

Relationship Group

Course Handbook



Welcome to the Course

We are pleased to confirm your place on the Relationship Counselling Course. This is a therapeutic group which uses NICE approved therapeutic interventions to help build awareness of how relationships can impact a person's life and provide innovative ways to help understand and build self awareness around relationship issues.

We appreciate it can seem daunting attending a group for the first time. People do report, after attending a group, they have found it really helpful. They generally report it has been helpful to learn more about a subject area and we hope that attending this group can help you to build understanding about relationships and how relationships can affect people's lives, and how learning new skills can help to counteract the difficult aspects of relationships and improve overall well-being for the future.

We are aware that the experience for online groups and courses will feel different from being present in a group of people. Whilst different arrangements may be required, for the majority we aim to use a shared online format called 'Microsoft Teams. To use Microsoft Teams you will need to access it via an app, it is a small download.

Click the link to join the group a few minutes before the start time. You will be asked to install the software (which is very quick). You can join from any computer, tablet or smartphone with a good internet connection.

We will be able to see each other and interact as normal.

We will need you to fill in the e-mail questionnaires before the group – a link to these will be sent to your e-mail a day before the group session. Please make sure the questionnaire is completed prior to the session or we will NOT know that you have attended and may be sent a 'failure to attend' letter and may be liable to being discharged. [Note- the questionnaires email is entitled 'Online Forms'. Please check your junk folder if you have not received this by each session date].

Please be aware, the names that you put in will be visible to the other participants; please use first names only (or what you are comfortable with). Please do not put your email address in.

You will join the meeting. Turn on the option to show the video of yourself (top right of the screen). Seeing each other will help it feel as close to the normal group setting as possible.

If you are unable to make your appointment or have any concerns or questions, please let us know. Each week you will need to click on the link just before the start time- this will remain the same unless you are sent another.

This course will meet weekly for 6 sessions, each session lasts 90 minutes. We encourage you to complete the exercises and use the delegate pack to keep notes of your reflections and plans.

Working Together

One of the most valuable things about courses is the support that you can give to each other. To help everyone feel safe and comfortable, it is helpful for the group to agree some guidelines for the sessions. We will discuss and agree these as a group, but here are some suggestions below:

- **Please put mobile phones on silent so they do not interrupt the group**
- **Try to be on time, but if you are late do come in and join the session**
- **Respect others people's points of view; they may be different from your own**
- **Listen when others are talking**
- **If you are unable to make it to the session, please let Steps to Wellbeing know**
- **Do not come to the group under the influence of alcohol or drugs**
- **Please keep any personal information shared within the group sessions confidential**



Steps to Wellbeing Contact Telephone Numbers and Email Addresses

Weymouth & Portland, North Dorset, West Dorset, Purbeck and East Dorset: 0800 454 0500
dhc.s2w.rural.admin@nhs.net

Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch: 0800 454 0500 or dhc.s2w.urban.admin@nhs.net

www.steps2wellbeing.co.uk



Keeping Safe Between Sessions

Steps to Wellbeing is not a crisis service, and although you are welcome to contact the service between sessions, the course facilitator may not be available to speak to you. If you are feeling very low and need some support between sessions, there are a number of places that you can turn to as outlined below.



Risk Guidance

Please make a note of your useful telephone numbers, so that you have them to hand when you need them. You may want to write them in the space below, or save them in your phone so they are ready to use. (E.g. Family/ Friend contact details, your GP / CMHT telephone number?)

Due to the format of our courses we are not able to check in with each person individually. If you feel at risk to yourself or others or feel at risk from anyone else please utilise your risk management plan agreed at assessment.

The services below can also be used for support:

- Contact a friend or family member for support
- **Connection** a local 24/7 helpline run by Dorset HealthCare: **0800 652 0190**.
- **Samaritans** (24 hours) Telephone **116 123** or e-mail jo@samaritans.org
- To start a conversation, text the word **'Shout'** to **85258**
- Self-present at **The Retreat, Hahnemann Road, Bournemouth BH2 5JW or Maiden Castle Road, Dorchester DT1 2ER** (please check their websites for opening hours as these may change)
- Visit The Retreats or Community Front rooms in your local area. Please see Dorset Healthcare – Access Mental Health website for more information
<https://www.dorsethealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-and-sites/mental-health-and-learning-disabilities/access-mental-health>
- NHS out of hours support: **111** or **999** (in the case of an emergency)
- Your GP or other healthcare professionals involved in your care e.g. The Community Mental Health Team, social worker, support worker.
- Present at your local hospital Accident and Emergency Department in an emergency

Helpful resources:

www.getselfhelp.co.uk

www.ntw.nhs.uk

www.thecalmzone.net - Tel: 0808 802 5858

NHS Apps: https://apps.beta.nhs.uk/category/mental_health/

Please make a note of your useful telephone numbers, so that you have them to hand when you need them. You may want to write them in the space below, or save them in your phone so they are ready to use. (E.g. Family/ Friend contact details, your GP / CMHT telephone number?)

My Personal Safety Plan

Signs that my mood is deteriorating
What steps can I take? Who is my support?

Session Overview

Session 1 – What do we mean by relationships?

Session 2 – Communication in Relationships

Session 3 – Noticing the ‘self’ in relationships and how we can manage Emotions.

Session 4 – What might influence my relationship patterns?

Session 5 – What’s my story?

Session 6 – Understanding Attachment in relationships

Session 7 – Perceptions and expectations in relationships

Session 8 – Moving forward and self compassion

Session 1 – Understanding Relationships

This week we're introducing the course and looking at what we mean by the term "Relationship".

Purpose of the Group:

1. **You as the Expert** - in your own relationships
2. **Making Choices** – The impact of your choices on relationships. Recognise your own ability to take positive action leading to self-empowerment
3. **Committed change** – Noticing the impact of your actions on managing relationships. Able to notice when your symptoms improve.
4. **Rewards** – Enjoying the fruits of labour and noticed change.
5. **Relapse Prevention** – Sustaining recovery and noticing warning signs to help maintain wellbeing and increase hopefulness.

Throughout the course we encourage you to **NOTICE** all of the above and to increase your own self-awareness and empowerment.

Today we will look at becoming your own expert through, noticing, normalising and psycho-education.

Weather check-in

Each week we will be inviting you to check-in with how you're feeling emotionally by using the metaphor of the weather. The weather can be used to represent how we are feeling, for example:



- Sunny- Doing ok
- Raining- tearful
- Cold- lonely
- Thunder- Anger

How is the weather with you today?

What's your 'why'?

When starting something new, it can be helpful to reflect on your motivation. What is your reason for starting is, what do you hope it gives you? This can help us on the days in which our motivation may be lacking or things feel hard, serving as a reminder for why we are doing it in the first place.

Below is a space to note down your goals relating to the course, and reflect on your 'why' and how this aligns with your values.

What? (goals)	Why? (values)

Values:

Values are deeply held beliefs, principles, and ideals that guide an individual's or group's behaviour, motivations, and decisions, by determining what is considered desirable or undesirable, right or wrong. They act as an internal compass, influencing a person's personality, the way they interact with the world, and the choices they make in various aspects of life, such as personal relationships, work, and societal engagement. Values can be personal or shared, and they can evolve over time due to new experiences and personal growth.

So values are your heart's deepest desires for how you want to behave as a human being. Values are not about what you want to get or achieve; they are about how you want to behave or act on an ongoing basis and how you want to treat yourself, others, the world around you.

There are hundreds of different values, but below you'll find a list of the most common ones. Probably, not all of them will be relevant to you. Keep in mind there are no such things as 'right values' or 'wrong values'. It's a bit like our taste in pizzas. If you prefer ham and pineapple but I prefer salami and olives, that doesn't mean that my taste in pizzas is right and yours is wrong. It just means we have different tastes. And similarly, we may have different values. So pick a domain of life that you want to improve, and read through the list below.

As you read through you can write a letter next to each value: V - Very important, Q - Quite important, and N- Not so important - for the specific domain of life you have picked to work on.

1. Acceptance: to be open to and accepting of myself, others, life etc
2. Adventure: to be adventurous; to actively seek, create, or explore novel or stimulating experiences
3. Assertiveness: to respectfully stand up for my rights and request what I want
4. Authenticity: to be authentic, genuine, real; to be true to myself
5. Beauty: to appreciate, create, nurture or cultivate beauty in myself, others, the environment etc
6. Caring: to be caring towards myself, others, the environment etc
7. Challenge: to keep challenging myself to grow, learn, improve
8. Compassion: to act with kindness towards those who are suffering
9. Connection: to engage fully in whatever I am doing, and be fully present with others
10. Contribution: to contribute, help, assist, or make a positive difference to myself or others
11. Conformity: to be respectful and obedient of rules and obligations
12. Cooperation: to be cooperative and collaborative with others
13. Courage: to be courageous or brave; to persist in the face of fear, threat, or difficulty
14. Creativity: to be creative or innovative
15. Curiosity: to be curious, open-minded and interested; to explore and discover

16. Encouragement: to encourage and reward behaviour that I value in myself or others
17. Equality: to treat others as equal to myself, and vice-versa
18. Excitement: to seek, create and engage in activities that are exciting, stimulating or thrilling
19. Fairness: to be fair to myself or others
20. Fitness: to maintain or improve my fitness; to look after my physical and mental health and wellbeing
21. Flexibility: to adjust and adapt readily to changing circumstances
22. Freedom: to live freely; to choose how I live and behave, or help others do likewise
23. Friendliness: to be friendly, companionable, or agreeable towards others
24. Forgiveness: to be forgiving towards myself or others
25. Fun: to be fun-loving; to seek, create, and engage in fun-filled activities
26. Generosity: to be generous, sharing and giving, to myself or others
27. Gratitude: to be grateful for and appreciative of the positive aspects of myself, others and life
28. Honesty: to be honest, truthful, and sincere with myself and others
29. Humour: to see and appreciate the humorous side of life
30. Humility: to be humble or modest; to let my achievements speak for themselves
31. Industry: to be industrious, hard-working, dedicated
32. Independence: to be self-supportive, and choose my own way of doing things
33. Intimacy: to open up, reveal, and share myself -- emotionally or physically – in my close personal relationships
34. Justice: to uphold justice and fairness
35. Kindness: to be kind, compassionate, considerate, nurturing or caring towards myself or others
36. Love: to act lovingly or affectionately towards myself or others

37. Mindfulness: to be conscious of, open to, and curious about my here-and-now experience
38. Order: to be orderly and organized
39. Open-mindedness: to think things through, see things from other's points of view, and weigh evidence fairly.
40. Patience: to wait calmly for what I want
41. Persistence: to continue resolutely, despite problems or difficulties.
42. Pleasure: to create and give pleasure to myself or others
43. Power: to strongly influence or wield authority over others, e.g. taking charge, leading, organizing
44. Reciprocity: to build relationships in which there is a fair balance of giving and taking
45. Respect: to be respectful towards myself or others; to be polite, considerate and show positive regard
46. Responsibility: to be responsible and accountable for my actions
47. Romance: to be romantic; to display and express love or strong affection
48. Safety: to secure, protect, or ensure safety of myself or others
49. Self-awareness: to be aware of my own thoughts, feelings and actions
50. Self-care: to look after my health and wellbeing, and get my needs met
51. Self-development: to keep growing, advancing or improving in knowledge, skills, character, or life experience.
52. Self-control: to act in accordance with my own ideals
53. Sensuality: to create, explore and enjoy experiences that stimulate the five senses
54. Spirituality: to connect with things bigger than myself
55. Skilfulness: to continually practice and improve my skills, and apply myself fully when using them
56. Supportiveness: to be supportive, helpful, encouraging, and available to myself or

others

57. Trust: to be trustworthy; to be loyal, faithful, sincere, and reliable

58. Insert your own unlisted value here:

59. Insert your own unlisted value here:

Once you've marked each value as V, Q, N (Very, Quite, or Not so important), go through all the Vs, and choose the top three that are most important to you in this domain of life, at this point in time. The next step is to start looking at ways to live these values, in this area of life; things you can say and do, guided by these values.

Here are some questions that can help you to clarify your values:

- What qualities do you most appreciate in others? In yourself? What does that say about what you value?
- What are you doing when time flies?
- Which events in your life have been the most meaningful to you?
- If you were to be stranded on a desert island, which three things would you bring with you? What do these things tell you about what's important to you?
- Which Values relate to how we would like to experience our relationships?

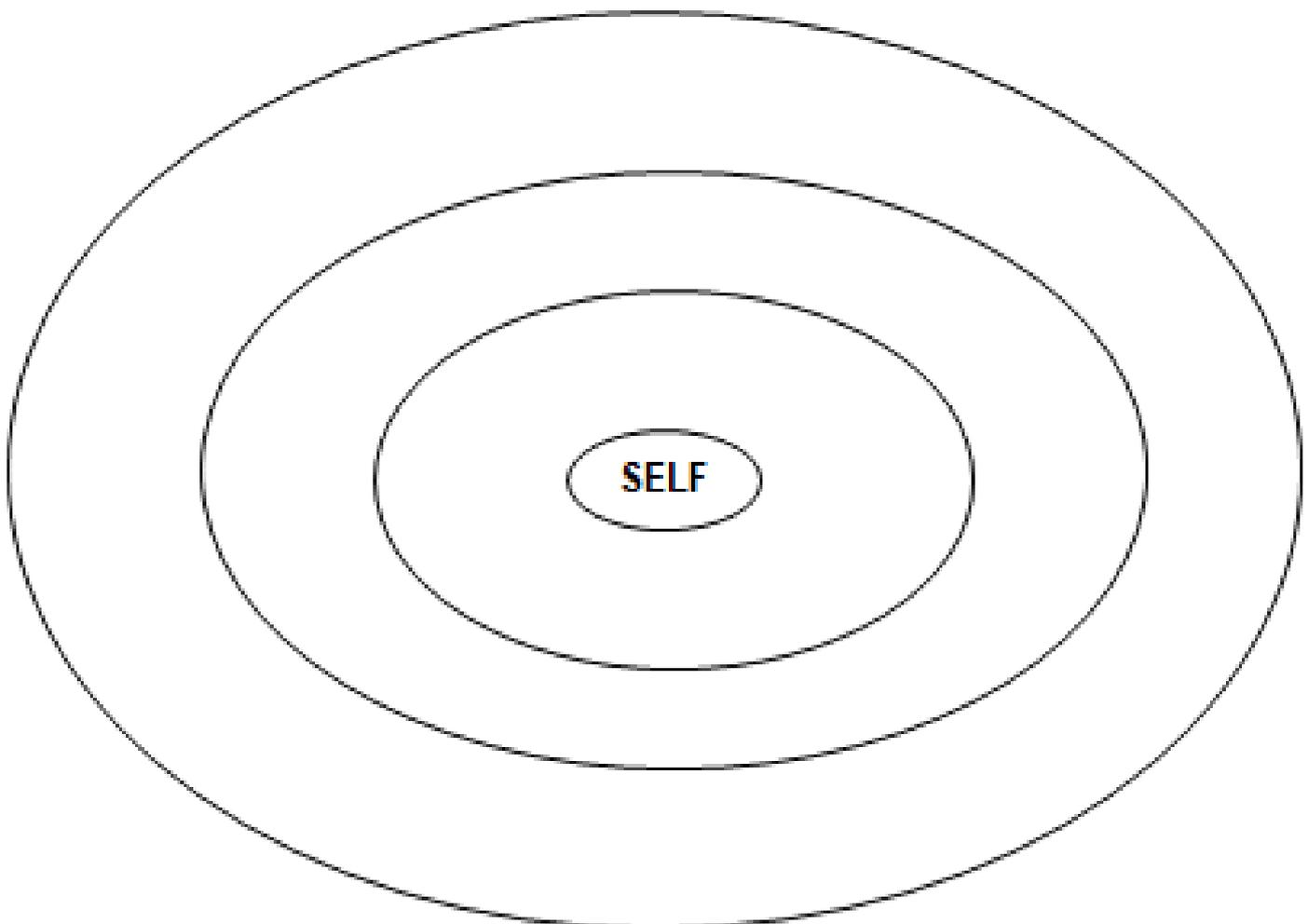
Closeness circles

We know our mood affects our relationships and our relationships affect our mood. Here we'll look at significant relationships/key figures in our lives. We'll explore the different types of relationships including motivating, draining, and the range of emotionally, practically, financially supportive relationships we have.

In essence we're developing a people map. The following exercise comes from IPT (Interpersonal Psychotherapy)

Write on the template who currently supports you in your life?

Where would you place them on the circles? Those in the inner circle are closer whilst those in the outer circles are more distant. Remember just as our weather changes, so do our relationships, some people can come and go and some remain. The purpose of this exercise is to gain some awareness of how these relationships affect our mood/depression. This also links in with the Away & Toward tool and although can be unsettling as increases awareness, it does also offer opportunity for choice.



Heads, shoulders, knees, and toes

When thinking about who is around us, it can also be helpful to think about their role. What support do they offer? We can use the idea of “Heads, shoulders, knees, and toes” to explore this.

Head- Who can offer practical advice or support?

Shoulders- Who is our shoulder to cry on?

Knees- Who is good for a ‘knees up’?

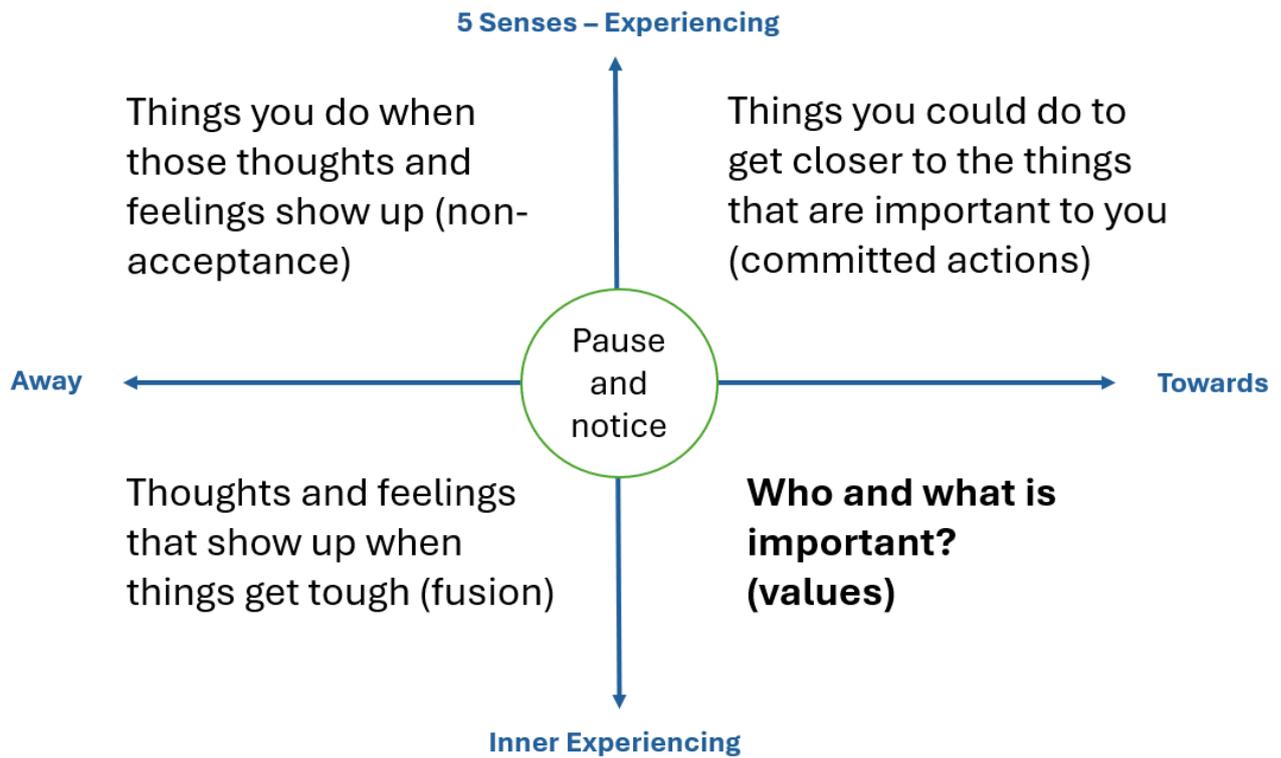
Toes- Who can give you a ‘kick’ in the right direction, motivation?

ACT Matrix

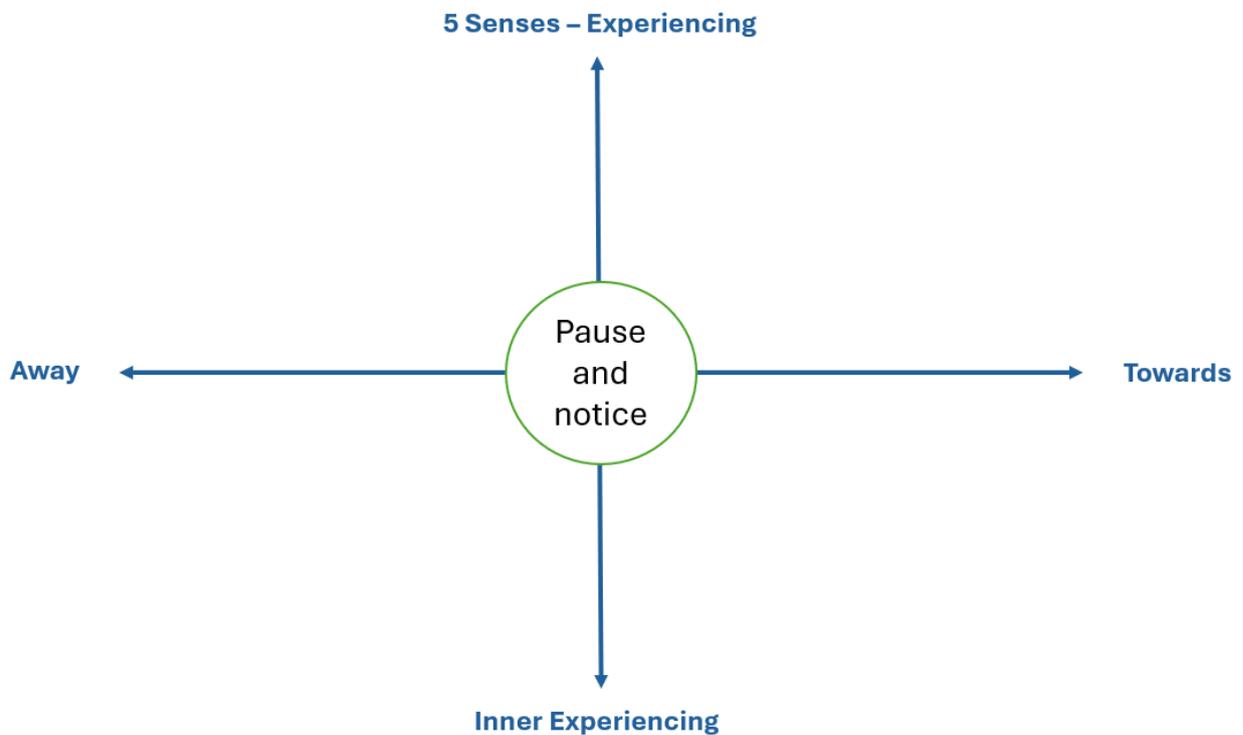
The ACT matrix is a tool taken from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy that follows on from the Values exercise. It can be a helpful point of reflection so we can ask ourselves what is takes us away from our Values and what moves us towards our Values and reflecting on this with regards to our relationships.

Here is a video guide to the ACT matrix:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCCSpOtDPV0>



Blank for your to fill in:



Reflections for the week

- What is the difference between goals and values and what are my values now?
 - What are my values in relation to my relationships?
- Who is in my closeness circle, what do I notice about this, are there any changes I want to make and how does that make me feel?

Session 2 – Communication in Relationships

Today we will look at what contributes or supports effective communication, looking at what hinders our communication and what may help.

Weather check-in

Each week we will be inviting you to check-in with how you're feeling emotionally by using the metaphor of the weather. The weather can be used to represent how we are feeling, for example:

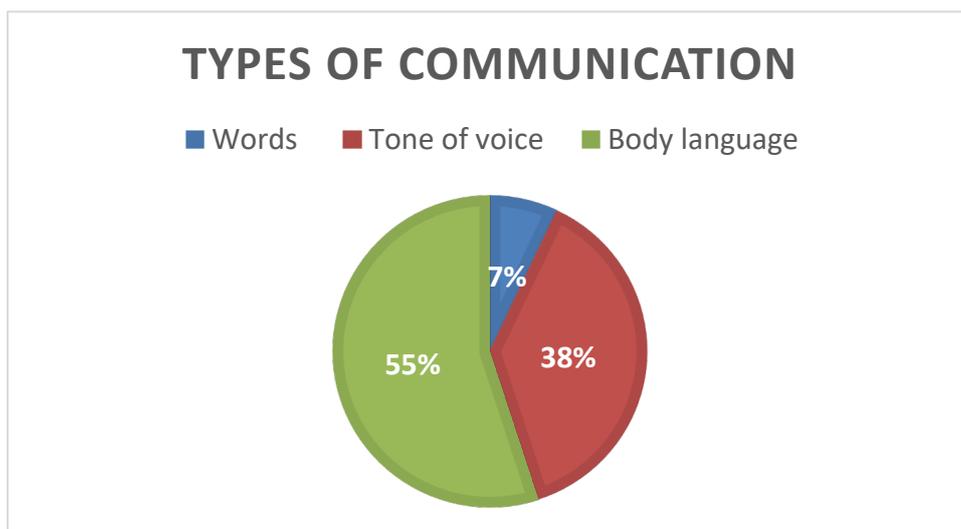
- Sunny- Doing ok
- Raining- tearful
- Cold- lonely
- Thunder- Anger



How is the weather with you today?

Communication

Communication is made up of three different types: words, tone of voice, and body language.



Think of a recent interaction where body language did not match words spoken did not match?

Describe what the person did and said and you did and said and what feelings were around this?

Communication styles

There are three main communication styles: passive, aggressive, and assertive. This can show up in our words or body, and can often have consequences. The below table show’s some examples of this.

	Passive	Assertive	Aggressive
General	“I don’t mind...that’s fine....yes alright”	“That’s a good idea, and how about if we did this too...” or “I can see that, but I’d really like...”	“This is what we’re doing, if you don’t like it, tough”
Beliefs	You’re okay, I’m not	I’m okay, you’re okay	I’m okay, you’re not
Body	Avoids eye contact, makes self smaller, fidgety	Warm, relaxed, open	Staring, makes body bigger, clenched
Consequences	Give in easily, don’t get what we want or need, self-critical, miserable	Good relationships with others, happy with outcome and to compromise	Make enemies, upset others and self, feel angry and resentful

Have you noticed these communication styles in yourself or others?

Boundaries

Boundaries are the lines and limits you create between yourself and other people. They allow you to define what is acceptable and healthy for you in your relationships, whether that is physical, emotional, or social.

Types of boundary include:

1. **Physical Boundaries:** Personal space, physical touch, privacy.
2. **Emotional Boundaries:** Protecting emotional well-being, managing emotional energy.
3. **Mental Boundaries:** Protecting thoughts, beliefs, and values.
4. **Time Boundaries:** Managing time and commitments.
5. **Material Boundaries:** Managing possessions, money, and resources.

Which boundaries are important to you? Are there boundaries you struggle with/ or that are easier to manage?

Is there an area in your relationships where you would want to consider changing a boundary – whether making it more rigid or flexible?

I Messages for managing a boundary:

I statements - represent how YOU feel and can be delivered without blame or judgement. Telling the other person how you feel, communicating how the difficulty affects you, and share your specific request to move forward. A simple example of this is “I feel frustrated when the washing up is not done, because it takes time out of our evening. I would like to be able to spend more time with you, I wonder if there is a way we could share this more evenly.”

I message formula:

- I feel... (emotion word i.e. frustrated).....
- when(event i.e. washing up)
- because (a vulnerability i.e. I miss you)
- and I need/would like (specific request to make situation better)

Reflections for the week:

- What does effective communication look like for me?
- What barriers are there for me around communication?
- What do my boundaries look like in relation to different areas of my life?
- How can I practice effective communication and practice boundaries that feel right for me?

Session 3 – Noticing the self in relationships and how we can learn to manage emotions

Weather check-in



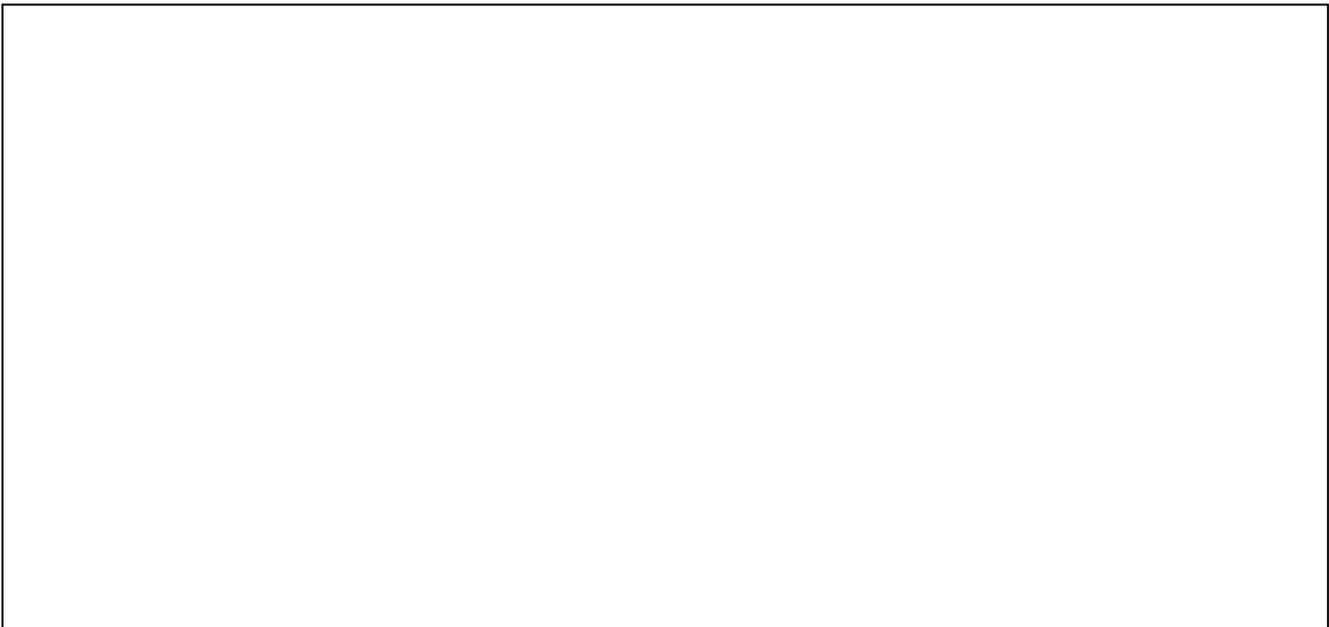
How is the weather with you today?

Reflections for week 3:

- How might my emotions influence how I show up in relationships? Do certain people illicit particular reactions?
- What are my emotions telling me about what I need? What is the function?
- How can I manage my emotions?

The 'self' in relationships

- How do I perceive myself?
- How might my emotions influence how I show up in relationships?
- Personal Identity Define yourself by answering the following questions: ● Who am I? ● What do I like about myself? ● What do I value in life? ● What do I believe in? ● What am I willing to take a stand for? ● What is my purpose?



Function of emotions

Our emotions may be trying to tell us something. The below table gives some examples of the function of our emotions and what they may be trying to communicate.

ANGER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help me get over this obstacle • To warn me of danger • To warn me that my boundaries are being threatened • To motivate me to fight for something • To communicate 'Watch out'to others
SADNESS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To alert me that I may be losing something • To warn me to cling on to an important thing • To remind me to comfort me in my loss • To draw in support from others • To motivate me to help a follower sufferer
FEAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To prepare me for fight or flight • To motivate me to problem solve • To warn me of danger • To remind me to take care and look out • To communicate 'danger, look out'to others
JOY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To alert me to an activity that is good • To remind me to do more of this activity • To communicate 'this is good'to others
GUILT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To alert me to having broken a rule (mine or another,s) • To motivate me to make amends • To remind me about what others expect or demand • To keep me behaving in an acceptable way
SHAME	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To motivate me to hide away from others • To alert me that my actions are frowned upon • To keep me behaving in an acceptable way

DISGUST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To alert me that something would be bad for me • To turn me away from a substance or situation • To warn others of something noxious or distasteful
INTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To draw me to something that may have value for me • To keep me focussed on something • To motivate me to find out more about something • To communicate 'this is worth a look'to others

Regulating Emotions:

We can develop skills that can help us to regulate our emotions when under stress. Sometimes emotions can become intense or painful or we might feel shut down or numb. This can also impact how we relate to others. Learning to regulate our emotions helps us to bring ourselves into a calmer, settled and focussed space where we are more able to make choices.

The focus of these skills is to learn how to cope with emotional pain and to help increase positive emotional experiences in your everyday life.

Strategies include:

- 1.Learning to identify and label your emotions.
- 2.Learning to understand the functions these emotions serve.
- 3.Learning to reduce painful, negative emotions and to let go of emotional suffering. Using skills like Mindfulness, Grounding, Breathing, and Defusing from thoughts.
- 4.Learning to increase positive emotions. Focus on our Values and what is important to us and acting in alignment with this can increase positive emotions.
- 5.Developing self-compassion – we may identify an inner critic part of us that judges us for having emotions. Developing Self compassion can help us to understand that our emotions are a natural part of us and that they can help us figure things out.

What might be in your emotion regulation tool kit?

It might be helpful to spend some time thinking about our emotions and being aware of helpful practices to manage them. As we have seen it can be helpful to us to become aware of our emotions and the function of our emotions and to spend some time noticing what messages they give us and then exercise choice around what we want to do with that information and what might align with our values. For example – emotion of anger might tell us something is really unfair, we might become aware of this and then choose the most helpful course of action.

What might you add into your own emotional regulation toolkit?

Session 4 – What might influence my relationships patterns?

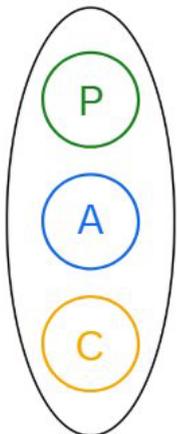
This week we're going to look at some of the influences on us throughout our lives and how that may impact our patterns in relationships.

Weather check-in



How is the weather with you today?

Parent Adult Child (PAC) Model



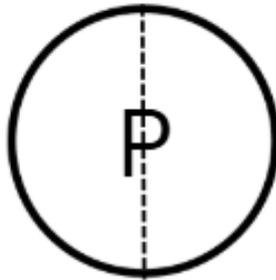
Stemming from a form of Counselling called Transactional Analysis, the PAC model suggests that we all hold within us the tendency to come from one of three ego states, the Parent, the Adult, or the Child.

These states are then further divided, with the parent splitting into 'critical' and 'nurturing' parent, and the child consisting of 'free child' and 'adapted child'

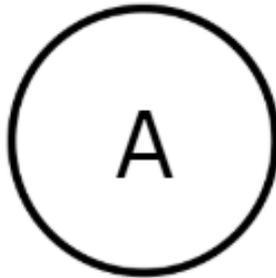
Getting to know your own PAC

Can you identify what each of these ego states might look like for you?

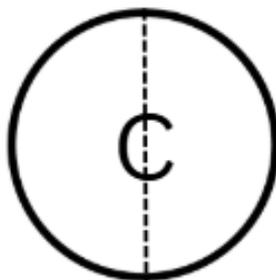
Critical



Nurturing



Free



Adapted

Blame

In addition to this weeks content, we have included below a video on blame which might be useful to watch in your spare time. Blame can factor into our relationships frequently and it can be useful to reflect on its function.

Brene Brown – Blame

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RZWf2_2L2v8

STOPP Technique:

This is a technique that we can use to pause, when we notice uncomfortable feelings or thoughts arrive and it can give us a moment before we react, to pause and respond.

- **S....Stop step back**
- **T....Take a breath, notice your breath**
- **O....Observe**
- **P....Practice what works**
- **P....Pursue your values**

Session 5 – What’s my story?

This week we’re continuing to look at messages we make pick up in our early years and the stories we form with them.

Weather check-in



How is the weather with you today?

Injunctions

One way we made sense of the world as a child is through Permissions and Injunctions. A permission is something we felt safe and able to do, where as an injunction is something we felt unable to do or be.

There are thought to be 12 main injunctions, we don’t tend to hold all 12, but may relate to 2/3 of them. Some examples are listed below:

1. Don’t be you

e.g. you were told couldn’t do a hobby you enjoyed “boys do football, not ballet” or weren’t able to express yourself “no you can’t dye your hair blue”

2. Don’t be close

e.g. you had a parent that was distant, or if you wanted a hug you were told you were being needy

3. Don’t feel

e.g. You were discouraged from your emotions “don’t be upset, it’s not that bad” “don’t be angry”

4. Don’t think

e.g. you were told your opinions didn’t matter, or maybe there was someone that always took over or finished your sentences

5. Don’t be (exist)

e.g. you were told you were a mistake or unwanted

6. Don't be a child

e.g. maybe you were the older sibling given a lot of responsibility, or an only child that had to spend a lot of time around adults "don't be so childish"

7. Don't grow up

e.g. you were the youngest or you were not allowed to do anything "too old" for you

8. Don't make it

e.g. you were discouraged from taking risks or felt your parents didn't want you to succeed

9. Don't

e.g. a hard, fast don't

10. Don't be important

e.g. there was always someone else that needed more attention, maybe the adults had other stuff going on that meant they couldn't give you their focus "not now"

11. Don't belong

e.g. you were discouraged from spending time with a certain friend group

12. Don't be well (sane)

e.g. you got care and attention when you were ill or needed something

What injunctions do I recognise?

Drivers

To cope with our injunctions, we develop drivers. These are a set of behaviours that feel helpful as a child to keep us feeling safe, but as an adult there might be times where they are less helpful.

- **Be Perfect** – I must be perfect at all that I do, how I look and act in order to be ok
- **Be Strong** – I must always be strong, not show emotions or vulnerability
- **Try Hard** – I keep trying but I never quite get there, I will try harder
- **Please people** – as long as I keep everyone one around me happy, I will be ok
- **Hurry Up** – I must get through everything as quick as possible, no time to stop and enjoy, just keep going

What are my default drivers?

Session 6 – Understanding Attachment in Relationships

This week we are going to be looking at different styles of attachment, understanding how they may show up in our relationships.

Weather check-in



How is the weather with you today?

Attachment Quiz

On the following page you will find an attachment quiz to help you identify your dominant attachment style. This is a basic version of the quiz stemming from Dynamic Interpersonal Therapy. You will find on the page after, a scoring sheet to help you gauge where you might be at the moment.

Attachment styles are not fixed, they can move. The purpose of this exercise is just to bring awareness and space for reflection.

Please rate how like you each statement is:

Attachment Quiz scoring

Relationship maps dominated by Style A are characterized by being balanced (selective, flexible), reversible, stable (consistent over time and progressive, developing positively over time). **Indicating secure attachment.**

The other patterns are typically inflexible in structure within a relationship, and repetitive across different contexts.

Style B relationships are characterized by perceived dangers and risks, the patient is fearful of intimacy and can be quite socially avoidance or volatile as the conflict between getting close and having to escape gets repetitively played out. **Indicating anxious attachment.**

Style C is characterized by a preoccupation with relationships, bringing others too close to the self and generating unstable and self-focused structures where the patient imagines knowing more about the feelings of others than is justified by circumstances. This can be seen as an effort to feel more in control of and less confused by intense involvements with “over-thinking” in the absence of a real understanding of the feelings and motivations of self or others, despite and continual need to engage. **Indicating disorganised attachment.**

Style D relationships are distancing and often quite stable but inflexible. There may be considerable selfishness and thoughtlessness, where others are rarely seen clearly as “three-dimensional” real figures and there is little conscious emotional investment. **Indicating avoidant attachment.**

Moving towards Secure Attachment:

Secure attachment:

If we think about it in the context of parent-child relationships, we have seen how secure attachment develops when a caregiver consistently provides a safe and nurturing environment, responding to the child's needs with sensitivity and care. This can transfer into healthy relationships in adults connecting to a sense of safety, trust, and emotional connection. It's a type of attachment where individuals feel comfortable seeking and receiving support, while also feeling confident in their own independence and ability to explore the world. Whilst this is an ideal situation, many of us may not have experienced care-giving or early childhood situations that led us to have this secure attachment style.

How can we move towards building a secure attachment style within ourselves?

Examine your beliefs about relationships:

Views about relationships tend to get set early in life. If your caregivers were unsafe or neglectful, you'll likely be distrustful of your adult relationships. For that reason, it's important to investigate what is actually true about your current relationships and be aware of and let go of outdated beliefs and interpretations.

For example : if you hesitate to trust or commit to your partner, try to find evidence that justifies your concern. Consider that you may be projecting experiences from past relationships onto your current relationship. If you are anxious or avoidant in a friendship, try to be aware of what is true about the relationship in the here and now, and that you are not acting out old beliefs or past stories you may hold.

Act opposite to your anxious or avoidant style:

Those with insecure attachment tend to cling to their relationships (anxious style) or hold themselves aloof from them (avoidant style). If you have an anxious style, try taking small steps toward becoming more independent. If you have an avoidant style, try letting down your guard and initiating intimacy.

The goal is to find the sweet spot where you have healthy levels of both intimacy and independence. It takes intentional steps to break a pattern but remind yourself of the many rewards of improving your relationships.

Increase your emotional awareness:

If you're feel unable to manage and work with your emotions, you'll likely be more reactive in your relationships, which decreases attachment security. Learning to be kind to your emotions, to tolerate them when they are uncomfortable and allow for healthy expression, makes you better able to empathize with those of your partner.

Communicate openly and listen empathetically:

Working toward a secure attachment requires communicating your hopes, fears, and concerns in a respectful, open-hearted way. Non-verbal communication is equally important. Eye contact, nodding, and physical contact can help defuse tension when used skilfully. When conflict does happen, listen empathetically to the other person and determine how you can help each other feel understood and connected, even if you disagree.

Seek out others with healthy relationships:

If you want to run a marathon, it's helpful to surround yourself with successful runners. In the same way, you can improve your relationships by learning about how people with healthy relationships think and behave. Notice or ask how these individuals set appropriate boundaries in their partnerships.

If you don't have a partner, remember that seeking someone who is securely attached can make it easier in your own journey toward secure attachment. If you're in a relationship, reflect on areas where improvement is needed.

Minimize stressors:

Stress can worsen attachment issues, even among those with secure attachment. This is particularly true of relationship-related turmoil, such as frequent arguments or the prospect of separation or divorce. Be proactive by committing to self-care, addressing conflict before it escalates, and engaging in calming activities with your partner.

An Integrated Approach

To summarize, these are the steps you can take to work toward secure attachment and improve your relationship satisfaction:

Learn about your attachment style

Examine your beliefs about relationships

Act opposite to your anxious or avoidant style

Increase your emotional awareness

Communicate openly and listen empathetically

Seek out others with healthy relationships

Minimize stressors

These actions work with thoughts, emotions, and behaviours, giving you an integrated approach to breaking old patterns and moving towards a secure attachment style.

As you work toward secure attachment, keep this principle in mind: Relationship harmony revolves around skilfully expressing your attachment needs and discerning those of your partner. Set aside regular time to reflect on how you and your partner can help each other feel respected, understood, and loved. With consistent effort, this practice can lead to greater intimacy and a more fulfilling relationship.

This principle can also be applied to all kinds of close relationships, although modified to the depth of the relationship.

Reflection points:

Do you feel that there are some areas in life where you already have a secure attachment style?

What steps might you personally take to move towards a secure attachment style?

Session 7 – Perceptions and expectations in relationships

This week we are going to be using the drama triangle to explore different positions we may come from in relationships. We will also reflect on the importance of understanding perceptions and expectations.

Weather check-in

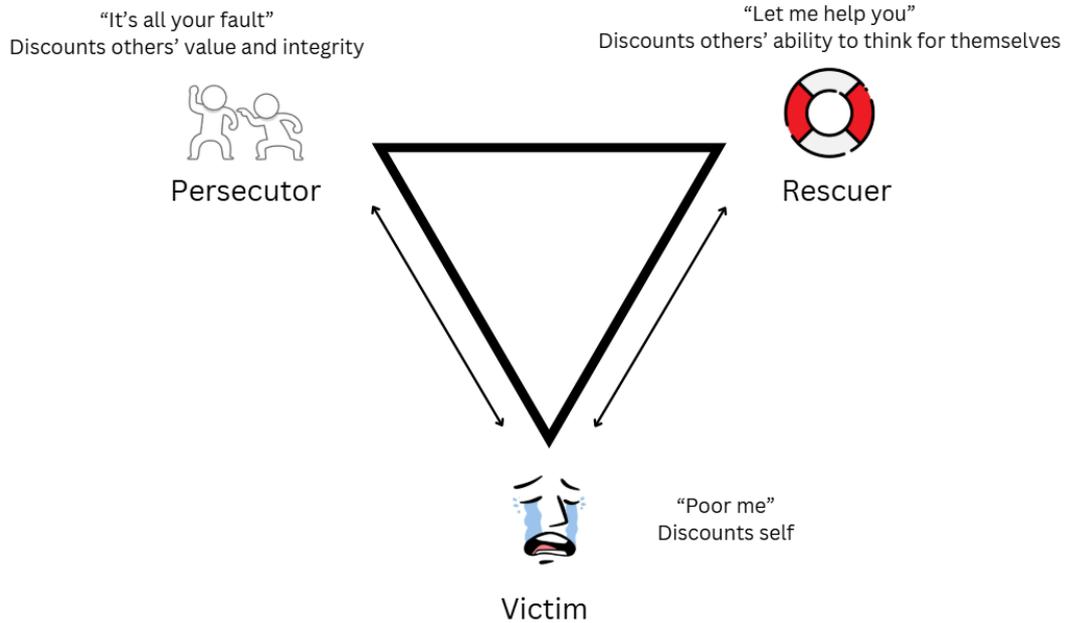
How is the weather with you today?



The Drama Triangle

We can come from one of three positions in the drama triangle. Each position acts as an invitation, inviting the other person to come from one of the others. This is where we might find ourselves getting stuck in communication.

- **Do you notice the drama triangle playing out in your relationships? What does this look like? Who might you get stuck in this with? Where do they sit?**



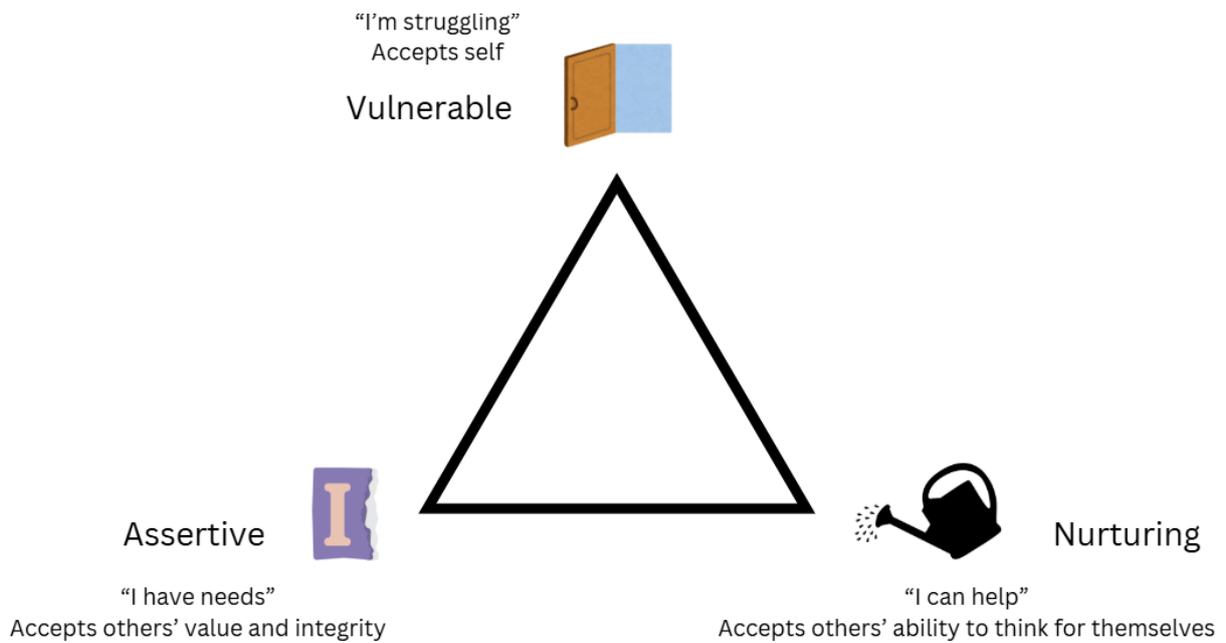
Drama triangle video:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E_XSeUYa0-8

Is there a starting gate position you identify with on the drama triangle? What do you notice about this? What thoughts, emotions, ego- states or drivers might be linked to this?

The Winners Triangle

To step out of the Drama Triangle we want to step into the winners triangle, trying to embody the three positions.



Are there relationships or moments in relationship with others, where you notice you step out of the drama triangle into the winner's triangle. What do you notice about this? What thoughts, emotions, ego states or drivers might be linked to this?

Perception

Depending on which side of the below number you are stood on, may depend how what you perceive it to be. The person on the left might see a 6, whereas the person on the right might see a 9. Neither person is more right than the other, it's just a difference in perspective.



What does it feel like when there's a difference in perception? What thoughts and emotions might show up? What might help?

Session 8 – Moving forward

This week we are going to reflect on the previous sessions and discuss next steps within the service.

Weather check-in



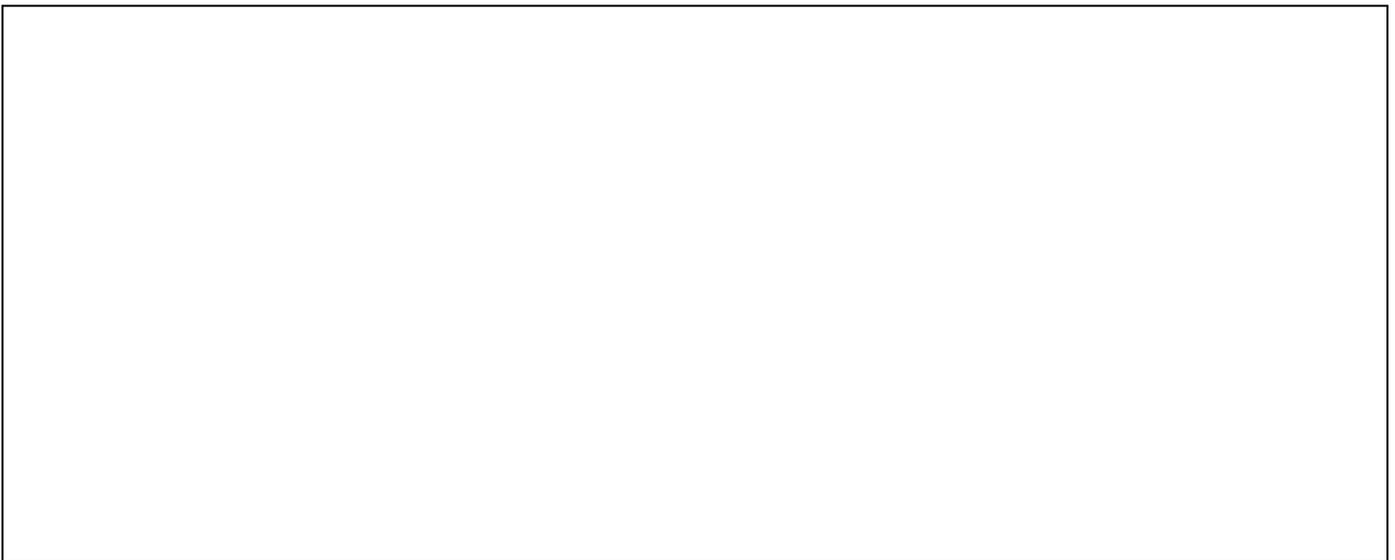
How is the weather with you today?

Reflections

- What came up for you?
- Looking back over the weeks, what do you notice now?
- What have you learnt about yourself?
- What have you learnt about relationships?
- What have you learnt about each other?

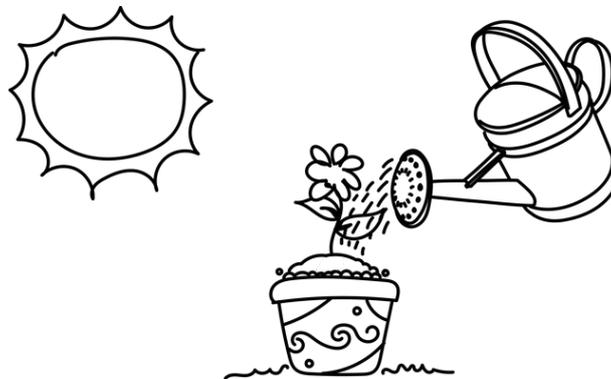
Looking to the future

- What setbacks might you face?
- What challenges could you expect?
- What could you do?
- What are your strengths and resources?
- What do you need to do to continue working on yourself in relationships?



Self-Compassion

"Self-compassion is simply the process of turning compassion inward. We're kind and understanding rather than harshly self-critical when we fail, make mistakes, or feel inadequate." – Dr Kristen Neff



Self-Compassion

We have touched on offering kindness and curiosity towards ourselves and developing self-compassion over the sessions, but it may be helpful to explore what self-compassion is and how it can be helpful in our relationships going forwards

We may be familiar with the inner critic part of us that blames us or berates us. Lack of self-compassion can be something we may frequently encounter. Common themes of self-criticism, shame, and doubt may cloud thoughts and develop a negative self talk. "I tried before and it didn't work", "other people can do it better than me", "I can't do that I am not good enough", "I am a failure", "I don't deserve it", "I can do it for others but not for myself".

Negative self-talk can get us down, lead to emotions of sadness, guilt or anger and can make it more challenging to connect with our authentic selves. This in turn can impact how we show up in relationships.

For so many of us who struggle with self-compassion, the negative core beliefs formed from a young age such as: “I’m not good enough,” “I’m not loveable,” or “I’m not worthy.” When you have heard feedback that confirms these beliefs as true-from parents, caretakers, peers, or society-it sticks and it’s hard to shake.

“When you start to recognize self-berating comes from a place not of truth, but from a place desperately in need of empathy and love, you begin your journey towards new self-awareness, insight, and compassion.”

Self-compassion helps us to recognise our own emotion and acknowledge our own experience and respond with kindness and support rather than criticism and judgement. It allows us to pay attention to thoughts and feelings, without judgement. It’s the act of being a friend to ourselves.

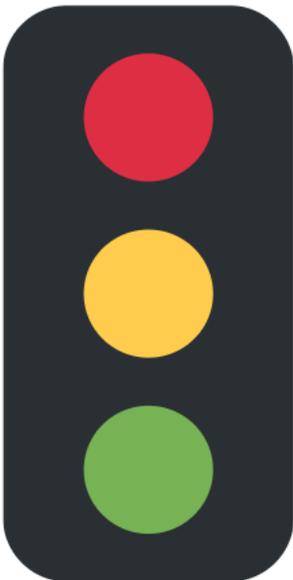
When we treat ourselves with kindness and understanding, this can enable us to communicate our needs and implement boundaries in a more direct, yet kind, way. Showing ourselves more compassion can reduce defensiveness and reactivity, allowing for more open and honest conversation with others.

Self-compassion can help us build resilience and help us create a more supportive, nurturing inner space, which helps us with relationships, because it helps us to be more empathic. We can start to view our suffering from the point of view of common humanity – we all suffer and we all need a best friend that treats us with love, nurture, and understanding.

Here are some tools we have looked at that can help us be aware of what we might be needing – the traffic light model and the ACT Matrix. These tools are perspective taking exercises that help us to be aware of where we are at, and what we might need to help us move forwards.

Early warning signs

What does my traffic light look like?



RED – Feeling consistently low, lacking in confidence, finding it hard to communicate

AMBER – Early warning signs

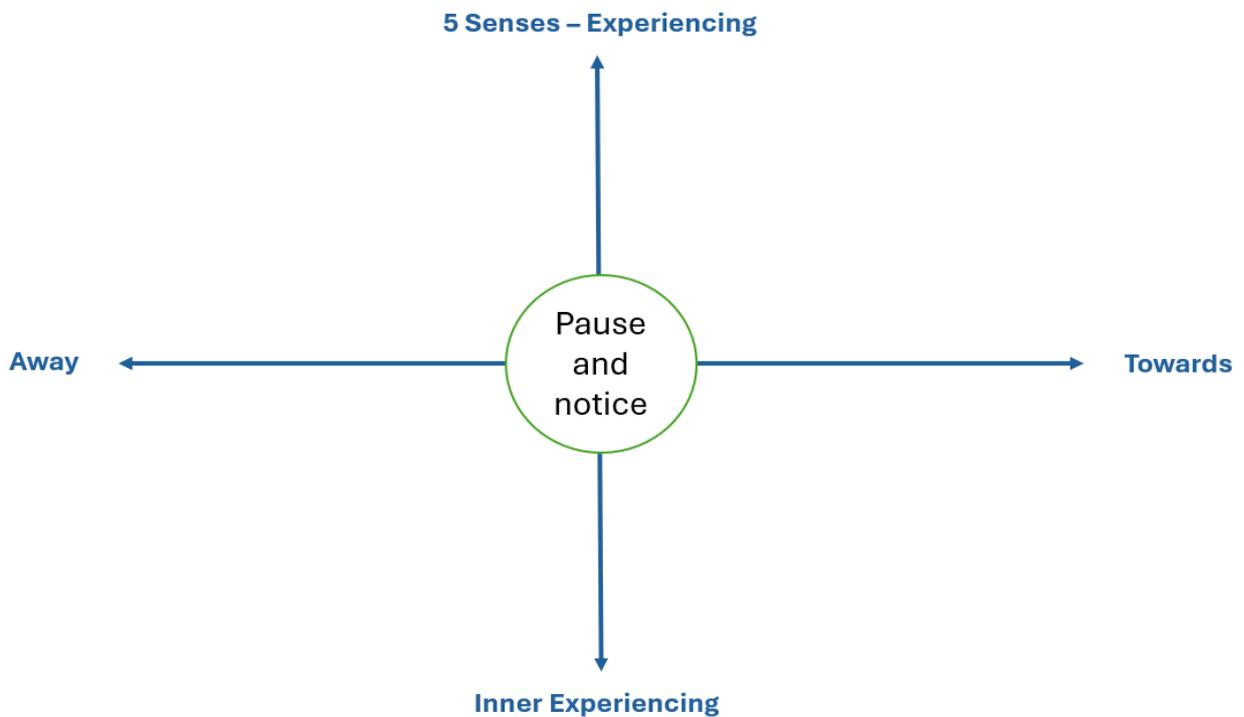
GREEN – Good days are more frequent, things feel more manageable, more confidence in yourself, more able to communicate

ACT Matrix

Here's a reminder about how we can use the ACT matrix to help us:

The ACT Matrix | a simple perspective-taking exercise

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cCCSpOtDPV0>



As the course comes to an end today:

What is important to me in my relationships/ life ? What are my Values?

What moves me away from my Values?

How can I align with my Values to move towards them?

**Thank you for your contributions to the course. It's been a pleasure to have
you with us!**