



Are you ready to take your relationship to the next level?

Relationships are never easy; humans are complex creatures with different needs, desires and wounds. Sometimes, two people can be incredibly in love, but communication can break down, leaving them wondering what went wrong. In some relationships, it might seem as if one person is more invested than the other, or one person is ready to commit whilst the other holds back. This can often lead us to wonder what is wrong with us - why won't this person who claims to love me do what needs to be done to make this relationship work? If you are the one that took the initiative to invest in this challenge, then, chances are, the person who is asking these questions is you.

But here's what you need to know: it didn't start with you.



Often, the men we love are trying to meet us emotionally whilst also trying to balance the societal pressure of what it is to be a 'man'.

Society has a harmful habit of reinforcing the idea that the feminine side of a romantic relationship drives forward the emotional element, whilst the masculine is 'along for the ride'. This means that men are often ostracised for showing vulnerability and self-awareness - the two critical ingredients for a healthy, happy long-term relationship. In fact, many of the vital components needed for relationship wellbeing - like communication, connection, trust and equality - tend to clash with society's idea of what it means to be a 'man' within the context of a romantic relationship. This means that to build true intimacy and love, these men must consciously choose to unravel the web of what they have always been made to believe masculinity is, by building self-awareness and leaning into vulnerability. When this can be done in a safe and loving relationship, healing can occur on a transformational level. But it's not always straightforward.

If you feel lost, alone and frustrated within your relationship, you're in the right place.

During this process, we will work through 21 simple techniques you can practice with your partner to get you feeling like your relationship is back to where you want it. These exercises are based on scientific research drawn from a range of psychological approaches, including:

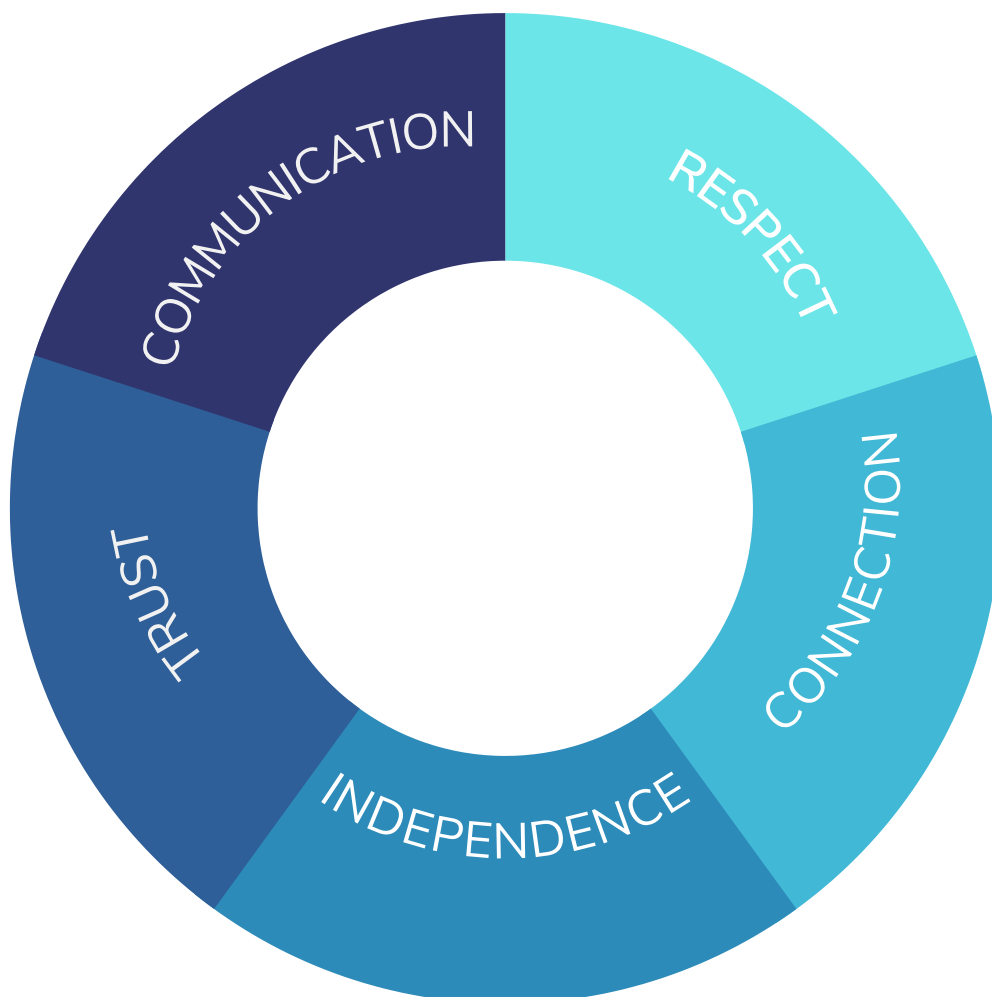
- Developmental & Attachment Psychology
- Emotionally Focused Therapy for Couples (EFT)
- Relational & Transpersonal Psychotherapy
- Mindfulness
- Dialectical Behavioural Therapy
- Imago Relationship Therapy
- The Gottman Method of Relationship Therapy



The Five Most Important Elements Of

Intimacy

Whilst no two relationships are the same, specific elements have been shown to increase - and fracture - the overall success of a romantic relationship. For example, many relationship therapists refer to the 'Four Horsemen' (Gottman, 2015) as a strong predictor of divorce and separation. The Four Horsemen usually show up during conflict. They include criticism, contempt, defensiveness and stonewalling - a shutdown of communication between partners during difficult conversations. Whilst this may seem alarming, it is a positive sign if you can identify how these might show up in your relationship. It means you can try eliminating them and replacing them with healthy patterns. In contrast to the Four Horsemen, the five elements below demonstrate a healthy, balanced relationship. Throughout this challenge, we will break down how to incorporate each into your relationship - thus enabling you to build intimacy and connection, building a solid suit of armour against the Four Horsemen and creating a loving, long-lasting relationship.



Step 2

Deepen Your Connection

What image comes to you first when you hear 'independence'? Depending on your attachment style, this will most likely vary. For some of us, independence is precious - we function better as a 'lone wolf' or prefer to be in our own company. For others, we find the idea of independence scary - it feels like loneliness and isolation; instead, we like feeling as if we belong somewhere and have a purpose.

Humans Are Wired For Connection

In 'Loneliness: Human Nature and the Need for Social Connection', neuroscientist John Cacioppo found that a lack of social connection and loneliness was associated with a similar spectrum of health complications as smoking, obesity and lack of exercise. Evolutionarily speaking, we are genetically hard-wired for connection. This makes sense when we consider that generations ago, our ability to hunt, gather, reproduce and survive entirely depended on being part of a group or tribe - there was safety in numbers. It is understandable to assume that now, things are different - we live in a different world, with distractions, endless hobbies and ways to stay connected. However, evolution is a prolonged process - and our brain has not quite caught up. Solitude can be highly beneficial - it allows us to reset and rebalance our energy. However, the purpose of solitude is to 'recharge' our social batteries, enabling us to get back into the world and find the connections we need to thrive.

Why Do We Fall In Love?

When it comes to romantic relationships, this is even more vital. We tend to fall in love - which, from this perspective, is a hormonal and neurological experience - to 'pair-bond'. From a very simplistic approach, think of it in terms of two animals in the wild - being in a pair increases the chance of survival and the ability to reproduce and raise healthy children. Whilst we no longer need to function in this manner to survive, it is still what biologically underpins why we tend to fall in - and out - of love. There is, however, an 'extreme' version of this - co-dependence, which is something we will discuss in this chapter. We will also look at how our attachment styles show up concerning independence and co-dependency - and finally, how we can find the sweet spot in the middle.