

The Social Connection Planner

**A Tool to Help
You Better Meet
Your Social
Needs**

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Having unmet social needs is a very common root cause of distress in the 21st century.

Here's how this planner aims to help you:

Unmet Social Need	Relevant Tools
To connect with like-minded people who share the same opinions, ideas, interests, personalities or experiences as you	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Social Networking Resources (<i>pages 3-4</i>) » Meetings and Support Groups (<i>pages 5-6</i>) » Online Social Connection and Support Resources (<i>page 7</i>)
To share emotional intimacy with others – to feel a sense of closeness and the ability to share personal information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Social Networking Resources (<i>pages 3-4</i>) » Conversation Menus (<i>pages 9-10</i>) » Improving Your Communication Skills (<i>pages 12-15</i>)
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Social Networking Resources



Top Tip

It's worth reminding yourself that a lot of us are nervous when meeting new people. You can use [The Thinking Slow Method](#) as a tool to help you handle distress during social situations. Be particularly mindful of black and white thinking, the unworthy story and the disconnected story.

[Our Top Pick: Meetup](#)

"Find Meetups so you can do more of what matters to you. Or create your own group and meet people near you who share your interests."

[Citysocializer](#)

"Citysocializer is the local, social life app to do more of the things you like with people going out around you. A place that combines having fun with new people offline, and a place to stay in touch with them online as your new network grows.

The latest pop-ups and art shows, running in the parks, a glass of wine after work or a coffee and Sunday movie - the community host socials for each other and invite to you to join them.

Knowing how tough it could be to meet new like-minded people in cities - whether to find a better social life or being new to a city - we nurtured our first real world community in London and today have grown to every major city in the UK, New York, Chicago and Washington."

[BumbleBFF](#)

"Meet your new best friend, partner in crime, wing woman, workout partner, or anything else that strikes your fancy."

[Hey! VINA \(Women Only\)](#)

"Your fave app for women's friendship! Swipe to meet new friends, join communities, take quizzes, & read awesome articles to live your best life."

[We3](#)

"We3 is a free mobile app that privately connects you to the most compatible people around you. By using social science and machine learning, we have developed the most sophisticated compatibility algorithm out there, exclusively to make new friends (no romantic shenanigans).

It takes over 150 factors into consideration, including personality, interests, worldview, hobbies, values and much more.



Here's how it works:

You start by answering questions about your yourself. Then, We3 connects you in group chats of 3 incredibly compatible people. You can see all your shared traits, mutual interests and common goals."

Patook

"Patook is the strictly platonic friend making app. Make friends with amazing people nearby who share your interests."



Meetings and Support Groups

[Local Minds](#) – Join your local Mind to access talking therapies, peer support groups, advocacy, crisis care, and employment and housing support.

[Rethink Mental Illness](#) – Rethink have around 110 registered groups across England. Activities vary and can include a focus on: self-help, information, peer support, campaigning, and fundraising. Many groups include all of these.

[USA Support Groups](#) – Access a list of support groups collated by Mental Health America.

[Adults with Autism Meetup Groups](#) – Meetup has a number of autism groups around the world, allowing you to meet others in your local area with autism to talk and share experiences.

[LGBTQ Meetup Groups](#) - Meetup has a number of LGBTQ groups around the world, allowing you to connect with other LGBTQ people in your local area.

[Cruse Bereavement Care](#) - Many local Cruse services offer groups where bereaved people can talk about what they are feeling and share advice. Groups might include: a set number of support sessions with the same group of people, friendship groups, family groups and groups for those in particular circumstances, such as those bereaved by suicide. You can also use the [NHS website](#) to find local bereavement support services.

[Bereaved Adult Meetup Groups](#) – Meetup has a number of bereavement groups around the world. Whether you are a caregiver and in the process of losing someone or already have lost someone, these groups allow you to talk about your challenges in a safe, supportive environment with people who have experienced it and understand.

[Gingerbread](#) – Gingerbread offers groups for single parents to get together, meet new people and share experiences.

[Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous](#) - SLAA is based on the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step programme. It's open to anyone who knows or thinks they have a problem with sex addiction, love addiction, romantic obsession, co-dependent relationships, fantasy addiction and/or sexual, social and emotional anorexia. [Here](#) are 12 characteristics of sex and love addiction.

[Co-Dependents Anonymous](#) - CoDA is a set of informal self-help groups made up of men and women with a common interest in working through the problems that co-dependency has caused in their lives. The only requirement is the desire to develop functional and healthy relationships. Click [here](#) to read about the patterns and characteristics of co-dependence.

[Debtors Anonymous](#) - DA is a 12 step programme for anyone who wants to stop incurring unsecured debt. DA is open to anyone who is having problems with money and debt and thinks they may be a compulsive debtor. They hold meetings at which people share their experience, strength and hope with one another. Click [here](#) for the 'Do you have problems with debt?' test.

[Gamblers Anonymous \(US, UK, International\)](#) – GA is a twelve-step program for people who have a gambling problem. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop gambling. Click [here](#) for the 'Are you a compulsive gambler?' test.



SMART Recovery UK – SMART Recovery is a network of self-help meetings where, through open and confidential discussion, participants help each other and themselves with recovery from any kind of addictive behaviour. SMART Recovery is science-based. This means that they constantly track how the scientific evidence is developing about addictions and what really works to help people change their addictive behaviours.

Alcoholics Anonymous – AA is an international fellowship of men and women who have had a drinking problem. It is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. There are no age or education requirements. Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem. Click [here](#) for Drinkaware's 'Are you drinking too much?' test.

Al-Anon - Al-Anon provide support to family and friends of alcoholics, regardless of whether that person is still drinking or not. Al-Anon Family Groups hold regular meetings where members give each other understanding, strength and hope.

Drug Addicts Anonymous – DAA is based on the Alcoholics Anonymous 12 step programme. It attracts drug addicts from many walks of life, people who have used many different drugs, both legal and illegal. DAA aims to help people find solutions to their problems, and to enjoy life without drugs.

Cocaine Anonymous - CA is a Fellowship of men and women who share their experience, strength and hope with each other that they may solve their common problem and help others recover from their addiction. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using cocaine and all other mind-altering substances.

Narcotics Anonymous – NA uses their own text of 12 principles. They are open to anyone with a drug problem seeking help, regardless of what drug or combination of drugs have been used, and irrespective of age, sex, religion, race, creed or class. The only requirement for membership is a desire to stop using drugs.

Overeaters Anonymous – OA is a Fellowship of individuals who, through shared experience, strength and hope, are recovering from compulsive overeating. They welcome everyone who wants to stop eating compulsively. The OA Programme is based on the 12 step recovery programme of Alcoholics Anonymous. Click [here](#) for the 'Do I have a problem with food?' test.

Self-Harm Support Groups - Access a list of UK-based self-harm support groups collated by the Self Injury Support charity.

Women's Trust UK – Woman's Trust is a specialist mental health charity, providing support groups, free counselling and therapy for women who have experienced domestic abuse.

Refuge UK – Refuge offer a range of support services for both male and female victims of domestic violence in the UK.

National Domestic Violence Hotline Resources (US) – Access a list of domestic violence support organisations collated by the National Domestic Violence Hotline.



Online Social Connection and Support Resources

[Our Top Pick: Reddit \(Website and App\)](#)

"There's a subreddit about everything, for anyone and everyone to post, share, vote and discuss. Just about every topic and subject imaginable. Feeling chatty? Strike up a convo using their new chat feature. Share and discuss posts with other redditors."

- » [Mental Health](#)
- » [C-PTSD](#)
- » [PTSD](#)
- » [Stress](#)
- » [Anxiety Help](#)
- » [Anxiety](#)
- » [Social Anxiety](#)
- » [Depression Help](#)
- » [Depression](#)

[Sanvello \(App\)](#)

"Stress, anxiety, and depression can get in the way of you living your life. Sanvello gives you psychologist-designed tools to address them based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, mindfulness meditation, relaxation, and mood/health tracking. Share stories, advice and more with Pacifica's peer-support community."

[CALM Webchat](#)

"Our webchat is for people in the UK who are down or have hit a wall for any reason, who need to talk or find information and support."

[Peanut \(App\)](#)

"Peanut is the app for mothers. We make it easy to connect and learn from like-minded women because let's face it, the more women in your life, the better it becomes."

[Mumsnet \(Website\)](#)

"Mumsnet makes parents' lives easier by pooling knowledge, advice and support on everything from conception to childbirth, from babies to teenagers. They believe that pooling knowledge and wisdom helps make parents' lives easier, and the site features lively active discussion groups."

[Women's Aid Live Chat \(Website\)](#)

Women's Aid Live Chat is a confidential service running Monday-Friday at 10am-12pm to support women experiencing domestic abuse. You can also post on their [community forum](#).



r/depression
Posted by [redacted]

You guys keep me sane

This feels like the only place I can really vent about my issues. It really helps.

↑ 22 ↓ 3 Share

BEST COMMENTS

Letting out your thoughts is so helpful, even if you don't get advice or help from others. Venting is great.

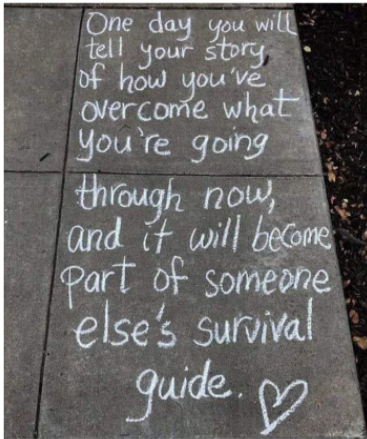
↑ 7 ↓

↑ 6 ↓

r/depression help
Posted by [redacted] Moderator • 5mo ...

Seeing this made me feel a little better today

INSPIRATION



↑ 564 ↓ 6 Share

r/CPTSD
Posted by [redacted]

1 4

My therapist told me something that stopped me in my tracks. I no longer want to self harm because of it.

CPTSD Breakthrough Moment

We did EMDR and are currently processing sexual abuse. During the roughest part of the session I had strong desires to self harm (my coping mechanism). It involved my child self and she was crying in a corner.

Later, he said to me "When you feel like self harming again, think of your safe space, or imagine cutting your child self. Imagine cutting a little girl who is crying in the corner."

It took me aback. He made a point that I never thought of. Self compassion.

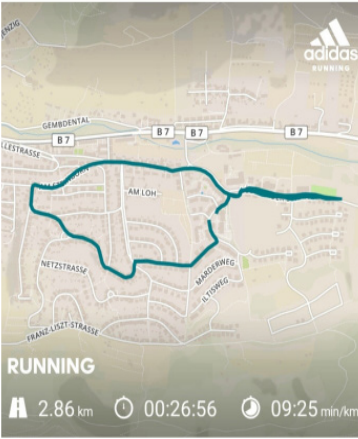
Thinking of cutting my child self feels disturbing. It also made me realize just how cruel I've been to myself. My child self just wants love. Why would I hurt her like that?

EDIT: Wow, thank you so much for the feedback and the gold!! I woke up to so many nice comments. Thank you all so much. I sincerely wish you all the best of luck in your journeys as well. :)

↑ 1.2k ↓ 127 Share

r/depression_help
Posted by [redacted] • 20d • i.redd.it

Actually went for a run today... Never done this before and I feel a little bit better now



↑ 431 ↓ 14 Share

r/mentalhealth
Posted by [redacted]

Hey you! Yes You!

The person scrolling through reading all the posts, in a complete state of hopelessness and despair. You that wants to reach out and talk to someone, but doesn't because you're not sure anyone will actually listen, and you just cant handle that kind of rejection. Let me tell you now, I was very much that person. I was trapped in an isolation entirely of my own making. I'm not saying it's not valid to feel that way, what I am trying to say is there is always someone willing to listen.

Please accept this as a place of refuge, where your feelings matter and your thoughts are valid. Please don't suffer in silence like I did for so long. If you dont feel you can reach out to friends, family or even professionals, here I am, a totally anonymous stranger that wants nothing but the best for everyone.

Please do reach out, this isn't one of those copy and paste's you see floating around. This is a genuine offer of compassion and any other support I can offer. Believe me I know exactly how you feel and want to relieve some of that crushing burden of loneliness and isolation.


I am here for you, whoever you are

↑ 254 ↓ 104 Share

r/Anxietyhelp
Posted by [redacted] • 3d • i.redd.it

A GOOD REMINDER

SOFTEN YOUR FOREHEAD,
UNCLENCH YOUR JAW,
RELAX YOUR SHOULDERS.




THIS IS A REMINDER TO
STOP HOLDING TENSION IN
YOUR BODY.

↑ 488 ↓ 37 Share

r/CPTSD
Posted by [redacted] • 5mo • i.redd.it

My favorite quote/reminder this month



↑ 1.6k ↓ 34 Share

BEST COMMENTS

Well said, and thank you for it. :)

r/Anxiety
Posted by [redacted] • 13d

Grateful for the validation in this sub

Share Your Victories

For the longest time I genuinely spent most of my days thinking I was both dying and an absolute freak. Stomach problems, feeling feverish/shaky, intrusive thoughts, my fear of driving, feeling irritated for no reason, all these things left me feeling so isolated and like I was just broken. Then I found this thread and realized that all these things stemmed from the anxiety which I've had since I was little. Of course just knowing that doesn't make the problem go away, but I just wanted to express how much of a relief it is to see that I'm not alone, these are common anxious experiences, and that maybe I'll get them under control someday.

Anyway, just wanted to say thanks to everyone here for sharing their stories and providing whatever help they can. I feel a lot better knowing it exists :)

↑ 1 ↓ 1 Share

BEST COMMENTS

↑ 13d

Glad you feel better! Sending you more positive vibes! ❤️

r/Anxiety
Posted by [redacted]

I have very bad anxiety and would like to try Subway, could someone give me a step by step of how to order a sandwich from there!

Answered Discussion Learning

Edit: I managed to go in just now, sandwich was very nice, I rather suspect I'll be back to try more! Thank you all so much for all your support, it means the world to me <3 <3

↑ 5.8k ↓ 393 Share

BEST COMMENTS

24 Awards

They'll ask you what you want. You'll pick X meat on Y bread, either 6 or 12 inches. They'll ask you what kind of cheese you want and then whether you want it toasted.

Then you'll get to veggies and other toppings and they'll just put on whatever you tell them to. Dressing/sauce too.

Once you're done with the sandwich, they'll ask you if you want it for here or to go and whether you want to make it a meal with chips and a drink. They'll ring up your charges, take your payment, and away you go.

Conversation Menu

Research suggests that when it comes to our social interactions, it's quality, not quantity, that matters.

High quality interactions involve being able to share personal information and going deeper than traditional small talk. These conversations foster emotional intimacy, leading to feelings of closeness and connection.

Studies suggest that quality interactions are of particular importance to introverted people's mental wellbeing.

Fortunately, there's a growing network of deep conversation events around the globe, allowing you to engage in meaningful conversations while meeting new people.

Examples include:

- » [Deep Conversation Meetups](#)
- » [Conscious Cafe](#)
- » [Trigger Conversations \(UK\)](#)

On the following page, you'll find our example 'Conversation Menu'.

Why not suggest starting a weekly Conversation Dinner with your friends, family, partner, colleagues, or someone you're just getting to know?

You can even take it in turns to create your own conversation menu. There's lots of inspiration online – search Google for "deep question examples".



CONVERSATION MENU

STARTERS

What's been the highlight of your week so far?

What are you enjoying about your life at the moment?

What are you looking forward to in the future?

MAIN

Do you have any goals you're working towards right now?

What's a personal challenge or obstacle you're currently facing?

Have you had any interesting insights about yourself recently?

DESSERT

What's the most interesting thing you've read or learned about recently?

What would you like to learn more about in the future?

What's a new experience we could share together in future?

*“I define connection as the energy that exists between people when they feel **seen, heard, and valued**; when they can give and receive **without judgment**; and when they derive **sustenance and strength** from the relationship.”*

– Brené Brown

Improving Your Communication Skills

“Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply.” – Stephen Covey

We’re a society of poor communicators. Why? Because nobody teaches us this stuff. The good news is that you’re reading this right now, and as the saying goes: If you want to change the world, start with yourself. Refer to the quote on the previous page and try to be honest with yourself. Could you make more of an effort to help others feel seen, heard and valued? Most of us could improve in this area.

Poor communication habits trigger social disconnection. Become a better communicator and open yourself up to experiencing higher levels of social connection, intimacy and love.

Poor Communication Habits	Effective Communication Habits
<p>Partial listening – Splitting your attention between multiple things besides the speaker, such as being distracted by a digital device, your thoughts, or by a task you're doing.</p> <p><i>Example</i> Speaker A tries to communicate with Speaker B who continues to send an email on their phone while also attempting to listen.</p>	<p>Mindful listening – Giving the speaker your full attention; removing distractions, noticing your thoughts and then redirecting your attention to what the speaker is saying, and pausing your tasks.</p> <p><i>Example</i> Both speakers put their phones in their bags while communicating and practise refocusing on the content of what the other is saying when they notice their minds wandering.</p>
<p>Mind reading – Assuming you know exactly what the other person is feeling or thinking without asking them directly.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “I can tell you’re having second thoughts.”</p>	<p>Checking perceptions – Asking clarifying and probing questions to find out if your interpretations are accurate.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “I noticed you changed the subject pretty quickly, could you tell me what you’re thinking?”</p>
<p>Hijacking – Redirecting the conversational focus on yourself instead of allowing the other person to fully express themselves. Be mindful of talking about yourself a lot and showing limited interest in others.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Oh yeah – I’m having trouble with my boss as well at the moment...”</p>	<p>Probing – Asking questions to improve your understanding of what the other person is thinking, feeling and needing. Showing that you can relate to what the person is saying after they've have the opportunity to express themselves first.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “You’re having trouble with your boss? How come?”</p>
<p>Judging – Evaluating the other person and what they’re saying rather than mindfully listening to them. Similarly, be conscious of the habit of projecting your own values and beliefs onto others.</p> <p><i>Example</i> Labelling someone as being selfish after something they’ve just said to you, and following your thought trail around this instead of listening to them. Feeling dislike towards people if they don't share the same values and beliefs as you.</p>	<p>Non-judging – Communicating with an open-mind, being curious, and accepting that everyone is different – everyone has their own unique set of experiences. Honoring the fact that we all have a right to our own opinions, values and beliefs.</p>



Poor Communication Habits	Effective Communication Habits
<p>Teaching or preaching – Offering solutions rather than listening and seeking to understand the other person; giving unsolicited advice.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Oh, my sister experienced the exact same thing. You should...”</p>	<p>Asking permission – Resist entering ‘fix mode’ and focus on mindful listening. When you’re confident that you’ve given the person enough time to fully express themselves and come up with their own solutions, you could ask their permission to give your advice.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Can I tell you what I’d do in this situation?”</p>
<p>Demanding – Making demands instead of respectfully asking for what you want.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Get your room cleaned now!”</p>	<p>Making specific requests – Asking someone to do something only if they’re willing to, rather than demanding something from them.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “I’m feeling really frustrated about this. Would you be willing to clean your room now please?”</p>
<p>Discounting – Giving the message that the other person’s opinions, feelings and needs don’t matter.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “That’s not true! I never take you for granted.”</p>	<p>Validating – Communicating in a way that shows you’re taking the other person’s opinions, feelings and needs into account.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “It’s understandable that you feel like that considering the situation you’re in...”</p>
<p>Belittling – Giving the message that the other person should feel foolish for having a particular feeling, need, or opinion.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Wow, I can’t believe you actually think that!”</p>	<p>Supporting – Demonstrating acceptance, warmth, and care to the other person.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “Okay, I’d be interested to know more about how you came to that opinion?”</p>
<p>Guilt-tripping – Giving the message that the other person is behaving immorally or is in the wrong for having certain needs.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “If you don’t trust me, then what’s the point? It tells me there’s something very wrong with our relationship.”</p>	<p>Summarising – Repeating what you’ve heard back to the speaker in a brief way to ensure you’ve understood them properly.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “So you’ve been feeling anxious because you haven’t been hearing from me as much when I’m away?”</p>
<p>Derailing – Shifting the attention from the other person’s feelings to your own to stop them from carrying on with what they were saying.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “I can’t believe you’d say that – you’ve really hurt me.”</p>	<p>Being quiet and not interrupting – Giving the person time to think and express themselves fully.</p> <p><i>Example</i> Waiting for a few seconds without filling the pauses to allow the other person to think and finish what they’re saying.</p>
<p>Placating – Agreeing with someone without really listening or providing the opportunity for them to fully express themselves.</p> <p><i>Example</i> “I know, you’re right – it won’t happen again okay?”</p>	<p>Reflecting – Repeating someone’s words back to them exactly to demonstrate that you’re listening and to move the conversation forward.</p> <p><i>Example</i> Speaker A: “To be honest, I was really disappointed that you forgot about it.” Speaker B: “You were disappointed I forgot...” Speaker A: “Yep, I was counting on having you there with me...”</p>



Review the communication habits on pages 12 and 13 and fill in the boxes below:

MY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION HABITS

MY POOR COMMUNICATION HABITS

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION HABITS TO DEVELOP



Guided Discussion for Effective Communication

Here's a structured conversation exercise for improving communication in a relationship:

Step 1. Both people read through the communication skills table.

Step 2. Person A shares which poor communication skills resonated with them – what they'd like to work on improving.

Step 3. Person B shares their opinion about which communication skills they'd like Person A to work on improving.

Step 4. Person B shares which poor communication skills resonated with them – what they'd like to work on improving.

Step 5. Person A shares their opinion about which communication skills they'd like Person B to work on improving.

Step 6. Both people take it in turns to finish one the following prompts:

- » "I'm sorry that..."
- » "I hope that..."
- » "I understand that..."
- » "I forgive you for..."



Recognising Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse can be difficult to spot if it's been happening for a while, or if it's what you witnessed growing up. In your mind, it becomes normal instead of unhealthy, and it might increase over time.

Here are examples of forms of verbal abuse:

Abusive Anger – Any form of shouting or screaming.

Withholding – Blocking connection by refusing to share thoughts, feelings and information with the partner and refusing to listen; prolonged silent treatment with language such as, "There's no point in talking about it," "You don't need to know," and "You wouldn't be interested."

Name Calling – e.g., "You're too stupid to understand," "You're too sensitive," and "You're acting like a child."

Constant Criticising – Regular criticism that interferes with your mood and self-esteem, e.g., "You're never happy with anything," "You never clean up properly," and "Nobody actually likes you."

Degradation or Condescension – e.g., "Who else would want you?" "You only got the job because your boss fancies you," and "No wonder you're not losing weight – look at how much you're eating."

Minimisation or Denial – Downplaying or denying the significance of an emotion or event, e.g., "It was only a joke," "You have no sense of humour," and "It only happened because I had too much to drink."

Gaslighting – You recall something that happens and the other person tells you it's all in your mind or you're making it up, eventually making you question yourself.

Countering – Choosing to oppose your thoughts, opinions, and feelings on a regular basis, e.g., "That's not really how you feel," "You're wrong," and "I can't believe you like that."

Blaming – When you feel like everything is your fault, e.g., "It's your fault I'm yelling, you make me so angry!" "Look at what you made me do!" and "It's your fault we're never on time."

Repeated Accusations – e.g., "I know you're cheating on me," "I saw the way you were looking at him," and "You're always favouring your Dad more than me."

Threats or Manipulation – Making statements that scare, intimidate or gain control over the other person, e.g., "If you're not happy to do this for me, I'm sure I'll be able to find someone else who will," "If you leave, I'll hurt myself," and "If you keep nagging me, I'll give you something to really complain about."



Setting Boundaries: How to Respond to Verbal Abuse

Try to speak as calmly as possible to avoid further escalating the situation.

Name the abuse and request that they stop it.

Examples

- *"You're being verbally abusive to me right now. It's not acceptable and I'm asking you to stop it."*
- *"You're gaslighting me and I won't accept it anymore. Stop it please."*
- *"You're constantly criticising me. It's a form of verbal abuse. It's not acceptable and I'm asking you to stop it."*

If repeatedly calling out the abuse doesn't lead to change and the person refuses to engage in a discussion (see the following page), you may need to consider limiting your contact with the person or ending the relationship.

Verbal abuse is considered a form of domestic violence. For more information on how to leave an abusive relationship, contact a domestic violence helpline or local support organisation.

My Reflections



Guided Discussion for Verbal Abuse

Step 1. Both people read through the list of verbal abuse examples.

Step 2. Person A shares their feelings and opinions about their own behaviour.

Step 3. Person B shares their feelings and opinions relating to their experience and sets boundaries around what they will and won't accept in future.

Step 4 (if appropriate). Person B completes Step 2 and Person A completes Step 3.

Step 5. Both people take it in turns to finish one the following prompts:

- » "I'm sorry that..."
- » "I hope that..."
- » "I understand that..."
- » "I forgive you for..."



“More than anything else, being able to feel safe with other people defines mental health; safe connections are fundamental to meaningful and satisfying lives.”

– Bessel van der Kolk

Helplines

The tend-and-befriend stress response—activated when you reach out to others and express your feelings—has been shown to boost mental health by lowering your heart rate, blood pressure, and cortisol levels.

Expressing your feelings rather than bottling them up is therapeutic for both mind and body.

Talking to a volunteer listener on a helpline can help you shift further into the tend-and-befriend stress response. Perhaps you associate helplines with feeling suicidal, but this isn't the case – it's a common misconception that helplines are only for people experiencing suicidal thoughts.

As the Samaritans note on their website:

"Most people who contact us are not suicidal. When you talk to us, we will give you an opportunity to talk about any thoughts or feelings you have, whatever they may be.

You'll be able to see things more clearly. You'll be able to think much more clearly about what your options are.

Sometimes people need to cry or show how angry they are at life, or go over their thoughts and feelings several times to make sense of them, and that's fine. We're there for as long as you need us."

United Kingdom

- Samaritans: 116 123
- Call 111 out of hours – they will help you find the support and help you need
- Campaign Against Living Miserably (CALM) – for men: 0800 58 58 58
- Hopeline/Papyrus – for people under 35: 0800 068 41 41. Text: 07786209697
- Anxiety UK: 0844 477 5774
- Depression Alliance: 0845 123 23 20
- Rape Crisis Centre: 01708 765200
- Rape/sexual assault: 0808 8000 123 (female) or 0808 8000122 (male)
- Miscarriage Association: 01924 200799
- Abuse Not: 0808 8005015
- Brook Young People's Information Service: 0800 0185023
- Eating Disorder Support: 01494 793223
- LLGS Helpline (LGBT): 0300 330 0630
- Sexuality support: 01708 765200
- Bereavement: 0800 9177 416
- Runaway/homeless helpline: 0808 800 70 70
- CareConfidential Pregnancy/post abortion: 0800 028 2228
- Women's Aid National Domestic Violence Helpline 0345 023 468
- National AIDS Helpline: 0800 567 123
- The Mix: Freephone 0808 808 4994
- Lifeline: 13 11 14

USA

- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741 to text with a trained Crisis Counsellor
- LifeLine: 1-800-273-8255



- Depression Hotline: 1-630-482-9696
- Suicide Hotline: 1-800-784-8433
- Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386
- Sexuality Support: 1-800-246-77437
- Trans Lifeline: 877-565-8860
- Eating Disorders Hotline: 1-847-831-3438
- Rape and Sexual Assault: 1-800-656-4673
- Grief Support: 1-650-321-5272
- Runaway: 1-800-843-5200, 1-800-843-5678, 1-800-621-4000
- After Abortion Hotline/Pro-Voice: 1-866-4394253
- Self Harm: 1-800-DONT CUT (1-800-366-8288)
- Pregnancy Hotline 1-800-4-OPTIONS (1-800-467-8466)
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) Youth Support Line 800-850-8078
- National Association for Children of Alcoholics 1-888-55-4COAS (1-888-554-2627)
- National Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-422-4453
- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-SAFE (1-800-799-7233)
- National Drug Abuse Hotline 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357)
- National Youth Crisis Hotline 1-800-448-4663
- Eating Disorders Awareness and Prevention 1-800-931-2237 (Hours: 8am-noon daily, PT)
- Veterans: 1-877-VET2VET
- Adolescent Suicide Helpline: 1-800-621-4000
- Postpartum Depression: 1-800-PPD-MOMS

Argentina

- Helpline 1: (54-11) 4758-2554
- Website: www.familiardesuicida.com.ar

Australia

- Helpline 1: 13 11 14
- Website: www.lifeline.org.au
- NSW1800 636 825
- SA131465
- QLD1300 363 622
- WA1800 676 822
- NT1800 019 116
- TAS1800 332 388
- ACT1800 629 354
- VIC1300 280 354
- Salvos Careline 1300 36 36 22 (National)
- Lifeline 13 11 14

Austria

- Helpline 1: 142
- Website: WWW.TELEFONSEELSORGE.AT

Barbados

- Helpline 1: (246) 4299999
- Email Helpline: SAMARITANSBDOS@YAHOO.COM



Belgium

- Helpline 1: 106
- Website: WWW.TELE-ONTHAAL.BE

Botswana

- Helpline 1: 3911270
- Website: WWW.LIFELINEBOTSWANA.ORG/INDEX.HTML

Brazil

- Helpline 1: +55 51 211 2888

Canada

- Helpline 1: 604-872-3311 (Greater Vancouver)
- Helpline 2: 18666613311 (Toll free-Howe Sound/Sunshine Coast)
- Helpline 3: 1-866-872-0113 (TTY)
- Helpline 4: 1-800-SUICIDE (784-2433) (BC-wide)
- Website: WWW.CRISISCENTRE.BC.CA
- Mental Health Crisis Line 1-866-996-0991 (Ottawa and Eastern Ontario)
- Kids Help Phone 1-800-668-6868 (All of Canada, age <20)
- Mental Help Health Line 1-866-531-2600 (Ontario)

China

- Helpline 1: Free: 0800-810-1117
- Helpline 2: Mobile/IP/extension users: 010-8295-1332

Croatia

- Helpline 1: (01) 4833-888
- Website: WWW.PLAVI-TELEFON.HR

Cyprus

- Helpline 1: +357 77 77 72 67
- Helpline 2: 0809 1122
- Military 2345
- Website: WWW.CYPRUSSAMARITANS.ORG

Denmark

- Helpline 1: +45 70 201 201
- Website: WWW.LIVSLINIEN.DK

Estonia

- Helpline 1: 126
- Helpline 2: 127
- Helpline 3: 646 6666
- Website: WWW.USALDUS.EE



Fiji

- Helpline 1: 679 670565
- Helpline 2: 679 674364

Finland

- Helpline 1: 01019-0071
- Website: www.mll.fi/nuortennetti

France

- Helpline 1: (+33) (0)9 51 11 61 30
- Website: WWW.SOS-AMITIE.ORG

Germany

- Helpline 1: 0800 1110 111
- Helpline 2: 0800 1110 222
- Hotline: 0800 181 0771 (to Samaritans) Hotline: 0800 181 0772 (to Samaritans)
- Website: samaritans.org
- International Helpline Berlin: Postfach 580251 10412
- Hotline: 6-12pm English service: 030-44 01 06 07
- Hotline: Russian service: 030-44 01 06 06
- Website: international-helpline.com
- Telefonseelsorge Deutschland (National)
- Hotline: 0800 1110 111
- Hotline: 0800 1110 222
- Website: telefonseelsorge.org

Ghana

- Helpline 1: 233 244 846 701
- Website: [HTTP://WWW.LIFELINE-INTERNATIONAL.ORG/LOOKING_FOR_HELP/GHANA](http://WWW.LIFELINE-INTERNATIONAL.ORG/LOOKING_FOR_HELP/GHANA)

Greece

- Helpline 1: (0) 30 210 34 17 164
- Website: WWW.KLIMAKA.ORG.GR

Hungary

- Helpline 1: (46) 323 888

Iceland

- Helpline 1: (+354) 1717

India

- Helpline 1: 2549 7777
- Website: WWW.MPA.ORG.IN



Ireland

- Helpline 1: +44 (0) 8457 90 90 90 (UK – local rate)
- Helpline 2: +44 (0) 8457 90 91 92 (UK minicom)
- Helpline 3: 1850 60 90 90 (ROI local rate)
- Helpline 4: 1850 60 90 91 (ROI minicom)
- Website: WWW.SAMARITANS.ORG

Israel

- Helpline 1: 1201
- Helpline 2: Tel from abroad: 972-9-8891333

Italy

- Helpline 1: 199 284 284
- Website: WWW.TELEFONOAMICO.IT

Japan

- Helpline 1: Counseling: 03 5774 0992
- Helpline 2: Face to Face: 03 3498 0231

Kenya

- Helpline 1: +254 20 3000378/2051323

Liberia

- Helpline 1: 06534308
- Website: [HTTP://WWW.LIFELINE-INTERNATIONAL.ORG/LOOKING_FOR_HELP/LIBERIA](http://WWW.LIFELINE-INTERNATIONAL.ORG/LOOKING_FOR_HELP/LIBERIA)

Lithuania

- Helpline 1: 8-800 2 8888
- Website: WWW.JPPC.LT

Malaysia

- Helpline 1: (063) 92850039
- Helpline 2: (063) 92850279
- Helpline 3: (063) 92850049

Malta

- Helpline: 179
- Website: WWW.APPOGG.GOV.MT/SUPPORTLINE179.ASP

Mauritius

- Helpline: (230) 800 93 93
- Email Helpline: BEFRIENDERSMAURITIUS@GMAIL.COM



Namibia

- Helpline: (09264) 61-232-221
- Website: WWW.LIFELINE.ORG.ZA

Netherlands

- Helpline 1: 0900-0767
- Website: WWW.SENSOOR.NL

New Zealand

- Helpline 1: (09) 522 2999
- Helpline 2: 09 5222 999; 0800 543 354 (for calls from outside Auckland)
- Website: WWW.LIFELINE.ORG.NZ

Norway

- Helpline 1: +47 815 33 300
- Website: WWW.KIRKENS-SOS.NO PAPUA

New Guinea

- Helpline 1: 675 326 0011
- Website: WWW.LIFELINE.WEB.ZA/PAPUA.HTM

Philippines

- Helpline 1: 02 – 896 – 9191
- Helpline 2: Mobile phone: 0917 – 854 – 9191

Poland

- Helpline 1: +48 527 00 00
- Helpline 2: +48 89 92 88
- Website: pomocetel.free.ngo.pl

Portugal

- Helpline 1: (808) 200 204
- Website: WWW.AAC.UC.PT

Samoa

- Helpline 1: 32000
- Website: [HTTP://SAMOALIFELINE.ORG](http://SAMOALIFELINE.ORG)

Scotland

- Samaritans: 116 123
- Lothian Gay & Lesbian 0131 556 4049



Serbia

- SRCE Novi Sad: (+381) 21-6623-393
- Website: centarsrce.org.yu
- E-mail Helpline: vanja@centarsrce.org.yu

Singapore

- Helpline 1: 1800- 221 4444
- Website: WWW.SAMARITANS.ORG.SG

South Africa

- Helpline 1: 0861 322 322
- Website: WWW.LIFELINE.ORG.ZA

Sweden

- Helpline 1: 020 22 00 60
- Helpline 2: Textphone: 020-22 00 70
- Website: WWW.NATIONELLAHJALPLINJEN.SE

Switzerland

- Helpline 1: 143
- Website: WWW.143.CH

Thailand

- Helpline 1: (02) 713-6793
- Website: WWW.SAMARITANSTHAILAND.BLOGSPOT.COM

Ukraine

- Helpline 1: 058
- Website: WWW.DOVIRA058.NETFIRMS.COM

Zimbabwe

- Helpline 1: (263) 09 65000
- Helpline 2: Toll Free: 0800 9102



Relationship Inventory Exercise

The aim of this exercise is to gain insight into your unhelpful patterns so that you can make wiser decisions in future. Spotting and changing your unhelpful patterns can help you experience higher levels of social connection, intimacy and love.

If you'd rather talk than write, you could go through the questions below with a friend or family member. Alternatively, you could call a helpline and talk it through with them.

In what ways did I contribute to the breakdown of this relationship?

- Did my story distortions or attachment style influence me to enter this relationship?
- Could I have communicated more effectively?
- Did I leave the relationship to protect myself from getting hurt?
- Did I focus too much on the other person's perceived flaws? Did I have unrealistic expectations of how relationships should be?
- Could I have managed challenging feelings such as fear, jealousy and anger better?
- Was any of my behaviour unacceptable? If so, how would I like to act in future?


In what ways did the other person contribute to the breakdown of this relationship?

- Could they have communicated more effectively?
- Could they have managed challenging feelings such as fear, jealousy and anger better?
- Was any of their behaviour unacceptable? If so, how would I like to respond if I was faced with similar behaviour in future?

My Relationship With:



Relationship Inventory Worksheet



The Five Love Languages

The concept of 'love languages' was coined by a marriage counsellor called Gary Chapman.

He suggests that we all have a primary and secondary way that we prefer to receive love.

Understanding love languages can help couples increase their relationship satisfaction. Problems can arise if you project your own love language onto your partner without taking their needs into account, as love languages don't always align.

Here are the five love languages Chapman identifies:

1. Words of affirmation. Verbal expressions of love, care and appreciation, e.g., "Thanks for doing that for me," "You look lovely," and "I love you." If this is your primary love language, you may feel dissatisfied in your relationship if your partner isn't comfortable expressing verbal affection. Experiencing verbal abuse will also feel particularly distressing.

2. Quality time. Spending time together as a couple and giving them your full attention. If this is your primary love language, experiencing a sense of distance and partial listening from a partner will be particularly distressing.

3. Acts of service. Doing kind things, such as making your partner breakfast in bed and going out of your way to get their favourite food. If this is your primary love language, feeling unsupported will lead to feelings of dissatisfaction.

4. Physical touch. Sexual and platonic touch, such as holding hands, hugging or having sex. Lacking these will feel particularly upsetting if it's your primary love language.

5. Receiving gifts. If this is your primary love language, you feel particularly loved when your partner surprises you with small gifts as a token of their love and appreciation for you. For you, actions like gifts speak louder than words.

Click [here](#) to take the test for free.

My primary love language:

My secondary love language:

