of available support. For other clients, negative support beliefs barely reflect reality. The beliefs of this latter group of clients prevent them from seeing and experiencing the benefits of the support that is offered. Moreover, this group is likely to experience a wide range of negative emotions that is the direct consequence of their negative view of their social network (and themselves), rather than the characteristics of the network itself.
- This exercise is particularly relevant for clients that are currently facing adversity and in need of social support.
- This exercise can also be a valuable way to increase gratitude for other people as it instructs participants to focus on the goodwill of others.

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► INSTRUCTIONS

In this exercise, we are going to explore how you feel about the amount of support that is available to you from others when you need it. Then, we are going to examine how accurate these beliefs are.

Step 1. Rate level of perceived social support

In difficult times, believing that we have people who are willing and available to help us can be invaluable. This belief is known as perceived social support. Simply put, perceived social support is about how strongly we believe that others will help us in difficult times.

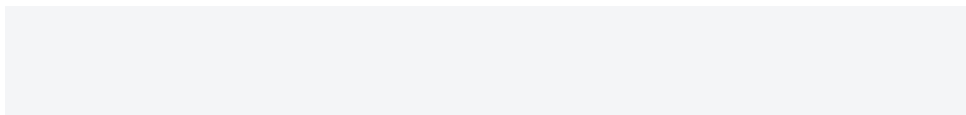
People with high perceived social support feel as though they have others with whom they can count on in times of need, can share their joys and sorrows, can get emotional help and support from, who care about their problems, and who are willing to help them make decisions. On the contrary, people with low perceived social support tend to feel as though they have no one or very few people in their life with whom they can count on in difficult times.

On a scale from 0 to 10 (where 0 = Strongly Disagree and 10 = Strongly Agree), to what extent do you feel that there is help or support available to you if and when you need it? Circle your response below.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Strongly Disagree									Strongly Agree

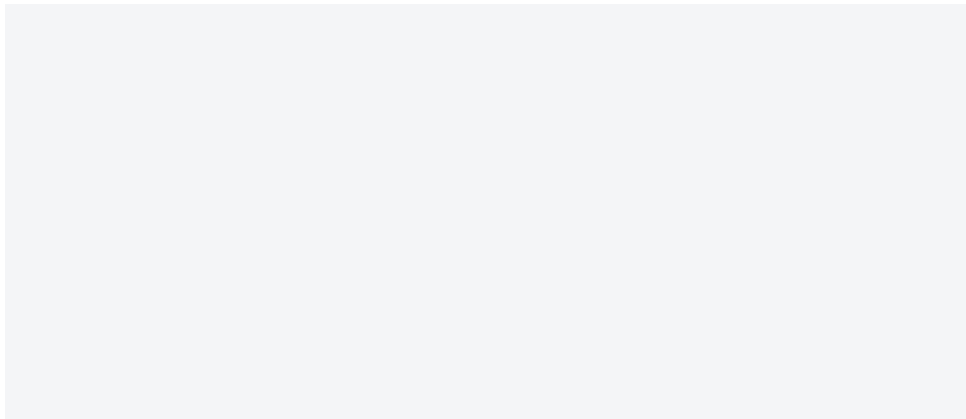
Step 2. Reflect on the score

Note, the higher your score in the previous step (Step 2), the more you believe that you have people in your life who are willing and available to support you in times of need. Thus, if you score 2, you believe that there only very little support available, whereas if you score 9, you believe that there is a lot of support available. With this scoring in mind, what do you make of your score? Do you perceive this score to be low, medium, or high?



If you perceive this score as low, you may continue with this exercise. In case you experience your score as medium or high, this exercise ends here for you.

Why do you think there is a low amount of support available to you?



Step 3. Track social support

This step involves keeping track of things that other people do to support you in your everyday life. Over the next two weeks, write down every moment of support by another person in the registration form presented on p. 38. These moments of support need not be major; examples include your spouse offering to cook dinner

after you've had a long day, or a teacher emailing you to check in with how you are going with an assignment. In the first column, write the date of the moment of support. In the second and third columns, write down the person who helped you and how you this person. In the fourth column, describe how this particular person helped you. An example is shown below.

Date	Name of the person offering support	Type of person (Colleague, Family, Spouse, Friend, Other)	How did this person help?
21-12-2020	Joe	partner	Called to check how my job interview went.

Step 4. Rate level of perceived social support again

This step is to be completed after you have logged moments of support for two weeks (Step 3). On a scale from 0 to 10 (where 0 = Strongly Disagree and 10 = Strongly Agree), to what extent do you feel that there is help or support available to you if and when you need it? Circle your response below.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree

Step 5. Rate level of perceived social support again

Did your rating of perceived social support change over time, from step 1 to step 4? If so, how?

Compared with how you previously thought about the amount of support that is available to you (Step 1), do you feel the same or differently after logging your actual moments of support (Step 4)?

If you feel differently about the amount of support you received, please describe what is different now than before the start of this exercise.

If you feel unsatisfied about the amount of support you received over the past two weeks, what could be steps you could take to receive more or better support?

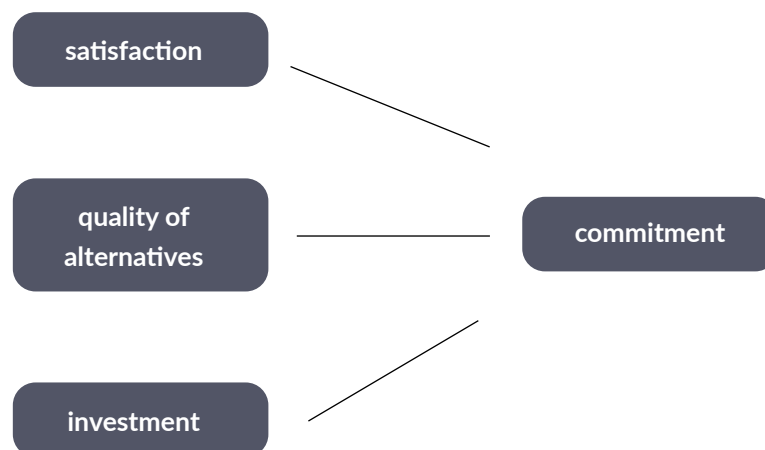
What is the most meaningful take-out message from this exercise?

■ ANALYZING RELATIONSHIP COMMITMENT

During the past 30 years, many theories have been developed that aim to understand why some relationships persist over time whereas others wither and die. A powerful theory that has gained considerable scientific support is Rusbult's (1980) Investment Model of Commitment. Research has shown that this theory can be successfully used to predict commitment and persistence across many types of relationships, including romantic relationships (e.g., marital relationships, lesbian and gay relationships), friendships, and relationships in organizational settings (for reviews of the literature, see Rusbult, 1987; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Rusbult, Drigotas, & Verette, 1994).

According to the theory, an individual's decision to remain in a relationship is largely due to his commitment level. Commitment refers to the degree to which the individual is motivated to maintain the relationship. A high level of commitment is reflected by a strong psychological attachment to the relationship. Furthermore, the theory states that 3 factors determine whether an individual remains committed to a given relationship: a) satisfaction, b) quality of alternatives and c) investment (see fig. 1).

Figure 1. A graphic representation of the Investment Model of Commitment



► GOAL

Relationship commitment can be driven by different kinds of motivation, differing in their degree to which they contribute personal well-being of the individual committing to the relationship. While some people show a high level of relationship commitment because they are highly satisfied with the relationship, others may predominantly invest in a relationship because of the fear of losing shared resources. The goal of this exercise is to structurally analyze the reasons for investing in both helpful and unhelpful relationships. In this way, the client gains more insight in both the benefits and costs of maintaining certain relationships. This insight can help the client to make more conscious choices regarding his relationship commitment and investment.

► ADVICE

- This exercise is particularly valuable for people who are involved in unhelpful relationships. Structurally analysing their reasons for investing in these relationships can help clients to better understand not only their reasons for investment but also the costs of their investment. For instance, clients may become aware that their fear of not finding someone else who is equally able to meet their needs causes them to keep investing in relationship that is not leading to satisfaction or may even be harmful to them.
- When clients struggle to identify reasons for their investments in positive and negative relationships, the practitioner may use the Investment Model to provide examples and structure. Using concrete examples, the practitioner can explain how satisfaction levels, quality of alternatives, and investment size contribute to the commitment level of relationships. Using the model, the client may reflect on his own situation and consider the extent to which each of these three factors contribute to his motivation to persist in his positive and negative relationships.
- Clients who mainly keep relationships alive because of investment reasons are in some cases overly focused on the negative consequences of reducing commitment. For instance, the fear of losing mutual friends when breaking up may cause a client to maintain a relationship that is not satisfying on a personal level. For these clients, it can be helpful to create a balanced view on the both the benefits and losses of reducing commitment.
- Failing to end or reduce the intensity of negative relationships is often motivated by fear: the fear of losing something that is considered very important (high investments), the fear of hurting the other person, the fear of how the other might respond, etc. First, it is important for the client to become aware of this emotion and if necessary, learn to effectively deal with it. Otherwise, the emotion may prevent the client from taking steps that are

necessary for personal development. Mindfulness and acceptance-based practice may be useful for this purpose. Second, a powerful way to assist the client in determining whether he should continue to invest in the relationship or not is by asking him to take the perspective of the other. Would you like to have a relationship with someone who is predominantly keeping the relationship alive because of fear? Would you like to keep a relationship alive with somebody who is only choosing to be with you because he or she fears that he may hurt you? Looking at his motives for investing in a relationship from the perspective of the other can help the client to realize that his motives may be far from desirable, for himself and the other person involved.

- In step 4, when discussing the actions that may be required for enhancement of personal well-being, it is important to consider the fact that relationship satisfaction can be influenced by personal actions. For instance, research has shown that the frequency of affectionate communication, both given and received, is positively associated with both satisfaction and commitment (Horan & Booth-Butterfield, 2010). In other words, individuals who reported giving and receiving a lot of affection also reported being committed and satisfied.

► REFERENCES

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► INSTRUCTIONS

In this exercise, we are going to analyze your reasons for investing in certain relationships. Please choose a relationship that you would like to address here. There may be many different reasons for analyzing relationships. Perhaps you are unsatisfied with a relationship and/or you are unsure of whether to continue investing in that relationship. Perhaps you are thinking about increasing or decreasing your current investment in a relationship. Just choose one particular relationship that you feel needs the most attention right now:

Step 1: Analyzing the 3 Predictors of Commitment

In this and the following steps, you will answer each question by providing a rating from 0 - 10. At the end of each step, please sum all the individual ratings of that particular step.

Satisfaction Level

How satisfied are you with this relationship?
(0 = not satisfied at all - 10 = highly satisfied)

To what extent does this relationship make you very happy?
(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

Which of your personal needs are being satisfied through this relationship?
Examples of needs are:

- instance intimacy (sharing personal thoughts, secrets, etc.)
- companionship (doing things together, enjoying each other's company, etc.)

- sexual needs (holding hands, kissing, etc.)
- security (feeling trusting, comfortable in a stable relationship, etc.)
- emotional involvement (feeling emotionally attached, feeling good when another feels good, etc.)

The following need(s) is/are satisfied through this relationship:

To what extent do you feel these needs are being satisfied through this relationship?
(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

Score (sum): of 30

Quality of Alternatives (higher score - higher perceived quality of alternatives)

Please consider the needs you specified in question 3. To which extent do you feel these particular needs could be fulfilled in alternative relationships (e.g., by another dating partner, friends, family)?
(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

To what extent do you feel that people other than the person in this relationship with whom you might become involved are very appealing?
(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

To what extent do you believe that you would do fine without this relationship? (e.g. because you believe you could find someone else who could meet your personal needs)
 (0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

Score (sum): of 30

Investment Size

In most relationships, we invest things. We may invest time and money, share personal secrets, share intellectual ideas. Over time, memories are created and shared. A sense of personal identity (who we are) may be linked to the other person in our relationship. In short, relationships differ in the extent to which we have invested in them and in the magnitude of what we would lose if we would end this relationship.

Please list your most important investment in this current relationship (it can be helpful to consider what you would “lose” if this relationship was to end).

Consider the investments that you listed in the previous question. How great would you rate your investment in this relationship?
 (0 = no investment at all - 10 = a very high level of investment)

To what extent do you feel that you have put a great deal into your relationship that you would lose if the relationship were to end?
 (0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

To what extent does the size of your investment cause you to keep this relationship alive?

(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

Score (sum): of 30

Step 2: Analyzing Commitment Level

To what extent do you want this relationship to last for a very long time?

(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

To what extent are you committed to maintaining this relationship?

(0 = not at all - 10 = very much)

How upset would you feel if this relationship were to end in the near future?

(0 = not upset at all - 10 = very upset)

Score (sum): of 30

Step 3: Entering the Scores in the Scoring form

Use the scoring form in on p. 47 to enter the four sum scores.

Step 4: Reflection

What do you notice when you look at the results of this analysis?

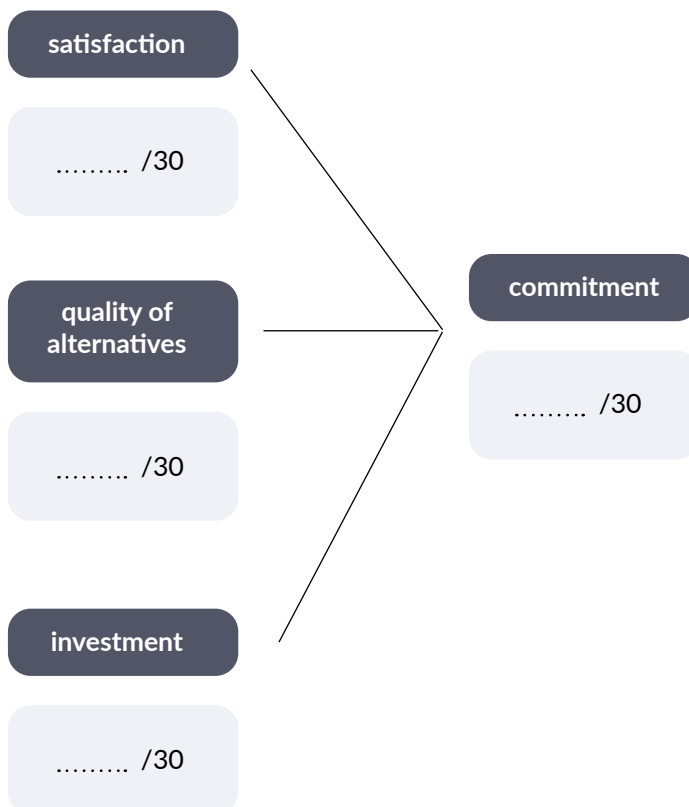
When you consider the reason(s) why you chose to analyze this relationship, what can you learn from this exercise?

Do you feel your current level of commitment contributes in an equal way to your personal well-being?

If not, what is needed or might be needed to increase your personal well-being in this relationship?

What actions can you take?

Scoring form:



■ MINDLESS VERSUS MINDFUL LISTENING

Mindful listening involves the practice of bringing full, moment-to-moment awareness to the speaker's message. Mindful listening occurs when we listen with an open and non-judgmental awareness to the other person's story. We let go of all our thoughts, ideas, opinions and beliefs and just listen to the other person. Mindful listening comes from an inner calm and present state of awareness. At first glance, mindful listening may sound easy. However, we often fail to listen mindfully. Rather than being present in this moment, we find ourselves thinking of the future or the past while listening. Rather than focusing on the conversation only, we are checking our phones at the same time. Instead of listening in an open and non-judgmental way, we judge the other person based on our own beliefs. We also often "listen" to other while thinking about how we are going to respond to that person. In this exercise, participants will practice and experience mindful and mindless listening.

► GOAL

The goal of this tool is to allow participants to practice and experience mindful and mindless communication. They will experience what it is like to:

- listen in a mindful way
- listen in a mindless way
- talk to someone who is listening in a mindful way
- talk to someone who is not listening in a mindful way

► ADVICE

- Mindful listening is not only relevant in our day to day encounters, but can also be considered an essential skill in coaching and clinical practice. For many clients, there may be no other relationship in their lives where they are heard in the way they are heard by their helping professional. This exercise may therefore also be very suitable for helping professionals who aim to cultivate mindfulness in their practice.
- This exercise is a great way to introduce the principle of mindful listening to participants. After reviewing the exercise, the instructor may inform participants about the key elements of mindful listening, as shown on p. 52. Note that the duration of this exercise can easily be adapted. First, the available time for conversations can be adjusted. Second, the instructor may decide to let all participants experience all four roles (mindful/unmindful listening, being exposed to a mindful/unmindful listener) or just one or two of these roles as described in this exercise.

► INSTRUCTIONS**Step 1: Inform participants about the upcoming exercise**

“In the following exercise, you will team up with another person and have a few brief conversations with this person. You will take the role of both the talker and the listener in this exercise. Before you start engaging in these conversations, I will hand you an instruction note. This note will tell you what to do. Please keep this note to yourself and make sure that the other person does not read your instructions.”

Step 2: Mindless listening

Cut out the instruction notes on p. 50 and hand them to your participants. If there is an uneven number of participants, create one group of three participants, in which two participants listen and one participant talks. Ask participants to apply the instructions on their note as well as possible. Inform them that this exercise takes 5 minutes and that you will alert them when time is over.

Step 3: Mindful listening

Now collect the instruction notes and hand the new instruction notes displayed on p. 51 to your participants. Make sure that participants switch roles; participants who were talking should now become listeners and the other way around.

Step 4: Evaluation

After 5 minutes, ask participants to finish the conversation and collect the instruction notes. Do not reveal the setup and the purpose of this exercise yet. Ask participants to reflect on the following questions:

- What was it like in the first round to be the story teller?
- What was it like in the first round to be the listener?
- What was it like in the second round to be the story teller?
- What was it like in the second round to be the listener?
- What could be the purpose of this exercise?

Now explain the setup and purpose of this exercise.

- Are there times that you recognize yourself as a mindless listener? If so, when?
- Are there times that you recognize yourself as a mindful listener? If so, when?

Mindless listening instructions for participants

Instructions Role: Story teller

Talk to the other person about your favorite movie. What is this movie about? Why do you like this movie so much? What do you find most appealing? What do you remember most of this movie? Etc.

Instructions Role: Listener

The other person is about to talk about something. While the other person is talking, try not to pay attention to the story. Let your mind wander. Wherever you are, try not to be in this moment with this conversation.

Mindful listening instructions for participants

Instructions Role: Story teller

Talk to the other person about your favorite holiday destination. Where is it? Why do you like it so much? What do you find most appealing? What do you remember most of this place? Etc.

Instructions Role: Listener

The other person is about to talk about something. While the other person is talking, try to fully pay attention to the story. Make the conversation the most important object of your attention. Be present with the other person and his story. If you get distracted, get back to the conversation in this moment.

Key Ingredients of Mindful Listening

Mindful listening involves the following key elements:

Single focus

Stop doing other things. Make the conversation the primary focus of attention.

Present moment focus

Set your intention to listen with full attention.
Rather than thinking about the past or future, be present in this conversation, right here, right now.

Connect

Look the person in the eye when he or she is speaking.
Listen to what the person is saying and how he or she saying it.
Provide room for the person to speak freely.

No judgment

Try to become aware of your judgments and let go of them as far as you can.
Judging is thinking rather than deep and open listening.

Redirect

Notice when you get distracted during the conversation (by thoughts or sounds), let them go and redirect attention back to the conversation.

■ ACTIVE-CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONDING

Research by Gable and colleagues (2004) has shown that sharing personal positive events with others is associated with increased daily positive affect and well-being. This process has been referred to as capitalization (Langston, 1994). Capitalization can be understood as an interpersonal process involving two key elements: (1) the sharer disclosing information about a positive event to the responder; and (2) the reaction (or the perceived reaction) of the responder.

Importantly, the potential benefits of capitalizing on positive events are dependent on the reaction of the responder. There are four possible ways in which one can respond to the good events in others' lives. They are: active-constructive, passive-constructive, active-destructive, passive-destructive.

Research shows that only the active-constructive response is beneficial to the responder and to the relationship between the sharer and responder. An active-constructive reaction involves responding to the positive disclosure with enthusiasm. For instance, when someone shares that he managed to get the raise in salary he had been working toward, an active-constructive response of the other person could be: "That is awesome! I know how hard you have been working on that."

This type of response increases the savoring of positive feelings involved (Reis et al., 2010). The other three response styles are negatively related to well-being (Gable et al., 2004). In this exercise participants will experience how the four different response styles can influence their personal well-being.

► GOAL

This group exercise introduces participants to the concept of capitalization interactions. A participant talks about something positive that happened to him/her and another person responds to that disclosure. The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of how one's reactions to the good news of others can affect their well-being.

► ADVICE

- This exercise works great as a practical introduction to the topic capitalization. After experiencing the effects of different types of responses, participants can be introduced to the theoretical underpinnings of capitalization.
- Participants may worry that their responses will sound phony or scripted when

they are asked to apply the active constructive response style. In practice, however, once the participants start they exercise, they generally find it easy to do.

- This exercise may also be used for clients who would like to have more satisfying relationships and it may be particularly valuable for couples. As the practitioner, it is appropriate to help clients to distinguish between the four different types of responding. Most importantly, it is important to have clients practice active constructive responding so that it becomes part of their everyday conversations.
- Participants can practice with building a more active-constructive responding style at home by first monitoring their usual style of responding. This can be done by keeping a daily log of their interpersonal interactions. When they notice that they are not engaging in an active-constructive style frequently enough, they may write down what could have been said to make the response active and constructive and then think about how this style could be used more often in the future.
- In order to cultivate a more active-constructive response style, participants may also contact others with whom they failed to respond to in an active-constructive way and apologize for not being more engaged or positive with them.
- When using this exercise in an educational context, enhanced understanding of the four different styles may be accomplished by asking clients to generate examples of positive events and possible reactions that would fall into the four different categories. Preferably, this step is carried out after explaining the research and theory underlying the communication styles. Another person responds to that disclosure. The goal of this exercise is to increase awareness of how one's reactions to the good news of others can affect their well-being.

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► INSTRUCTIONS

This exercise introduces participants to the concept of capitalization interactions, in which one person talks about something positive that happened to him or her and another person responds to that disclosure.

Participants will receive different instructions based on the condition and the role to which they are randomly assigned. Please note that some time is needed for participants to prepare these instructions in advance.

Step 1: Create two groups

Divide participants into two equal groups: interviewers and interviewees. If there is an odd number of participants, put the extra person in the interviewee group.

Step 2: Hand out instructions to the interviewees

Give each interviewee a copy of the instructions shown in on p. 57.

Step 3: Hand out instructions to the interviewers

In this exercise, there are four different types of instructions for the interviewers. These different instructions are shown on p. 58 and 59.

Each interviewer will randomly receive one of these four instructions. It is important for the instructor to not draw any attention to the fact that there are different instructions to make sure that participants are not aware of this fact. One possible way to do this is to print the different instructions and randomly order them in a pile. Next, each interviewer is handed one sheet.

Step 4: Facilitate group discussion

Ask participants to discuss their experiences with the whole group. First, ask the interviewees to reflect on how they felt during the conversation and how it was to talk about the positive event. This question will result in different reactions. Next, inform participants that each interviewer had a different type of instruction. Interviewers may show their instructions to the interviewee. You may decide to add some additional time for participants to discuss their experiences in pairs.

Step 5: Discuss the theoretical background

Start with explaining the concept of capitalization. Capitalization refers to sharing personal positive events with others.

The potential benefits of capitalizing on positive events are dependent on the reaction of the responder. Explain that research has shown that this reaction has two important dimensions, namely a) how active versus passive the reaction is, and b) how constructive versus destructive the reaction is.

Ad A.: An active reaction involves a responder who shows interest and involvement when the event is shared. In case of a passive reaction, the responder is reserved and subdued in his or her reply.

Ad B: A constructive reaction involves a responder who is positive and supportive when the event is shared. In contrast, a destructive reaction involves a responder who is negative and unsupportive when the event is shared. Combined, these two dimensions result in four different response styles: active-constructive, active-destructive, passive-constructive and passive-destructive.

Next, provide a concrete example of the four reaction types (see p. 57) and explain to the group that research has shown that an active-constructive response is best for the person who is capitalizing on the positive event in that they report increased wellbeing and increased relationship satisfaction. There is a feeling of being understood and cared for by the listener. When the listener's response is passive or destructive, negative emotions are often elicited (Gable et al., 2004; Gable, Gonzaga, & Strachman, 2006). There is a feeling of being misunderstood and not being cared for.

Overview of four different response styles

	Constructive	Destructive
Active	<p>Positive response, enthusiasm, smiling, maintaining eye contact, displaying positive emotions.</p> <p>Example: <i>"You will become a father? That's great news! I am sure you will be a great dad!"</i></p>	<p>Negative response, focusing on the down-side, negative non-verbal cues.</p> <p>Example: <i>"You will become a father? Believe me, you can forget about having any free time for yourself."</i></p>
Passive	<p>Positive response, happy, but lacking enthusiasm, little to no active emotional expression.</p> <p>Example: <i>"You will become a father? That's nice, man."</i></p>	<p>Negative response, lacking interest, little to no eye contact, turning away.</p> <p>Example: <i>"You will become a father, huh?" Well, can you make sure to hand in those files in time?"</i></p>

Instructions for all interviewees

Please read the following instructions carefully:

In a few minutes, you will be interviewed about something positive that happened to you. It does not matter what kind of event you choose, how long ago it happened or how important it was. Just choose something positive that you feel comfortable talking about. The person interviewing you will ask you to describe the event and then may or may not ask additional questions.

During the interview, try to notice how you feel while talking about the event and how you feel about the way the interviewer is responding to your story.

Active-constructive Response Instructions

Please ask the person whom you are assigned to interview to describe his or her positive event. Do not show him or her your instructions.

While the other person is talking, you are going to try to react in a so-called active-constructive way. An active-constructive response means that you:

- are highly involved in the exchange
- react with interest and enthusiasm regarding the event
- react positively towards the person
- actively ask questions about the event
- actively ask questions about the impact of the event
- make enthusiastic comments, such as “that sounds wonderful” or “you must be (have been) really proud
- make good eye contact

In sum, your general attitude during the conversation is enthusiastic, excited and happy. Try to be an active and supportive interviewer.

Active-destructive Response Instructions

Please ask the person whom you are assigned to interview to describe his or her positive event. Do not show him or her your instructions.

While the other person is talking, you are going to try to react in a so-called active-destructive way. An active-destructive response means that you:

- are highly involved in the exchange
- minimize the importance of the positive event
- focus on the potential downsides of the positive event
- actively ask questions about any potential negative aspects regarding the event
- question the positivity of the event by asking questions such as “what is so ‘good’ about this good event?”

In sum, try to be an active but questioning interviewer, who attempts to make the shared event seem not so great in the first place.

Note: If you find it difficult to respond in this way, just remember that this is just an exercise. This interview is for demonstration purposes only and you and your interviewee will be discussing your responses and the instructions afterwards.

Passive-constructive Response Instructions

Please ask the person whom you are assigned to interview to describe his or her positive event. Do not show him or her your instructions.

While the other person is talking, you are going to try to react in a so-called passive-constructive way. An passive-constructive response means that you:

are not very involved in the exchange
react positively, but with reserved interest and enthusiasm regarding the event
do not ask additional questions about the event
do not elaborate on the statements of the other person

In sum, your responses should appear positive or supportive on the surface, but they are reserved and subtle. Try to be a pleasant but uninvolved interviewer.

Active-destructive Response Instructions

Please ask the person whom you are assigned to interview to describe his or her positive event. Do not show him or her your instructions.

While the other person is talking, you are going to try to react in a so-called passive-destructive way. An passive-destructive response means that you:

- are not very involved in the exchange
- show little or no interest in the positive event
- do not make much eye contact
- change the subject completely
- talk about yourself or about something unrelated to the positive event
- ask mundane questions about everyday life (e.g., “What did you have for breakfast this morning?”)

In sum, try to be a detached and uninterested interviewer.

Note: If you find it difficult to respond in this way, just remember that this is just an exercise. This interview is for demonstration purposes only and you and your interviewee will be discussing your responses and the instructions afterwards.

■ RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

A study by Lyubomirsky, Tkach, and Yelverton (2004) tested the impact of kindness on wellbeing. In their intervention, Lyubomirsky and colleagues asked students to perform five random acts of kindness per week, over the course of six weeks. These kindness acts were described as behaviors that benefit others or make others happy, typically at some cost to the giver (e.g., cook a meal for someone, donating blood, help someone with yard work or offering your seat to an elderly, disabled or pregnant person). Students in the control group did not receive any kindness instructions. The results of this study showed that the students who performed the random acts of kindness experienced an increase in happiness, whereas the control group experienced a slight decrease. These findings support the idea that deliberately practicing kindness positively impacts wellbeing.

► GOAL

The goal of the exercise is to increase wellbeing by consciously performing acts of kindness. Becoming more aware of one's own kind behaviour toward other people has been found to increase subjective happiness (Otake et al., 2006).

► ADVICE

This exercise is typically used as "homework" for the client. After the first week or so, the exercise can be evaluated in terms of effects for the client as well as his/her environment. How did people react? What did it feel like to act in this way? Inform clients that kindness can involve both small and big gestures such as letting a car merge in front of you or helping someone move.

► REFERENCES

- Lyubomirsky, S., Tkach, C., & Yelverton, J. (2004). Pursuing sustained happiness through random acts of kindness and counting one's blessings: Tests of two six-week interventions. *Unpublished data*, University of California, Riverside, Department of Psychology.
- Otake, K., Shimai, S., Tanaka-Matsumi, J., Otsui, K., & Frederickson, B. L. (2006). Happy people become happier through kindness: A counting kindnesses intervention. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 7, 361-375.

► INSTRUCTIONS

Small acts of kindness can brighten another's day. Every week, commit to making

five random acts of kindness. They can be large or small, it is your choice. The template below can help keep track:

This week I helped others by:

Act of Kindness #1

.....

Act of Kindness #2

.....

Act of Kindness #3

.....

Act of Kindness #4

.....

Act of Kindness #5

.....

Next week I intend to help others by:

Act of Kindness #1

.....

Act of Kindness #2

.....

Act of Kindness #3

.....

Act of Kindness #4

.....

Act of Kindness #5

.....

■ GRATITUDE FOR IMPORTANT PEOPLE

Other people can have an important impact on our happiness. For instance, past research has found that people report having happier feelings when with others (Pavot, Diener, & Fujita, 1990). Moreover, other studies have found a correlation between satisfaction with friends and satisfaction with life (Campbell et al., 1976; Liang et al., 1980; Rhodes, 1980). This exercise is about feeling and experiencing gratitude for important people in one's life.

▶ GOAL

The goal of this exercise twofold. First, the exercise can help to increase awareness of the importance of other people in one's life. Second, this exercise can be used to help clients experience the feeling of heartfelt grateful.

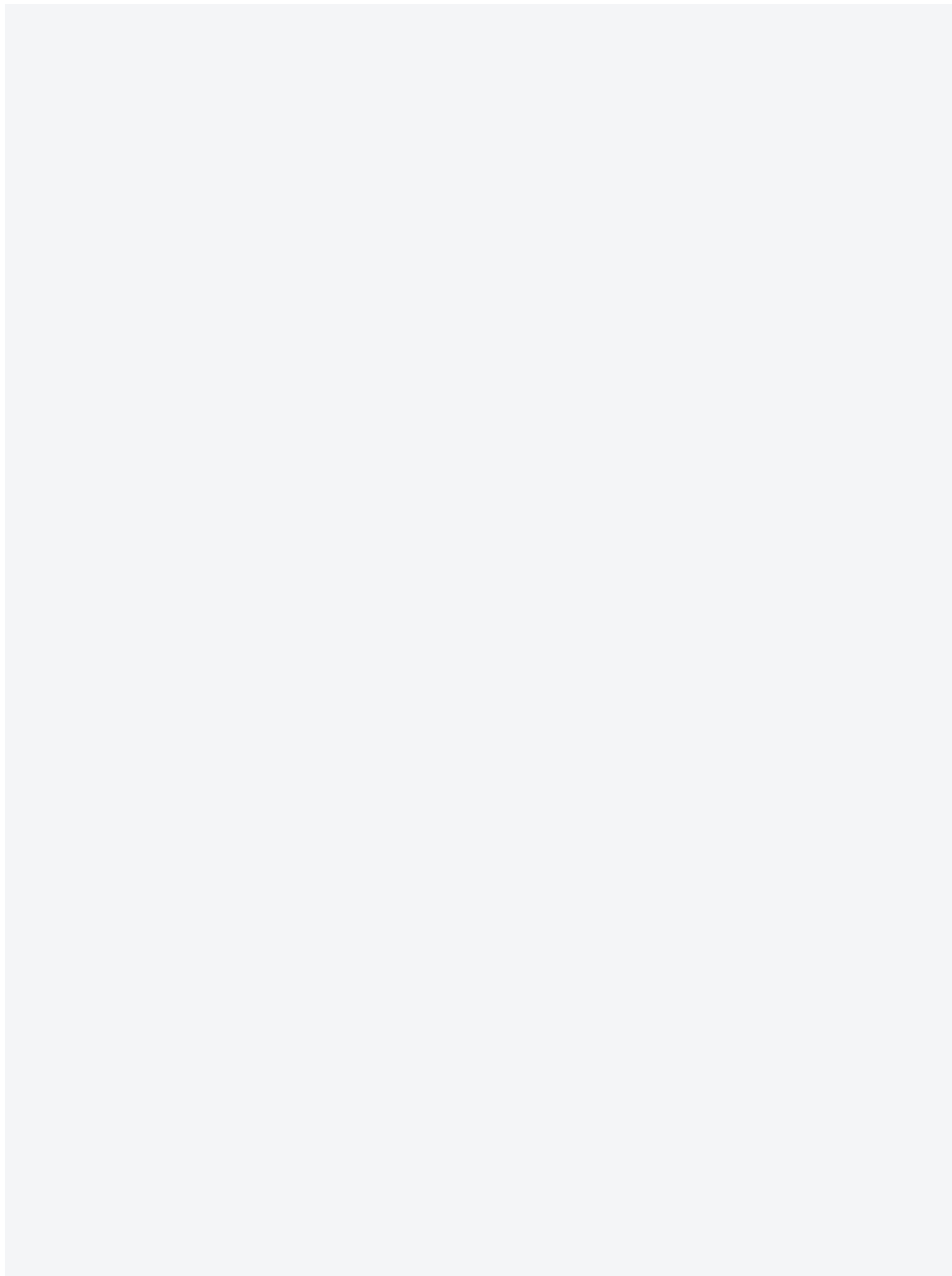
▶ ADVICE

This exercise can be used in a session with an individual client but also works very well in groups. Clients may know someone in their life who has made a significant contribution to their personal well-being. To raise awareness on gratitude, ask participants to pay attention to what they feel during the exercise and discuss this afterwards. As a practitioner, you may ask your client what they notice when they talk about these people that they are grateful for. How do they characterize or describe the experience of gratitude?

▶ REFERENCES

- Campbell, A., Converse, P. E., & Rodgers, W. L. (1976). *The quality of American life*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.
- Liang, J., Kahana, E., & Doherty, E. (1980). Financial well-being among the aged: A further elaboration. *Journal of Gerontology*, 35, 409-420.
- Pavot, W., Diener, E. D., & Fujita, F. (1990). Extraversion and happiness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11, 1299-1306.
- Rhodes, A. A. (1980). The correlates of life satisfaction in a sample of older Americans from a rural area (Doctoral dissertation, University of Arkansas, 1980). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 41, 1958-9A. (University Microfilms No. 80-26, 072).

Take a moment to think about the people in your life who have influenced you in positive and meaningful ways. These can be family members (parents, grandparents, children, spouse, etc.), teachers, bosses, or even an iconic role model. Think about how these people have influenced and contributed to your life. Now, take a few minutes to write down who they are, what is the nature of your relationship with them, and why you are so grateful to have them in your life.



■ APOLOGIZING EFFECTIVELY

Despite best intentions, people violate other people's expectations, breach promises and commitments, and communicate in deceptive ways. In other words, people willingly or unwillingly hurt others from time to time. Apologies are often considered effective tools to restore the possible damage in trust that can occur as a result of these actions (Tomlinson, Dineen, & Lewicki, 2004). In many cases, apologizing is an essential step towards forgiveness and reconciliation.

Indeed, research has shown that providing an apology can be effective because expressing the appropriate words can reveal that the violator understands that some events have occurred which damaged trust (see Fehr, Gelfand, & Nag, 2010 for a review) and that the issue must be addressed.

An important question in this respect involves the effectiveness of an apology. How can we apologize effectively? A study by Lewicki, Polin, and Lount (2016) investigated whether certain components of an apology were perceived as more critical for the apology to be perceived as effective. Apologies for a trust violation were perceived as more effective when they contained a greater number of the following components: an acknowledgment of responsibility, an explanation of what went wrong, an expression of regret, an offer of repair, a declaration of repentance, and a request for forgiveness. Interestingly, the results also showed that while more components are better than fewer, some components are more important than others. An acknowledgement of responsibility and an offer of repair were considered the most important components, while a request for forgiveness was considered the least important. This tool was designed to offer clients a structural approach to effectively apologize for their wrong doings.

► GOAL

The goal of this exercise is to assist clients in making an effective apology. The elements described in this exercise are likely to create an effective apology because they satisfy the psychological needs of the offended person.

► ADVICE

- Clients who struggle making apologies may benefit from practicing with their practitioner before actually making the apology. The practitioner may take the role of the victim and provide feedback on the nature and perceived effectiveness of the apology.
- Clients may choose to offer the apology directly, in a face-to-face conversation

or in a written form. Both types have their own benefits and downsides. On the positive side, a written form allows for time to carefully address all the elements needed in an effective apology. On the negative side, a written apology may seem more “avoidant” and may be subject to misinterpretation because of important non-written information (tone of voice, facial expressions, etc.) is absent.

- For some clients, expressing remorse (Step 3) can be very challenging, because it involves acknowledging disappointment in oneself. In order to share these feelings, clients must overcome their fear of showing vulnerability. It can be helpful for a client to practice putting himself in the victim’s shoes to better understand his perspective (empathy), and then also look into the victim’s eyes when delivering the apology. What would you like to hear if you were hurt in this way? Can you understand that sharing these feelings may help to restore the bond between the two of you? In this way, the importance of showing vulnerability can become more obvious.

► REFERENCES

- Fehr, R., Gelfand, M. J., & Nag, M. (2010). The road to forgiveness: A meta-analytic synthesis of its situational and dispositional correlates. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 894-914.
- Lewicki, R. J., Polin, B., & Lount, R. B. (2016). An exploration of the structure of effective apologies. *Negotiation and Conflict Management Research*, 9, 177-196.
- Tomlinson, E., Dineen, B., & Lewicki, R. J. (2004). The road to reconciliation: Antecedents of victim willingness to reconcile following a broken promise. *Journal of Management*, 30, 165-187.

► INSTRUCTIONS

The goal of this exercise is to assist clients in making an effective apology. The elements described in this exercise are likely to create an effective apology because they satisfy the psychological needs of the offended person.

Step 1. Acknowledge

Acknowledge the offense and take responsibility. Show the other person that you recognize:

- **who was responsible**
“I’m sorry, I made a mistake” (using the pronoun “I” is important here)

- **who was harmed**
“I realize that I hurt you...”
- **the nature of the offense**
“... by making that insensitive joke”

Note that this is in sharp contrast with the way apologies are often made:

- **failing to allocate responsibility**
“Yes, mistakes were made”
- **vague statements about who was hurt**
“I see that some people may feel offended”
- **failing to acknowledge the specific offense**
“... by whatever I said”

Step 2. Provide an explanation

Provide an explanation for the offense that makes clear that:

- **it was not your intention to hurt the other person**
“It was never my intention to hurt you and make you feel this way”
- **it will not happen again**
“I will do everything to not let this happen again”

It is important to note that explanations should not sound like excuses (“I was really busy and had a tough day at my work”). Many excuses come across as shallow defenses and can be counterproductive. Moreover, explanations should not sound like attempts to blame the victim (“I just could no longer stand the way you were acting”).

Step 3. Express remorse

When hurting someone, it is common to feel shame, embarrassment, regret, humiliation, or remorse. By expressing these feelings, you communicate to the victim that you recognize your mistake and the suffering it caused (“I feel really badly about what happened. For days I have felt embarrassed about how I let you down”).

Step 4. Make amends

An effective apology reflects an effort to repair the damage done. It is important to first ask the offended person what a possible reparation may look like before engaging in actions to restore the relationship or to alleviate personal feelings of guilt. Reparation of damage may include compensation for lost resources (financial) or behavioral actions (e.g. being more honest).

■ EIGHT STEPS TO FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is described as the conscious, intentional act of releasing feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed or betrayed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness (Baskin, & Enright, 2004). Forgiveness is not condoning or excusing a perpetrator's behavior, nor is it reconciling or forgetting. To condone or excuse wrongful behavior is to suggest that there was no unfairness. Forgiveness, by comparison, is the choice to abandon resentment and offer goodwill in the face of unfairness (Baskin & Enright, 2004).

Helping clients learn how to forgive those who have hurt them is a valuable undertaking in therapy. Holding onto interpersonal resentment can have a significant and lasting impact on our client's wellbeing. Each time the client is reminded of a particular act of wrongdoing by a person in his or her life, negative thoughts and feelings arise, which may impact mood, personal relationships, and daily functioning. In a meta-analysis that compared nine studies investigating the efficacy of forgiveness interventions within counseling, it was discovered that "process-based" forgiveness interventions were effective in increasing forgiveness and decreasing negative psychological states such as anxiety and anger (Baskin & Enright, 2004). Process-based interventions help clients explore the injustices they have experienced, assess the amount of felt pain and anger, and understand the ways in which harboring that anger and pain may be personally harmful. This tool offers clients an eight-step process-based guide to forgiving those who have hurt or betrayed them.

► GOAL

The goal of this tool is to help clients learn to forgive and achieve peace of mind.

► ADVICE

- Practitioners should practice patience in this intervention in order to allow the client to take their time in moving through these steps of forgiveness. Practitioners may benefit from bringing to mind personal experiences of interpersonal betrayal to help them remember how difficult it can be to forgive those who have hurt us.
- It is important to emphasize to clients that forgiveness is different from reconciliation. Reconciliation is the act of coming together after disagreement or transgression in mutual trust. The client need not necessarily reconcile with the person he or she is forgiving.

- Clients should consider their own safety before extending kindness and goodwill towards the person they are trying to forgive (Step 7). If interacting with the person could put the client in danger, suggest that they find another way to express their feelings of forgiveness, such as by writing in a diary or doing a forgiveness or compassion meditation.
- It is important to clarify to clients that to forgive is not necessarily to forget. In fact, when one forgives, he or she rarely forgets the event. People tend to remember traumatic events, but on forgiving, a person may remember in new ways—without continuing to harbor the deeply held accompanying anger.

► REFERENCES

Baskin, T. W., & Enright, R. D. (2004). Intervention studies on forgiveness: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 82*, 79-90.

► INSTRUCTIONS

The goal of this tool is to help clients learn to forgive and achieve peace of mind. Throughout life, we will be hurt by others. Choosing to forgive these people is a way to release the distress that emerges when we are reminded of the betrayal. However, forgiveness is often easier said than done, and the process of truly forgiving a person can be a long and challenging journey. This tool aims to support you on this journey, by offering eight essential steps of forgiveness. These eight steps were developed by renowned forgiveness researcher, Dr. Robert Enright, who recommends that you move through them at your own pace.

Step 1. Make a list of people to forgive

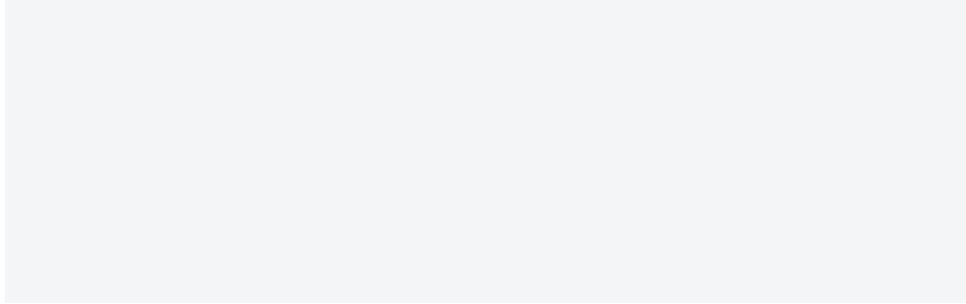
Make a list of people who have hurt you or betrayed you in your life. This hurt or betrayal must be enough to warrant the effort to forgive. So, for instance, a partner cheating on you or a close friend spreading vicious gossip about you would likely warrant the effort to forgive, whereas the supermarket clerk ignoring your attempt to make small talk would not. Once you have your list of people, rate your level of hurt associated with each person on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the least pain and 10 being the most pain.

■	/10
■	/10
■	/10
■	/10
■	/10
■	/10
■	/10

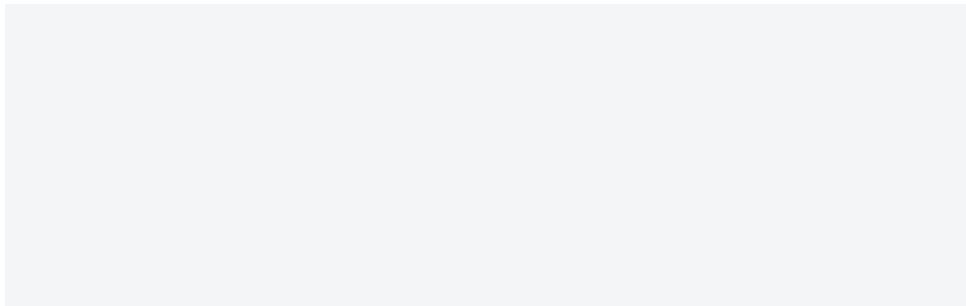
Step 2. Describe the impact of betrayal

Starting with the person who has caused you the least pain (i.e., the person with the lowest score out of 10 in step 1), describe a time where this person hurt or betrayed you in the space below. Allow yourself to feel any difficult emotions that come up as you do this.

Consider how this person negatively impacted your life; what psychological and/or physical harm did he or she cause you?



How has your view of the world, and of people generally, changed as a result of this incident?



Step 3. Consider the other person's pain points

Have a think about this person's life prior to hurting you. What was life like for them while growing up? In what way have they been hurt or betrayed themselves? Could these wounds have made them more likely to hurt you? What kinds of extra pressures or stresses were happening in this person's life at the time he or she betrayed you? These are this person's pain points; those areas that make him or her vulnerable and human. Awareness of these pain points may help you understand why or how this person could have disgraced you. Write down as many pain points as you can think of in the space on the next page.

-
-
-
-
-

Step 4. Welcome the feeling of compassion

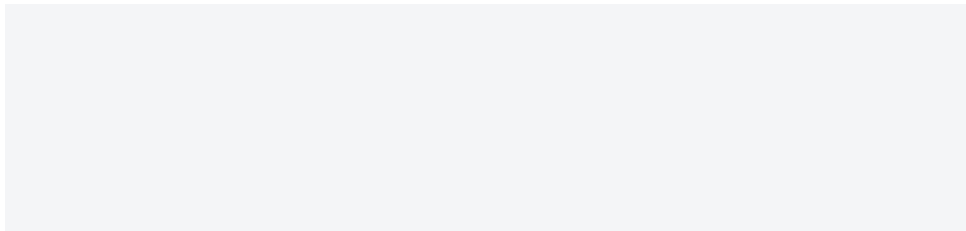
Become aware of any slight change in your heart toward this person as a result of Step 3. Oftentimes when we consider that which makes a person vulnerable, we feel a sense of compassion for their pain, even when they have unjustly caused us pain. It is less likely that this person acted entirely maliciously and more likely that he or she was confused, misguided, or even mistaken. He or she may deeply regret his or her actions. If you notice a feeling of compassion, welcome it and allow it to arise.

Step 5. Own your pain

See if you can bear the pain that this person has caused you so that you do not end up projecting that pain back onto the person who betrayed you. We must realize that our pain is ours to work through, and should not be thrown back onto others.

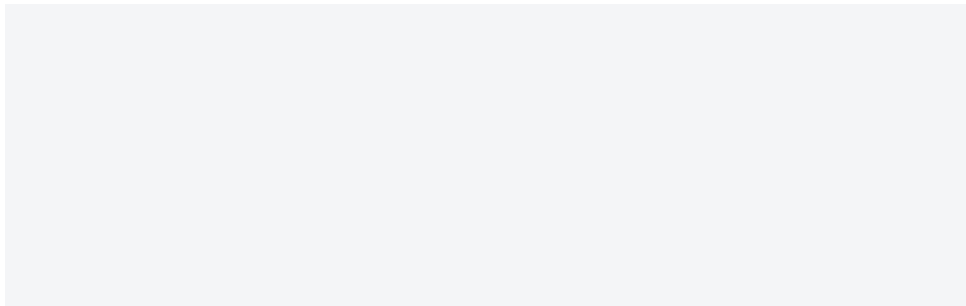
Step 6. Decide to forgive

It is now time to decisively forgive this person. Make the decision to forgive this person, understanding that to forgive is to extend mercy toward him or her; that is, to offer kindness, compassion, warmth, and generosity in order to reduce your feelings of resentment. Remember that forgiveness does not mean that you are excusing this person's actions or tossing justice aside; forgiveness and justice can be practiced together. In the space below, state your forgiveness by saying something along the lines of "I choose to forgive X."



Step 7. A gift of forgiveness

Offer the person who hurt you a gesture of your forgiveness. This does not need to be a physical gift; a smile, a returned text, or a good word about him or her to others, would suffice. In the space below, write down at least one thing that you would feel comfortable offering the person you are forgiving.



■ MANAGING TOXIC RELATIONSHIPS

The quality of social relationships is one of the most consistent predictors of subjective well-being (e.g., Diener & Seligman, 2002). In general, individuals who have satisfying relationships report feeling happy more frequently and feeling sadness less frequently, and report being more satisfied with their lives than those who do not have satisfying relationships.

However, social relationships can also be a major source of distress and misery (e.g., Rook, 1984). These negative social relationships are social ties that reduce the individual's well-being. Considering the significant impact that negative relationships can have on wellbeing, this tool was created to help clients identify whether any of their close relationships are toxic in this way. The tool then provides guidance on how to manage such negative, toxic relationships.

► GOAL

The goal of this exercise is to help clients identify toxic relationships in their lives and decide whether to and how to move away from these relationships in order to lessen their negative impact.

► ADVICE

- This exercise can best be considered a starting point for managing toxic relationships, as its goal is primarily to increase a person's awareness of the nature of toxic relationships and their personal costs. The exercise ends with coming up with identifying actionable next steps (Step 7), and follow through of this step requires additional time and support. The practitioner may offer suggestions during this last step, especially with regards to mental and emotional care (i.e., in line with professional psychological advice).
- It is important for practitioners to not coerce clients in any way as to how best to deal with a toxic relationship. Clients who have been involved in a toxic relationship for many years may have never considered their own power to change or break the relationship. Allow the client ample time to decide how to deal with the relationship and allow clients to make the choice themselves. Clients should never be forced to take a certain course of action.
- In the event that risk is disclosed during this exercise, such as physical or psychological abuse within a relationship, practitioners should make every effort to support these clients by linking them in with relevant support services (e.g. a local family violence organization).

► REFERENCES

- Diener, E., & Seligman, M. E. (2002). Very happy people. *Psychological Science*, 13, 81-84.
- Rook, K. S. (1984). The negative side of social interaction: impact on psychological well-being. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 46, 1097-1108.

► INSTRUCTIONS

All too often, we hang on to relationships that do not serve us. For whatever reason, we put the relationship or the other person before ourselves/our wellbeing. In this exercise, we will have a look at some of your difficult close personal relationships and work out whether it is in your best interest to continue having these people in your life.

Step 1. Identify difficult personal relationships

Make a list of up to 5 personal relationships that you find challenging. In table 1 below, in the left column, write down the person’s name. In the second column, describe your relationship (e.g., step-mother).

Table 1. My toxic relationships

Name	Relationship	Reasons for toxicity
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		

Step 2. Identify why the relationship is toxic

Consider what makes each of the above relationships toxic. You might like to use the list of reasons for why/how a relationship can be toxic for reference on the next page, as well as come up with your own. For each relationship, come up with

as many reasons or examples as you can think of, and write these down in the third column of Table 1.

- This person makes me feel unsafe
- Being around this person is emotionally distressing for me
- I feel nervous and on guard when I am around this person
- This person is manipulative or conniving
- I have felt this person push moral, ethical or legal boundaries
- I feel as though this person adds unnecessary challenges to my life
- I feel emotionally drained after dealing with this person
- I feel obliged to spend time with this person
- I feel bad about myself when I am with this person
- I do not want to spend time together
- Within this relationship, I give far more than I get in return
- My needs take a back seat to the needs of this person
- I do not feel listened to nor cared about in this relationship
- This person does not have many (if any) of the qualities I look for in a friend
- I feel like I am walking on eggshells when I am around this person
- I am unhappy with the way this person treats me or talks to me
- Other

Step 3. Choose a relationship to focus on

Consider the relationship that is most toxic for you at this point in your life. That is, which of the above-mentioned relationships is causing you the most stress at the moment? Write down this person’s name in the space below.

Step 4. Examine the amount of time and energy devoted to this relationship

We devote time and energy to our relationships both directly (through physical contact and communication) and indirectly (through thinking about the relationship and reacting emotionally to it). In the space below, write down the ways in which you, directly and indirectly, invest in this person/relationship.

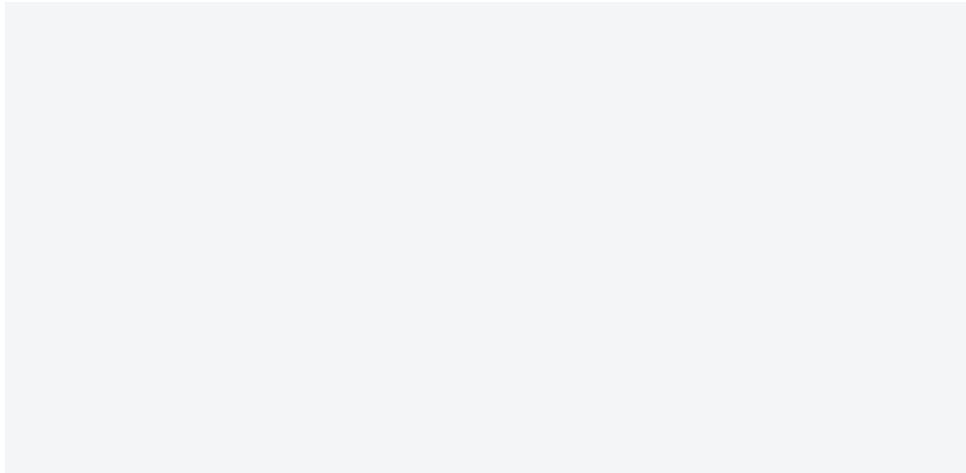
Direct: time and energy spent emailing, talking on the phone, messaging/texting, talking face-to-face, physical contact, and so on.

Indirect: time and energy spent thinking about and/or feeling upset (or other negative emotions) over the person/relationship.

Step 5. Examine the costs of the relationship

Now consider what you are missing out on because of the amount of time and energy you spend on this relationship (identified in step 4). For example, you might be missing out on an hour’s worth of sleep whilst thinking about this person during the night, or you might be missing out on quality time with your family due to obligatorily spending time with this person. Other common costs include: difficulty concentrating on work or study, less time availability to spend

with friends and loved ones, financial costs (e.g., meals out, phone bills), feeling physically drained after interacting with this person, lack of sleep, etc. Come up with as many costs as you can think of, and do not hold back! It is important for you to identify just how much this relationship is interfering with your life and your wellbeing.

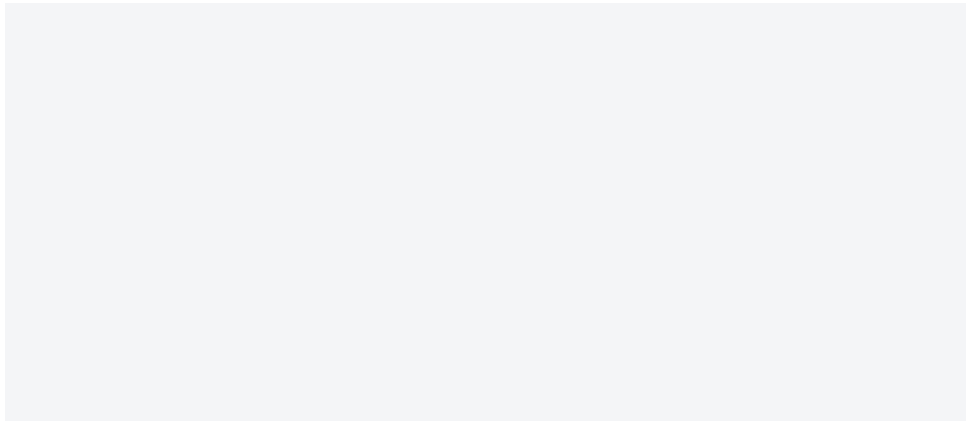


Step 6. Decide how to best manage this relationship

Ask yourself, what is the best action forward with regard to this negative relationship in your life? There are a number of actions that you can take to manage this relationship. You could:

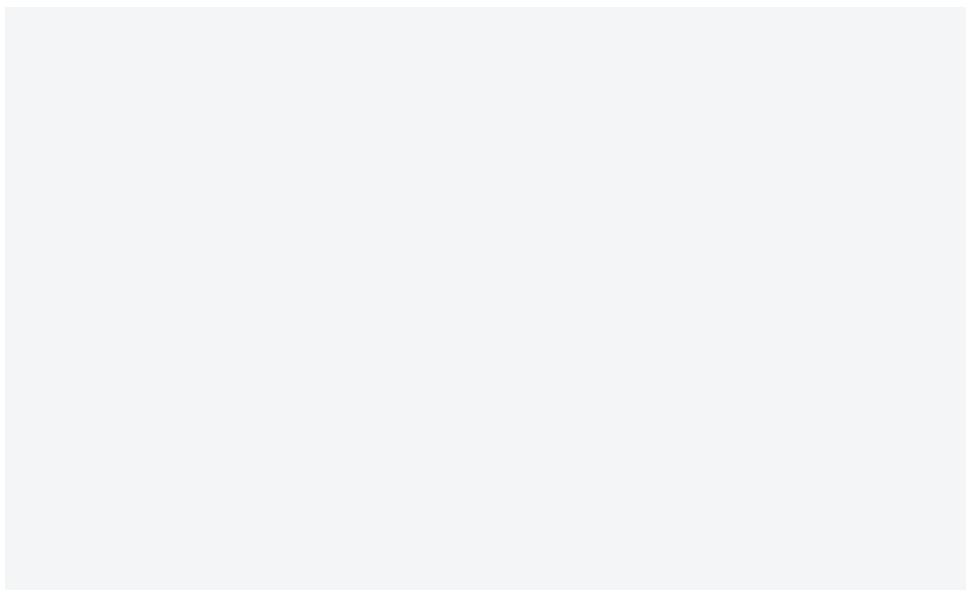
1. *Do nothing.* This option involves doing nothing, which means the relationship will stay the same; you will likely continue to feel the way you feel now, as well as miss out on those things that the relationship costs you.
2. *Take a step back.* This option involves lessening your level of contact and connection with the other person. For instance, reducing the amount of direct contact you have with this person (e.g., taking fewer phone calls, catching up with them less frequently), and/or reducing the degree of indirect impact (e.g., spending less time thinking or agonizing about the relationship, and learning to manage your emotional reactivity). This option is about setting healthy boundaries in an effort to put yourself and your wellbeing first.
3. *Leave.* This option involves ending the relationship, meaning that you will no longer invest in this relationship at all.

At this moment, which option is most feasible for you? Why?



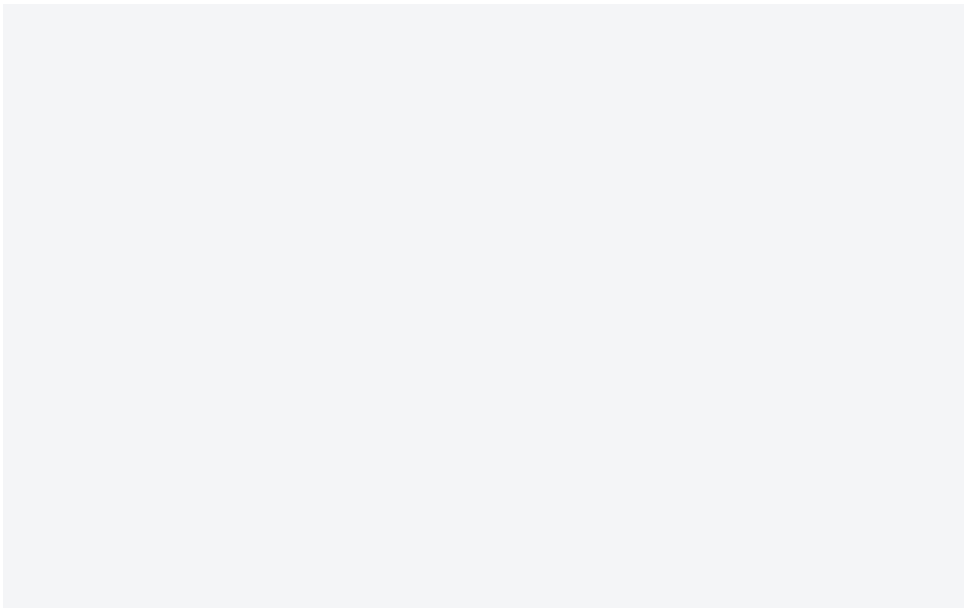
Step 7. Take action

What steps can you take to bring about your decision for this relationship (Step 6)? To help with this, look back on the ways in which you, directly and indirectly, invest in this person/relationship (Step 4) and for each of these, come up with at least one actionable step. For example, if you have decided to take a step back from the relationship (Option 2, Step 6), and you are currently spending one evening every week catching up with this person, an actionable step could be to change this catch up to monthly. In the space below, write down every possible thing that you could do to bring about your decision for this relationship.



Step 8. Make meaning from forgiveness

Can you find meaning and purpose in what you have experienced? For instance, have you learned anything new about yourself and how you want to be and behave in this world? Are you more motivated to work toward preventing future injustices of a similar kind? Consider this in as little or as much detail in the space below.



Once you have completed the process of forgiveness for one person on your list, select the next person in line to run through these eight steps with. Move up your list until you are forgiving the person who has hurt you the most.