

# Mental Health Workbook

31 Self-Help Tips



Shall we get acquainted?

## Hello!

We have one request for you from the very start: let's agree right away that this is not the kind of notebook or guide that you feel like "it's a shame to write in it" or one that sits untouched in a drawer or on a shelf amidst books.

I am here with you, for you, and about you. I am your companion on the journey to understanding the fundamentals of mental health, the path to rebuilding your life in the United Kingdom, and the path to self-discovery. The one who will support and listen and even give advice. The one you can trust. Who will teach you to live for yourself and understand yourself? Who will guide you to love yourself? , and to love oneself means to treat oneself as a treasure.

To put yourself on the path towards change, I need you to say "yes" to the question:

Are you willing to embark on an exciting journey to discover yourself?

\*space for your answer\*

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Great! We can continue. This handbook contains 32 topics to help you better understand mental health, psychology, and therapy. Each topic also has exciting tasks, and by practising and implementing these tips in your life, we promise you will feel the difference.

The IRC and OPORA teams worked on this book. We've poured our hearts and love into it. And love and therapy always work, so don't doubt it.



The International Rescue Committee (IRC) responds to the world's worst humanitarian crises. It helps people whose lives and livelihoods have been shattered by conflicts and disasters to survive, recover, and gain control over their future. Founded in 1933 at Albert Einstein's request to assist refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, the IRC became deeply rooted in Europe. At the end of World War II, the IRC was one of the few organisations ready and able to help millions of refugees in need of shelter. Since then, the IRC has become a global humanitarian organisation with programs in over 40 countries, including the United Kingdom and Ukraine.

IRC UK works in partnership with local councils to support better integration of refugees, asylum seekers, and vulnerable migrants from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, Iraq, Sudan, and other countries currently residing in the United Kingdom. Support is provided through various initiatives (integration courses, employment counselling, mentoring, and leadership training).



**OPORA** – is a charity organisation that supports those affected by the war in Ukraine in rebuilding their lives in the United Kingdom. Founded at the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022, OPORA provides reliable information resources, specialised online support groups, advocacy, and practical support and unites Ukrainians into a community.

**IRC and OPORA understand that supporting mental health and well-being is critical for people affected by war.** Many displaced individuals may face complex challenges related to their mental health and well-being. They may experience anxiety, anger, sadness, fatigue, and stress. This, combined with the challenges of integrating into a new society, can lead individuals to experience depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder.

We want to support displaced people in the United Kingdom by developing this guide covering critical mental health and well-being topics. Each discussed topic combines theoretical and practical knowledge in an attempt to equip people with skills and tools that can be used to manage their well-being and mental health. We believe that by making this guide accessible, we can support everyone's mental well-being.

**Shall we begin?**



# Contents

**32 topics = 32 issues and advice on how to approach them.**

This book can be read sequentially, or you can start from any page with the most relevant topic.

Adaptation	4	Low Self-Esteem	44
Safety	6	Trauma	48
Burnout	9	Exploring Our Emotions: Fear, Anger, Sadness, Guilt, Shame, Joy	51
Grief	12	Separation, Loss	55
How Not to Lose Your Mind	15	Relationships	57
Depression and Apathy	17	Body and Psychosomatics	60
Emotional Intelligence	20	Frustration	63
Resilience	22	Self-Identification	65
Eating Disorders	24	Values	67
Silent detox	26	Honesty	69
Time to Grow Up	27	Asking for Help	71
Anger and Aggression	30	Happiness Chooses You	73
How to Deal with Panic Attacks	33	Insomnia	74
Conflict and <u>Communication</u>	36	Responsibility - It's Your Life	76
Humanity	39	Self-Concept	78
Manipulation	41		



# Adaptation

We start with **Adaptation**. Take a deep breath in and out, immerse yourself in novel ideas, embrace change, and cultivate resilience.

It is wonderful when you have the time and space to plan for changes in your life (getting married, having a child, buying a car, moving house), but what if changes come crashing in unannounced, turning your life upside down without asking if you're ready for them? Does this sound familiar?

Changes happen daily, and our task is to adjust to them, gain new experiences, and adapt.



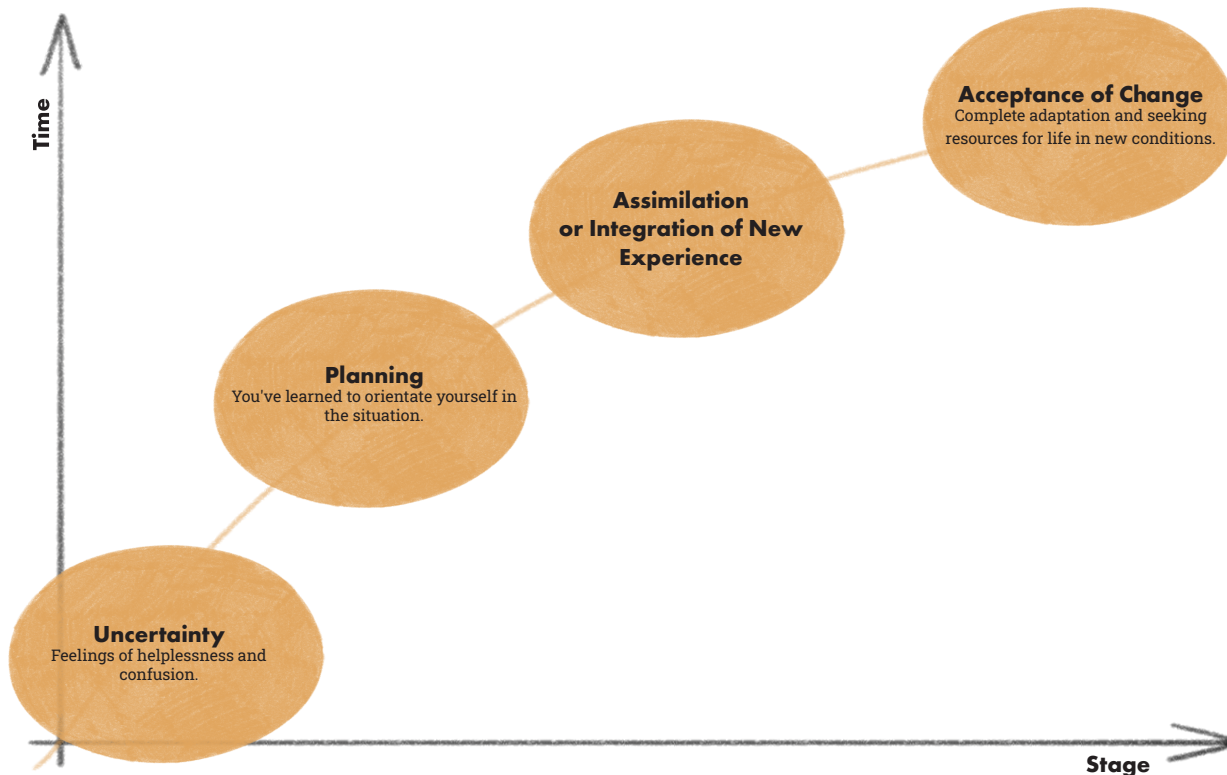
**Survival doesn't favour the strongest  
or the smartest but those who best  
adapt to change.**

Charles Darwin

**Adaptability** is the readiness and ability to realign yourself to new challenges and conditions without becoming frustrated and, in doing so, creating and mastering new patterns of behaviour. In other words, it's a flexible approach to change that helps us get new experiences, find new solutions, and form new neural connections.

Research has shown that mental and emotional intelligence can only make you successful and happy if you're adaptable. You will thrive in any situation only with high adaptive intelligence. Adaptability isn't a unique trait you're born with; it's something you can continually develop. Adaptive Intelligence (AQ) isn't tied to age – it's linked to the habit of self-improvement.

## Stages of Adaptation:



## SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice

**Create a Safe Environment.** Make every effort to find or create a space in which you feel safe and secure.

**Speak.** Find a way to express your emotions and feelings, for instance, through drawing, music, writing, or therapeutic groups.

**Maintain Your Cultural Traditions.** This will help you feel closer to your culture and aid in self-identification.

## DEVELOPING AQ (Adaptive Intelligence):

- Learn to perform actions that are unfamiliar to you.
- Choose something unknown to you, even in trivial matters.
- Adopt new habits. Remember, they take 60-90 days to form, not just 21.
- Expand your circle of acquaintances. Make 2-3 new weekly connections with people from different professions and social backgrounds.
- Read biographies of famous people who've faced difficult situations. It gives the sense that if someone else could, I can too.

# Safety

Your journey of self-help has just begun, and to continue interacting with the world, it is essential to establish a sense of safety.

What does safety mean to you? How do you feel it, and where is it located in your body?

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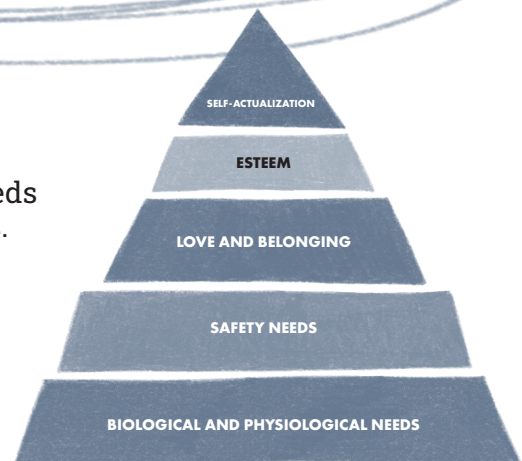
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**Safety is a phenomenon that ensures normal personal development. The need for safety is fundamental in the hierarchy of human needs, and without its partial satisfaction, harmonious personal growth and self-realisation are impossible.**

First and foremost, for interaction with life, one needs safety at the physiological and psychological levels.

You've probably heard of "Maslow's Hierarchy."



Abraham Maslow, the American humanistic psychologist, developed the idea of a hierarchy of needs, arranging them by decreasing importance. At the pyramid's base are physiological conditions, such as the desire to eat, drink, sleep, and so on. The next level is safety. However, while a certain percentage of the population is more or less provided with food and water, problems often arise at the next level. This is because safety is not just the absence of a direct threat to life and health. We need not only physical but also emotional security. If this need is met, we can build healthy relationships with family, friends, partners, and the world. But what if this isn't happening? What if we don't feel emotionally and physically safe around those who surround us or where we are right now? What then?

## SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice

Create a safe space. Learn to open up, trust, and provide support. We cannot make the world safe, but we can learn to create a safe space where you can feel calm, anxiety dissipates, the body relaxes, and you feel productive energy and a desire to develop and implement.

If you have a feeling of "I'm in danger", or if your internal alarm bells are ringing, it indicates that your self-preservation instinct is working.

Are you familiar with this state? If so, then let's practice.

## SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice

Take 5 minutes for your mental health.

**1. Use a self-checklist.** It usually consists of a few questions, for example:

"Do I currently feel safe?"

"Am I in a calm state right now?"

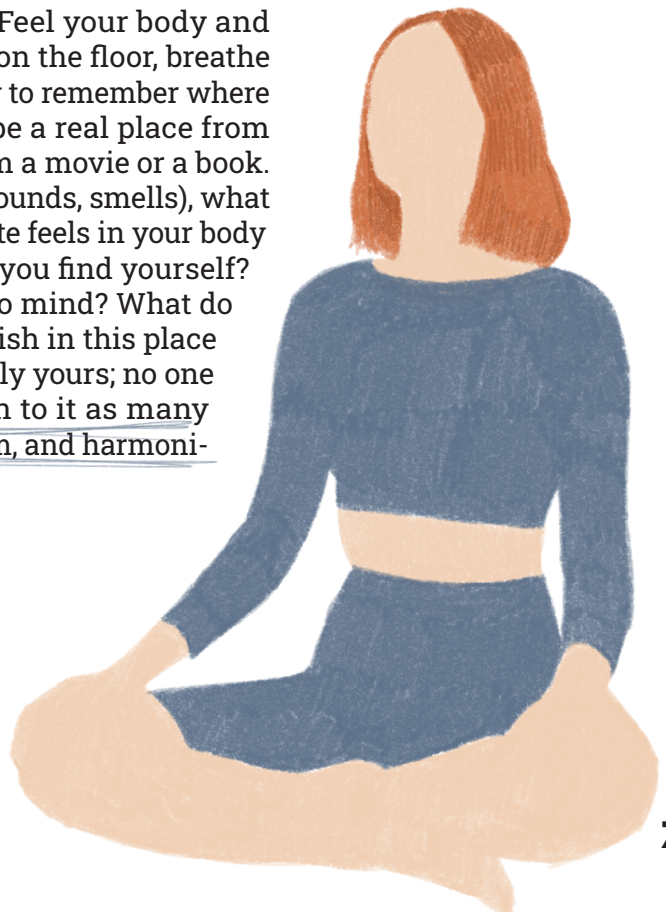
"Has my mood changed in the last day?"

Answer these questions and consider your current state.

### **2. "Safe Place" Exercise**

This exercise aims to restore and strengthen your sense of safety. We recommend doing this exercise daily for a month to restore essential trust worldwide.

Take a comfortable position and relax. Feel your body and yourself within it. Place your feet firmly on the floor, breathe evenly and calmly. Close your eyes and try to remember where you felt safe, cosy, and peaceful. It can be a real place from your past, an imagined place, a place from a movie or a book. Describe this place: what it's filled with (sounds, smells), what you are like in this place, and how this state feels in your body right here and now. In what position do you find yourself? What do you feel? What thoughts come to mind? What do you want? Spend as much time as you wish in this place and this state. Remember, this place is only yours; no one can be there except you. You can return to it as many times as you need to feel safe, relaxed, calm, and harmonious.



Now, answer the question:

What will help you return to this place: some image, association, sound, smell, thought, feeling, sensation, or maybe something else?

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**You've just taken another step towards your mental health. You have acquired a new tool. Use it whenever you feel unsafe.**



# Burnout

**Let's continue our exploration of self-help.**

**Let's talk about burnout.** If you're already looking forward to the weekend on Monday, if you complain about fatigue not only at the end of the day but from the moment you wake up, if you constantly feel anxious and irritable, pay attention to how you feel to avoid needing "emergency" psychological help.

Burnout is a state of mental, physical, psychological, and emotional exhaustion that occurs against the backdrop of prolonged stress.

## STAGES OF BURNOUT

American psychoanalyst Jay R. Greenberg identifies five main stages of burnout:

**1. "Honeymoon"**. Imagine a young woman settling into a new job she has long dreamed of. To demonstrate her efficiency in her new role, she starts working on Saturdays, tries to finish tasks faster, and may stay in the office until late at night, sacrificing her leisure for work. But as stress accumulates, she begins to lose energy.

**2. "Fuel Depletion"**. Even from the most exciting and beloved job, you can tire if you give it your all. Our young woman, after intense work, feels profound fatigue. At this stage, apathy can set in, sleep problems may occur, and interest in work, especially at the current workplace, may diminish.

**3. "Chronic Burnout"**. Constant fatigue and exhaustion set in. After some time, the condition worsens, and fatigue becomes more pronounced. The young woman begins to feel dissatisfied with herself and her work. Physical problems, such as illnesses and headaches, may also emerge.

**4. "Crisis"**. The beloved job becomes a nightmare. Instead of inspiration, she feels apathy, hatred, and indifference. Colleagues annoy her, and she only does the bare minimum at work.





**5. "Breaking the Wall"**. The career is at risk, but that's not the most significant issue at this stage. At its peak, emotional, physical, and psychological exhaustion can provoke dangerous illnesses.

### **How Long Does Emotional Burnout Last?**

It varies from person to person, but it is a lengthy process. To recover, it may take from several weeks to a few years.

### **What Can Help Deal With Burnout?**

**Review Work Habits and Time Management.** Perhaps the most critical factor in dealing with burnout. Maintaining a balance between work and personal life is essential. Avoid working on weekends, evenings, or vacations. Allocate free time to yourself, your family, friends, or hobbies.

**Rest.** Choose a type of leisure that helps you recover rather than depleting your last energy reserves.

**Exercise.** Physical activity helps increase stress resistance. Engage in regular physical activity. You don't need to spend two hours at the gym; you can start with a short 15-minute workout at home and gradually add activities like brisk walks, yoga, or stretching.

**Sleep.** Don't neglect sleep. It's best to go to bed by 11:00 PM and give your body a full eight hours of rest. Sleep is one of the best ways to rejuvenate your body.

**Healthy Eating.** Proper nutrition is essential for the normal functioning of your body. Your diet should be rich in necessary vitamins and minerals, and you should drink an adequate amount of water.

**Pleasure.** Engage more often in activities that bring joy and positive emotions.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Create an 'achievements and gratitude' journal. Burnout can make you believe that nothing good is happening in your life and that you are incapable of success.

Therefore, it's helpful to remind yourself that this is not the case. The simplest way is to write down three achievements and three things you are grateful for at the end of the day. These could be small victories, like going a day without social media or learning how to use Google Forms. A full life can be built on small wins.

The key to this exercise is consistency. If you feel like you didn't accomplish anything today and nothing good happened, try to write these six points. After a few days, you'll start feeling better.

**Practice self-care.**

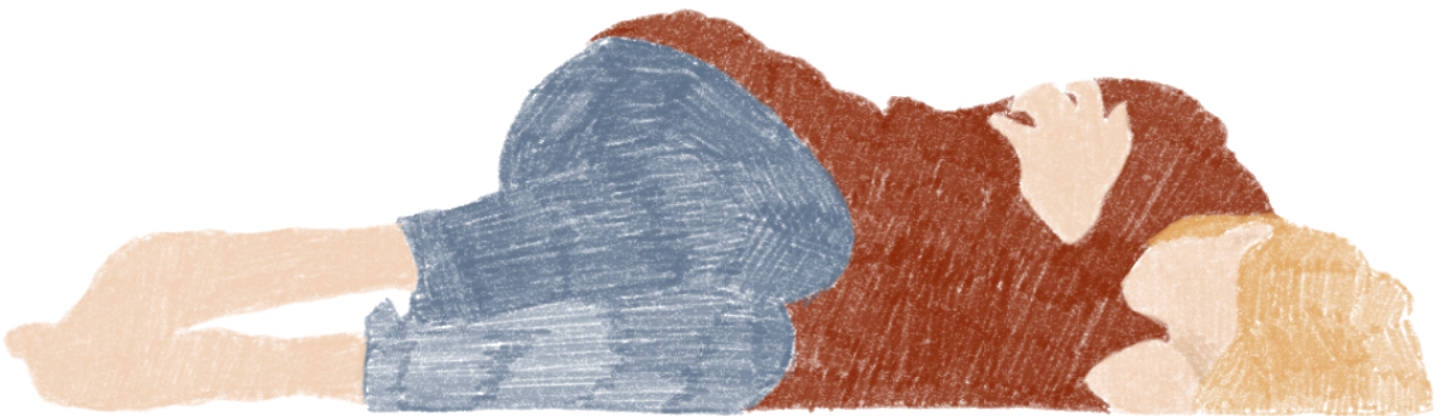
# Grief

Usually, grief is mentioned in regards to the loss of loved ones. However, one can grieve for various reasons - if something was important but is now lost. Every person faces losses: losing a job, the loss of loved ones, a difficult breakup. Surviving the grief of loss can be very challenging. Everyone goes through this experience differently; some distance themselves from family and friends, some cry around the clock, and others become angry. There is no right or wrong way to cope with loss - everyone experiences it differently.

**Grief** is a state in which a whole range of emotional experiences exist. It's serious inner work that our psyche does to cope with the loss of something or someone important. A person experiencing grief can feel "emptiness," a "black hole," or a "loss of the meaning of life."

Elizabeth Kubler-Ross believed that people go through five stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance) sequentially: from denial to anger, from anger to bargaining, and so on. Later, psychologists found that the order of experiencing these stages can be different. The stages change in any order, and the same stage can repeat. For example, a person can go from denial to anger, then to depression, and then back to denial.

**Do not deny yourself the right to grieve. What can you do instead?**



## Recognise the grief

Suppressed grief lingers inside us and deprives us of the opportunity to enjoy life peacefully. If you don't let it out, anxiety, depression, or dependencies can become consequences..

### **Give yourself time**

Grief doesn't follow a schedule. Pain sometimes subsides and then intensifies, and emotions that seemed over can return. Pay attention to your feelings; this will help you understand the situation and live through the experience.

### **Have compassion for yourself**

Loss, especially if accompanied by guilt or regret, slowly erodes our "self" and makes us ashamed of events that cannot be changed. Don't be afraid to forgive yourself for things you cannot control. This will help restore lost integrity.

### **Talk to people**

When others see, hear, and accept us who have gone through something similar, it can help us to accept ourselves. At the moment of loss, it's essential to communicate with people in groups focused on recovering from grief, as this helps feel the support of others.

### **Understand that you have changed**

Loss leaves an indelible mark on us - nothing will be as it was before. We can only come to terms with grief and loss, which is entirely natural. Allow yourself to move on.

Terry Martin (T.L. Martin) and Kenneth Doka (K.J. Doka) identify grieving styles: **intuitive**, where a person fully experiences their feelings, and **instrumental**, where a person is restrained in their emotional expressions and does not openly express them. They experience the loss through specific actions, trying to cope with the event in this way. In many people, the grieving style is **mixed**: a person sometimes stays in control of their feelings and then switches to an active mode, solving problems and making plans. There is no one-size-fits-all way to deal with emotions that seem unbearable. The most important thing is to try and observe your reaction. Take care of yourself as much as possible and rely on those who can support you: close ones and professionals.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Express your feelings; do not hide your despair from loved ones. Don't "close up." Do not "suppress" grief inside. If you want to cry – cry; if you want to laugh – laugh. Your body needs this; it's a valid reaction, and no one will judge you for it!

Practice: Come up with and write down at least 10 phrases or actions that have comforted and supported you in grief. For example, these could be activities, entertainment, rituals, time spent with loved ones, or even places that relax you. Having this list to turn to when you need support and relief during grief is essential.

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# How Not to Lose Your Mind

Life will not be the same as before. In today's conditions, it's crucial to maintain a healthy mind - it's about mental health, the ability to think critically and perceive the reality of events. Loss of reality equals losing your mind.

**"Are you from smoke or from a hangover?  
Did the devil scratch your soul? Or did you  
lose your mind?"**

Ivan Kotlyarevsky, I, 1952, 185

Have you heard about Viktor Frankl's book "**Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy**"?

Viktor Frankl, a philosopher and psychologist, survived Nazi death camps and showed millions worldwide the path to finding the meaning of life. In the terrible, deadly conditions of concentration camps, he demonstrated the extraordinary power of the human spirit. A spirit determined to endure despite physical weakness and disorder. There is a reason for a person to live! His fate was somewhat more merciful and gave him a second chance. He survived not only due to luck. Throughout all the burdens of life as a prisoner, teetering on the brink of the abyss, he analysed the behaviour of those around him, the guards, the military, and himself. Most importantly, he maintained a healthy mind and humanity despite all the horrors he experienced.

Creating the book "Man's Search for Meaning," Frankl did not set out to tell readers about the horrors that took place in the places of his imprisonment. He aimed to show how one can survive on the brink of death by maintaining a healthy mind. No matter how difficult a situation may be, looking at it from a different perspective can help you find peace and discover the strength and potential to survive, improve, and live a new, happy life.



## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Read Viktor Frankl's book "Man's Search for Meaning" for a month. Take your time. Write down 10 quotes/phrases that influenced you the most, the ones you can rely on.

With the help of this book, you can understand how to endure life's most challenging trials and keep a healthy mind.

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# Depression and apathy

This handbook will help you gradually uncover various states and feelings within yourself. It may sometimes be difficult or unbearable, but as you journey through the handbook, you will explore yourself, get to know yourself, and experience your situations.

## Feelings of emptiness, pessimism, sadness, and a loss of purpose in life... sound familiar?

Depression and apathy often go hand in hand. Apathy is a psychosomatic condition characterised by indifference and a lack of interest in people and events.

**Depression** is not merely feeling down but an illness—grief, gloomy thoughts, low self-esteem, and an inability to experience pleasure. It affects all aspects of daily life and is accompanied by an increased risk of suicide. It can lead to the development of various addictions, as well as heart problems, diabetes, or sexual disorders.



### The causes of depression and apathy can include:

- stressful situations;
- disruptions in the endocrine system;
- persistent chronic illnesses that take a psychological toll;
- lack of sunlight, emotional burnout, vitamin deficiencies, mental strain.

### Symptoms can include:

- anhedonia – an inability to experience pleasure. For example, someone may have everything going well for them, but they feel nothing;
- sadness and guilt;
- psychomotor retardation: "I can't do anything; I have no energy.";
- increased feelings of worthlessness;
- decreased concentration;
- self-harm or recurring suicidal thoughts;
- difficulty performing daily tasks;
- feelings of indifference;
- lack of emotions, both positive and negative;
- lack of motivation to achieve goals;
- low energy levels;
- a sudden decrease in social activity. For example, wanting to avoid seeing friends, celebrating birthdays, or even going to the store;
- frequent procrastination of life plans, tasks, and decisions;
- no desire to learn something new, meet new people, or gain new experiences.

People in depression become hostages of an imaginary "carousel" of negative thoughts.

Thoughts: "What's the point of anything? Life is meaningless," "Why bother doing anything when nothing will work out?" > these thoughts lead to a low mood, feelings of sadness, and despair > These emotions cause physical heaviness and decreased activity > thoughts like "I haven't achieved anything that I planned again" > feelings of guilt > and so on.

### *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

**You shouldn't self-diagnose depression, but you can take a test for apathy alone.**

Answer the following questions:

**Do you constantly feel bored?**

**Have your productivity and efficiency decreased recently?**

**Have you felt indifference in response to pleasant events in your life?**

**Have you felt indifference in response to adverse events in your life?**

**Do you not feel like participating in events you used to enjoy?**

**Does your usual activity require too much effort?**

**Do you have no interest or desire to learn something new?**

**Does meeting new people not elicit an emotional response from you?**

**Do you expect others to solve problems for you?**

**Do you feel a sense of emptiness or desolation?**

**Do you feel that everything is senseless or futile?**

**Do you always want to sleep, and prolonged sleep doesn't provide a sense of rest?**

If you answered positively to most of these questions, you are likely experiencing apathy.

When experiencing strong apathy, it's essential not to succumb to it. Instead, create a list of activities you used to enjoy, even if you don't want to do them now, and start doing something from that list for at least 5-10 minutes every day. This process is called **behavioural activation**.

Most importantly, seeking professional help is necessary to deal with prolonged depression.

# Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EQ) is one of the primary skills of the 21st century, considering today's circumstances.

Solving complex equations or calculating percentages is excellent, but how will it help you adapt to a new country, navigate tough negotiations, avoid family conflicts, or understand your child?

**Emotional Intelligence** is the ability to understand others and, equally importantly, yourself. It's the skill of reading, managing emotions, and recognising motivations and true desires.

Some people may have incredibly high IQs but low EQs.

## Why develop emotional intelligence?

With **EQ**, you can significantly improve your effectiveness, build better relationships with others, and become more self-assured. Most importantly, you'll learn to understand yourself, your feelings, desires, and needs. By developing your **EQ**, you won't need tarot cards; you'll start predicting events because you know what's happening to you.

## How do you develop emotional intelligence?

**Internal dialogue.** Learn to name your emotions with words. People often fear naming their emotions or might not even realise their feelings at a given moment. Study an emotions chart and begin practising awareness and naming your emotions: "This makes me happy," "This irritates me," "I want...". Don't shy away from negative emotions. All emotions are valuable. When you start accepting your emotions as they are, you might suddenly realise that beneath the mask of normalcy, you're quite a melancholic person, or perhaps you behave too aggressively.

**Learn effective self-expression**

Why do I act this way?

Is it worth using these words?

How would I react if I were in their shoes?

Is there another way to understand this situation?

- Stress management.** Breathing exercises can help reduce anxiety and avoid emotional burnout.
  
- Develop empathy/compassion.** Understanding issues from someone else's perspective is essential. Treat people with respect and understanding; this will return to you like a boomerang. There is a Native American saying that goes, "Don't judge someone until you've walked two moons in their moccasins".
  
- In any misunderstanding, try to put yourself in the other person's shoes. If a conflict arises or the situation becomes complicated, ask yourself, "**How would I react if I loved them?**"

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Create a journal and add a new section called "**My Emotional State Every Day**".

Recording your thoughts on paper lets you understand which events led to particular feelings. Write down how you reacted. Record everything – situations at home and work, sudden insights, anxieties, and plans. Over time, you'll see patterns in your behaviour. By analysing this, you'll gain better self-understanding. This journal will help you "name" your emotions.





# Resilience

What does the gentlest mollusc do when a foreign object (like a grain of sand) enters its shell and starts causing pain?

Does it suffer? Post about it on social media with "Everything is difficult"? Eat away its troubles?

This could have happened if nature had not provided the only correct mechanism in such a case: to transform the problem into a precious gem - a pearl.

By discovering a traumatising and irritating defect within yourself, you can gradually turn it into an advantage. This process is called resilience – a set of specific adaptations during which, like from a lemon, you make lemonade.

**The concept of "resilience" was first described by Salvatore Maddi, who called it psychological hardiness and enhanced human effectiveness.**

Maddi identified three components of resilience that reinforce and support each other. The more present they are in a person, the lower the probability they will exhibit negative somatic or psychological symptoms in severe stress situations.

The first component is **engagement**.

Being in the process of events is always more advantageous than observing them from the sidelines. It's especially beneficial in terms of dealing with stress. A person who acts and is geared to act is better protected from stress than one who sits on the sidelines and waits.

The second component is **control**.

Even though we can't control the main global aspects, we can always find something to take into our own hands and start exercising control.

Otherwise, by refusing to try to control anything, we surrender ourselves to the power of a very unpleasant effect known in psychology as "learned helplessness." This is a complete disconnect between a person's actions and what happens to them.

The third component of resilience is **"risk-taking"**.

This is the willingness to act without a guarantee of success. Considering that even negative experience is still valuable, it's experience. People who don't dare to act without fully guaranteeing that everything will be okay are much more vulnerable to stress than those willing to take action despite uncertainty.

These traits are stable personality characteristics, but that doesn't mean people are born with them – they can be trained and influenced.

Let's try.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

### **"Quality of Life at a Ten" Technique**

You'll need just 7 minutes to complete this task. Please slow down, find a comfortable place, take a piece of paper (not your phone's notepad) and a pen, and write down 10 situations in which you found it difficult to cope.

For example, arranging a place for your child in school, finding a job, buying plane tickets, getting home, etc. These can be situations of varying complexity, but they cause you stress and difficulties.

Opposite each situation, write whether you coped with it or not. Congratulations if you coped with 7 – meaning you wrote "yes" in seven cases! Your resilience level is growing.

Now, over the next week, each day, set yourself a new minor or significant task, complete it, and continue recording it in your notebook.

For example, go to an interview, communicate in a foreign language, eat less sugar, do 15 minutes of exercise, etc.

Each completed task is a small or large victory that shapes your resilience.

# Eating Disorders

Become familiar with your body because your body always gives the first signals if something is not going as planned.

**Eating behaviour disorders** – anorexia, bulimia, and compulsive overeating - are not just temporary disruptions in eating patterns. Eating behaviour disorders are psychological problems related to eating habits..

For people who often overeat, food becomes an exclusive source of pleasure because they have a broken connection with their feelings, with the awareness of what makes them feel good, happy, and interested. What should be a multitude of sources of pleasure is reduced to just food. In other words, an eating behaviour disorder occurs when the usual motivation to derive pleasure from taste turns into a need to relieve tension (people with such disorders often don't pay attention to taste).

## Types of eating behaviour disorders:

- **Nervous Anorexia.** When a person consciously restricts themselves from eating due to a panic fear of gaining excess weight. This life-threatening condition can lead to body weight dropping below healthy levels.
- **Compulsive Overeating.** With this disorder, a person tends to overeat when experiencing negative emotions, using food to "swallow" their feelings. Often, it happens without feelings of hunger, with a loss of control over the amount consumed, and with feelings of guilt and depression afterwards. Risk factors can include childhood obesity, critical comments about weight, low self-esteem, depression, and physical abuse during childhood.
- **Pica.** The persistent consumption of non-nutritive, non-food substances.
- **Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID).** Avoidance or restriction of food intake, which leads to significant loss of weight, nutrient deficiency, dependency on nutritional supplements, or marked psychosocial interference. However, unlike anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa, this disorder doesn't include concerns about shape or body weight.
- **Bulimia Nervosa.** Overeating followed by inappropriate compensatory behaviours (such as forced vomiting, misuse of laxatives, diuretics, enemas, or excessive exercise) to prevent weight gain.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

If you have concerns about excessive weight, dissatisfaction with your body, overeating, or, conversely, undereating, try this practice.

### **Practice 1: How to Recognise Eating Behaviour Disorders in Yourself**

Try to answer these questions honestly:

- Have you ever noticed that you eat uncontrollably?**
- Do you ever feel shame, guilt, or sadness about eating, with a persistent desire to eliminate the calories consumed?**
- Do you struggle to cope with your feelings about your eating habits or body shape?**
- Do you count calories, time until your next meal, or pay excessive attention to what you should eat (without a doctor's recommendations)?**
- How often do you worry about your appearance and feel the need to lose weight or fear gaining weight?**
- Is your self-esteem tied to your weight and body shape?**

If you answered "yes" to at least three of these questions, you might tend toward an eating behaviour disorder. It is advisable to talk to a doctor or mental health professional about this.

### **Practice 2: Look at Yourself, Admire Your Beautiful Body**

**Your body is unique and deserves respect and love. Say, "Thank you, my beautiful body."**

**Return to this practice whenever you start neglecting your body.**

# Silent detox

Our handbook deals with both informational and practical knowledge, as well as more profound knowledge - delving into your inner world and getting to know yourself. We invite you to practice 100% informational hygiene from the moment you wake up until the next morning.

## Are you up for it?

### Here are the essential components of this practice:

- You do not touch your phone for even a second under any circumstances.
- You don't check social media, post anything, or read the news on your phone or computer.
- You don't watch TV, listen to the radio, open web pages, or read newspapers or books.
- You don't communicate with anyone throughout the day. Absolutely no interactions. (Plan and prepare for this in advance: arrange for someone to take care of your children, etc.).
- Ideally, spend this day in complete silence in a remote, nature-filled place, away from people.
- You cannot listen to music.
- Why all of this? To prevent yourself from escaping from yourself. We constantly bombard our inner selves (that Inner Voice) with tons of information, drowning out its impulses. We go where others (media, relatives, bloggers, neighbours, etc.) tell us to go instead of where our inner voice calls us.

There's a Native American saying: **"To hear yourself, you need silent days"**. That's precisely what we are mastering in our handbook.

**We recommend doing this at least once a month.**

Enjoy your deep dive into yourself!

# Time to grow up

**An infantile person** seeks someone who will take care of them and be responsible for the consequences of their actions.

Key signs of **infantilism**:

- Need help keeping track of time. Time is a vague concept.
- Difficulty expressing feelings.
- Lack of goals and aspirations for personal growth and self-realisation.
- Always in the role of a "victim".
- Unwillingness to take responsibility for one's life.

**How do we deal with infantilism? We do our best to grow up.**

Growing up is an exciting and engaging process of learning to face challenges.

As strange as it may sound, being a child in the adult world is a long-term failure. Children are never free (they can't do anything without adults) and constantly swing emotionally (from laughter to tears).

In the adult world, a child's wishes are only fulfilled once someone else fulfils them. They are unable to become individuals and authors of their own lives.

**Why is it difficult to grow up sometimes?**

It's all about our "inner child," still deficient in unconditional love and care. They wait and hope someone will love them and add something to their lives. The child feels fear, confusion, and helplessness. In cases where these needs were not sufficiently met in childhood by those who were more mature and responsible for the child, there is no one to address these needs now. But they exist. Recognising your childlike needs is also a step towards growing up. The "growing up" process is long associated with suffering and disappointment. Still, gradually, the "subject changes," Now you can take care of yourself, satisfy your needs, listen to yourself, and recognise: What's going on with me? What do I want? How can I get it?



Now, it is our task to recognise and meet these needs ourselves. It's not easy to do it alone because if there wasn't that "adult" by your side in childhood, whom you could rely on, who would protect and take care of you, then there is no "adult" in your psyche now, no experience of self-care and self-concern.

### **Criteria for adulthood:**

- Ability to reflect. Being able to recognise your feelings, thoughts, desires, as well as the feelings and motives of others.
- Ability to control your emotions.
- Ability to plan your future, set long-term goals, control impulses and desires, and work towards your goals.
- Ability to make subjective choices like choosing a profession, a partner, a dish in a restaurant, etc.
- The ability to show assertiveness is a crucial skill that distinguishes a healthy adult. It includes determination, perseverance, a sense of boundaries, a sense of self-worth, authenticity, independence, responsibility, and self-regulation.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

What do you need to do to grow up? Practice.

Practice that takes time but shows the complete picture of behaviour and reactions to life situations. Are you reacting from the position of the "Adult" or the "Child"? Which role do you assume?

Create a table where you record situations that affected you negatively. The essence of this table is to analyse situations in detail.

Record the situation:

- Time (when the problem occurred)
- Emotions (how you reacted and what you felt at that moment)
- Intensity (the level of emotions from 0 to 100)
- Thoughts (what came to mind during the situation). It's better to describe them while they're fresh.
- New thoughts (how you see this situation now)
- Behaviour (you'll learn to see how emotions affect your thoughts and your behaviour)
- How you should behave in this situation.

An example:

Situation	Time	Emotions	Strength (from 0 to 100)	Thoughts	New thought	Behavior during the situation	What should be done (thoughts now)

# Anger and aggression

In some small but important ways, people are like hedgehogs. Like these cute creatures, they go through life with their quills forward, ready to defend themselves. It's not their fault; they've been conditioned this way. And since they go through life with their quills forward, others they encounter also approach with their quills out, thinking, "If you hurt me, I'll hurt you back!"

Human closeness is an attempt to reveal their soft bellies and live without quills. But it's scary! What if I open up and get hurt? So, hedgehog-people roll on the ground, bumping into each other, quilling each other, and think, "What a prickly world!"

People aren't born as hedgehogs; they become them because they need to defend themselves, and for defence, you need anger and aggression.

For humans, aggression is one of the basic emotions. Although we all get angry, this emotion is often considered "negative" and "unpleasant" compared to happiness. Many would prefer never to experience it at all.

The problem with anger is that it's directed at destroying the current situation. Its purpose is to provide the energy to break, destroy, and thus bring about change. It can be dangerous, so civilisation has developed ways to control aggression.

Here's an important point: you can either vent your anger without taking action, which can become toxic, or you can channel it into productive action. For instance, directing your energy toward implementing a new project.

So, what does "toxic" mean here? It's an inner dialogue like "Here you go crying again like a child," "You're an adult; you should be able to take criticism," "Just smile and say thank you to the world," or "You should learn to forgive." All our thoughts and feelings are important, but sometimes, we lose control and have an "outburst."

## So, what can you do in such cases?

### 1. FIND THE TRIGGER

Rewind the situation from the outburst to when you first felt the emotions. Carefully and second by second, trace this moment. Identify this emotional surge. What exactly did you feel? What feelings "arose": guilt, resentment, helplessness, anger, loneliness, and probably more? Notice what your body felt at that moment. Pay attention and remember it.

### 2. RED FLAG

Don't dive into the thoughts, but try to mark this "explosion" with a red flag. Remember it and fix it. Learn to understand your emotions. Start by verbally expressing your feelings to yourself: "I am angry right now," "I feel upset," "This irritates me," and so on.

### 3. FACE TO FACE

Once you recognise your anger, construct a dialogue:

Who or what am I angry with in this situation?

What's behind the anger: resentment, injustice, powerlessness, etc.?

After this, identify the unmet need behind the anger.

It's time for "I-statements" (expressing your feelings without attacking or blaming): Learn to talk about your feelings without hurting or attacking others.

### 5. TURN ANGER INTO ADVANTAGE

Anger is a powerful energy; use it for good. To transform anger into an advantage, you should not suppress it but redirect and utilise it.

## Here are four pieces of advice that can help you do that:

- Seek Creative Solutions:** Use your imagination. Fantasise. Fantasies can awaken your creative abilities and help you find unconventional solutions.
- Add Determination:** Anger provides focus, energy, and determination, which can help you overcome obstacles and challenges.
- Know Yourself Better:** By understanding what typically triggers aggression in you, you can take a significant step toward self-improvement.
- Practice Sports:** Anger brings an influx of energy. You can use this energy to achieve desired results in sports or fitness, getting a dose of "feel-good" hormones – endorphins.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Before we move on to practice, let's consider a parable:

**Once upon a time, there was a couple who quarrelled every day. Despite their exhaustion from the constant bickering, they couldn't stop. One day, a witch visited them and gave them a bucket of enchanted water. She told them, "If you feel the urge to argue again, fill your mouth with this water, and the quarrel will end."**

**She left, and the woman started scolding her husband as soon as she did. But the husband filled his mouth with the enchanted water and remained silent. So, the woman was left talking to herself. Eventually, they stopped arguing.**

The following technique is borrowed from Daoist teachings. It helps control anger and aggression, eliminate inner blocks, and promote relaxation.

### **Buddha's Smile**

Sit comfortably. Take a deep breath and close your eyes.

Feel the tension leaving your body with each exhale. Your body becomes more and more relaxed. Shift your attention to your face.

Imagine that your facial muscles, nerves, and cells become more relaxed with each exhale, filling with pleasant warmth.

Visualise your lips gently curving into a faint, light smile.



# How to deal with panic attacks

A sudden shock, a change, something unexpected, and you no longer have control over yourself; fear overcomes you, and your body freezes. What is happening?

Unfounded feelings of anxiety and fear accompanied by dizziness, nausea, trembling in the limbs, rapid heartbeat, and chills. This is how people describe panic attacks.

## How to Stop a Panic Attack

As the onset of an attack is sensed, a person quickly loses self-control. However, some methods allow you to regain control over your body and mind. These are classic techniques that you may have already heard of and perhaps even used:

### Grounding:

- Grounding.** If you are standing, feel your feet, the surface, and tap your feet on the ground. If you are sitting, sway from side to side and feel the support in your buttock area. Shift your focus to your body and points of support.
- It may be helpful to wear a rubber band on your wrist. In case of a panic attack episode, pull and release the rubber band. Focus on the sensations where your hand touches the surface of the band. Repeat several times.
- Use positive self-talk, for example, "Everything is fine, this is not a catastrophe," "I'm okay, this is just imagination," and "I am calm, I am not afraid."
- Shift your focus to the external environment and describe what is happening around you. For example, "A red car just passed," "A girl in a green scarf walked by," "There are three people at the bus stop," "It's 6:45 on the clock," and so on, at least 10 facts.
- Use positive visualisation. Recall a pleasant event or place where you usually feel safe. Close your eyes and immerse yourself in exploring the image in your memory. Feel how your body relaxes, and physical symptoms subside.
- Explore your fear through metaphor. Answer questions about yourself: "What shape does my fear have?" "What colour?" "What does it look like?" "How can it be named?" "What does it want from me?" This will allow you not to detach from yourself by plunging into a panic state but, on the contrary, to approach your **experiences**



A panic attack is not a trivial matter. It fills you with terror. It makes you think that the life you knew is over. But then the panic attack passes, and the world remains as it was. You feel confusion and anxiety, but none of those horrible things (like death or madness) that seemed inevitable five minutes ago happened.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

If you have experienced something similar but are not sure if it was a panic attack, we suggest taking a short test for panic attacks.

Answer "yes," "no," or "hard to say" to the 21 questions below.

1. Do you have episodes of anxiety or panic?
2. Do you experience episodes during which you do not feel intense anxiety but feel discomfort from the sudden and rapid development of some physically unpleasant symptoms?
3. Do you have strong palpitations or a rapid pulse?
4. Do you experience sudden sweating?
5. Do you experience chills, trembling, or internal tremors?
6. Do you have a feeling of shortness of breath or breathlessness?
7. Do you experience pain or discomfort in the left side of the chest?
8. Do you feel nausea or discomfort in the abdominal area?
9. Do you experience dizziness, instability, or light-headedness during these moments?
10. Do you feel that everything around you becomes strange, unreal, or foggy?
11. Do you have a fear of going crazy or doing something uncontrollable?
12. Do you experience numbness or tingling in your hands or feet?
13. Do you experience waves of heat or coldness in your body?
14. Are these symptoms accompanied by a fear of death (thoughts of death or a sense of inevitable doom)?
15. Do these attacks typically last between 15 to 30 minutes?
16. Is it typical for you to feel a general weakness and fatigue after such attacks?
17. Do you feel a lump in your throat during these moments?
18. Does it cause a constant concern and fear related to the expectation of a recurring attack?

**19.** Do these states cause concerns about possible complications of the attacks or their consequences (fear of losing control, fear of a severe illness)?

**20.** Do these attacks lead to significant changes in your daily behaviour (e.g., make you go out less often, avoid specific places, etc.)?

**21.** Are these states associated with certain "threatening" situations (e.g., travelling in public transport, being in large crowds, etc.)?

Count the number of "yes" answers. If you have 10 or more "yes" answers, you are likely prone to panic attacks.

**Important! This test does not accurately assess or diagnose a possible disorder. If you receive a positive result, it is important to consult a mental health professional.**

# Conflict and communication

**Conflict**, how we dislike it, how often we avoid it because conflict is that explosion we discussed in the context of anger and aggression. Conflict is the result of aggression.

If we look at modern life, it may seem like much of our planet is in conflict. Therefore, we suggest not dwelling on the conflict in detail but trying to find solutions to move the conflict to a constructive resolution.

If you find yourself in a conflict, the first thing you need to do is re-establish control over yourself. Please don't succumb to an emotional wave; master it like an experienced surfer. Recognise yourself as the creator; you can manage the conflict. Let it submit to your authority.

## ABOUT DIALOGUE

Dialogue is about speaking with your words.

Let a dialogue happen if it finds a place and time to manifest!

### What you might encounter in a dialogue:

Understanding – perfect!

**Misunderstanding** – your partner doesn't hear you; you don't hear your partner; your partner's values don't align with your value framework.

Ignoring – you "start" a dialogue, but your partner doesn't react or deflects it. We start imagining all that we don't know about our partner, what they are trying to hide – they are avoidant, afraid, don't care, and many other intrusive fantasies.

By attempting to start a dialogue, you are already asserting yourself, your feelings, and trying to express that something is not going well in your interaction.

In any communication, **it's essential to learn to say NO.**

This ominous NO can sometimes be as hard to squeeze out as toothpaste from an empty tube.

You think, "I'll definitely say No," and somehow, it comes out as "Yes." When did this happen, how?

Then comes despair: I agreed again when I didn't want to agree.

It's difficult to say No straight away, so we say: "I'll think about it," "Give me some time," or "I'll respond a bit later" (give yourself time). There is the feeling that the sweet, eagerly anticipated "Yes" will bring more enthusiasm and smiles than the uncomfortable but honest "No."

But it is healthier and more productive to be honest with yourself and others, no matter how uncomfortable it is in the short term.

## HOW TO SET THE COMMUNICATION TONE?

We suggest seven simple techniques to help build communication. Read and practice!

### **1. Use authoritative opinions to convince someone of your viewpoint.**

Your opinion will appear more convincing if you support your position with the opinion of a person who is an authority on the topic you're discussing. You can talk about scientists and writers or even mention your relatives (if the conversation concerns household matters).

### **2. Don't try to calm down when you're nervous. Transform anxiety into excitement.**

When people are anxious, they try hard to calm down, but this isn't always the right approach. It's better to turn that anxiety into excitement. Think of it as joyful anticipation, which, like excitement, stimulates the brain. Excitement also prompts action, which can help you communicate more effectively with different people.

### **3. Speak about the best qualities of a person out loud to make communication smoother.**

Compliments are an effective way to capture someone's attention and pique their interest.

### **4. Use the "bridging" technique to avoid uncomfortable topics or questions.**

If you want to avoid a topic but don't want to blatantly ignore it or get irritated, use this method to change the conversation topic by starting with something related. Then, transition to the part that's more pleasant for you to discuss.

### **5. Show interest, even if you are already familiar with the discussed topic.**

When someone shares something enthusiastically, it's best not to say you've heard it all before.

### **6. Employ the principle of reciprocity.**

When you have done something for someone, they will likely want to reciprocate and do something for you in return.

## **5. Use the phrase "I need your help."**

This technique emphasises the importance of the other person and fosters trust.

### *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Let's think about one of your conversations. It's better to choose a fresh and vivid one, perhaps one with tension. What words did you use? What was the result of the conversation? Did you reach an understanding, or did it escalate into an argument? Then, think about how you could change the "You-message" in this conversation to an "I-message." For example, instead of "You made me feel very sad with your words" and "You made me angry", try to say, "I feel very sad about these words" and "I feel angry when I hear this."

It may be challenging to find the correct phrasing but try to find phrases that allow you to express your feelings without accusing your partner. Write down these phrases in your notebook. Afterwards, imagine your conversation partner, take on their role, and calmly express these "I-messages." Analyse your feelings. Then, try to practice these skills in real-life situations.

You'll find that your conversations will often end constructively without harming emotional states and relationships.

# Humanity and love

Today's question: how not to lose humanity in existing circumstances? This question can be categorised as global, philosophical, existential, and one to contemplate deeply.

Is there such a thing as selective humanity? Where does it begin, and where does it end? How often, even before a war, did we reflect on the fact that the world is broader than each of our families? At what point do we stop empathising with another person's suffering?

## BEING HUMAN

And man came into this world in the likeness of God,  
To be happy on this earth.  
To treat each other as humans,  
Human understanding,  
To behave humanely,  
Be a human, not a beast.  
Is there anything human in you?  
Are you even human?

In any complex situation, we turn to the human and their humanity.

A human is empathetic, thoughtful, aware, understanding, loving, generous, providing support, and accepting.

Being human means feeling, choosing, making decisions, giving, loving, caring, seeing, and creating (everyone can add their own criteria).

Now, let's move on to the most precious thing in life - Love. It's something without which this world couldn't exist because love gives birth to the beautiful shoots of life and creation. Love acts like magic. Love provides strong support and inspiration. Love is the foundation of humanity.

### What is love?

Yes, it has thousands of definitions. However, it always manifests in helping someone realise their purpose in life. It's not about limitations, hugs, or wanting to pamper someone and let them indulge in laziness.

If you help your loved ones (including family) realise their purpose in life, you love them. If you hinder, block their development, or exchange it for laziness and instant pleasures, it's not love but using them to serve needs unrelated to love.



Love is not only about motives but also methods. If you force your employees to learn - that's one thing. If you create an environment in which they want to learn - that's closer to love.

All people want love. Those who feel it right now don't want to lose it, while those deprived of it always seek it. What to do if you don't feel love inside, lack fulfilment, or don't know how to love?

**Create a resource of love in your interactions with people.**

### *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

This time, we suggest reading the book "**Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind**" by Yuval Noah Harari. We're confident that this book will change your perspective on the world.

# Manipulation

Can you confidently say to another person: Stop! You can't treat me like this?

If so, congratulations!

If you find it challenging to say Stop! Then, continue your journey through this topic.

There's already so much information about "manipulation" that this topic has become a form of manipulation itself. It has gained so much power that you might expect a manipulator or an abuser around every corner.

Thankfully, people are becoming more knowledgeable and developing resistance to manipulation, but there is always more work to be done. The focus is on self-discovery. If you know yourself well, no manipulator can breach your boundaries.

According to Everett Shostrom, the author of the book "The Human Manipulator", a manipulator views people as objects to achieve their desires. The essence of manipulation is to instil fear, shame, or guilt in a person and use it to achieve one's goals. However, manipulators don't always consciously realise their actions; people often manipulate because they don't know how to meet their needs or are afraid or ashamed to communicate them directly.

Types of manipulation can be boiled down to triggering three feelings: shame, guilt, and fear. These feelings lead to changes in behaviour and make it easier to control people.

**Shame:** "How could you do this? I was counting on you!" As a result, a person tries to get rid of shame and does everything to prove they are not what the manipulator implied.

**Guilt:** Manipulation like "You don't love me" makes a person in a relationship feel guilty and forces them to prove their love.

**Fear:** This involves blackmail, threats, and intimidation like "If you don't do this, I'll do that."

## Step-by-step Guide: What to Do if You're Being Manipulated

**Expose the Manipulator.**

This is the first and most crucial step. Once you understand that you're dealing with a manipulator, you'll be more cautious about their words.

- Don't Give the Manipulator the Desired Reaction**  
You can use techniques like not showing emotions, mirroring the manipulator (reflecting their emotions back at them), or making them empathise with your situation. Manipulation often appeals to a sense of guilt, but don't rush to take the blame, especially if you don't believe you're at fault. You can say that you didn't intend to hurt them and ask them if you've done something wrong.
- Ask the Manipulator Clarifying Questions**  
Manipulators often make unreasonable requests or demands that make you forget about your needs and focus on theirs.  
  
Shift the focus back to them by asking questions like:  
"Do you think this is a reasonable request?"  
"Is this fair to me?"  
"Are you asking me or telling me?"  
"What will I gain from doing this?"  
"Do you really expect me to...?"
- Set Personal Boundaries**  
Learn to say "no" diplomatically but firmly. The ability to say "no" is a crucial part of communication. Clearly stating your refusal allows you to stand your ground while maintaining healthy relationships.
- Trust Yourself**  
Feelings of guilt usually arise when you doubt yourself. Lack of trust in yourself and your partner is one of the main reasons manipulation can exist. Even if you encounter a manipulator, it's not a reason to doubt yourself or think you're not good enough. Such situations can happen to anyone.

**The key is recognising them and protecting yourself without becoming a manipulator. Communicate openly and sincerely.**

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

We want to share some phrases that manipulators often use. Hearing these, you can easily recognise manipulators in your environment and avoid falling into their trap.

- "I was just joking!"
- "You're impossible to talk to!"
- "Others are even worse, and you complain about this!"
- "I did it for your own good."
- "I thought we had something special."

- "You're always..."
- "This is for your own benefit!"
- "If you leave, I'll..."

Now, for practice: during the week, pay attention to your interactions with people and note down any phrases that a manipulator has used with you or when you found yourself in the role of a manipulator.

You'll learn even more interesting information about yourself.

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# Low self-esteem

**Self-esteem** is one of the criteria by which we can assess how comfortable we feel in various situations. Sometimes, we doubt our abilities and start comparing ourselves to others; even minor criticisms can hurt us deeply.

Low self-esteem is like weak immunity, making us vulnerable to everyday setbacks.

## Signs of low self-esteem:

- Distrust of your thoughts, constant doubts.
- Fear of difficulties because of the belief that you won't be able to overcome them.
- High demands on yourself.
- Frequent feelings of anxiety.
- Unfounded self-criticism.
- Dissatisfaction with yourself (appearance, actions, worldview).
- Fear of rejection.
- Jealousy and pessimism.
- Self-blame for failures.
- Attempts to justify yourself in case of failure or inaction.

## Where does low self-esteem come from?

- Lack of attention or cruelty from parents.
- Unrealistic expectations from parents and, as a result, feeling "not good enough."
- Constant teasing from other children or bullying.
- Being in a hostile environment, such as among people who are prejudiced against the child due to their belonging to a different social group, nationality, or religion.

If you recognise yourself, then let's move on. The next step is to change the state of "low self-esteem" to a state of "adequate self-esteem."

Healthy, adequate self-esteem, self-confidence, and the ability to love and respect oneself and others are interconnected.

Let's break it down. Adequate self-esteem

People with **adequate self-esteem** live in the present and have a balanced view of themselves (without exaggerated feelings of being a god or completely worthless). Such individuals can adapt accurately, knowing what they excel at and when to seek professional help.

Developing adequate self-esteem allows for easier and quicker decision-making because of a clearer worldview. These people are not afraid of change because they have a clear way of orientating themselves, and any mistakes are seen not as a collapse of their entire personality and universe but as valuable experiences for personal growth and understanding of their limits.

Adequate self-esteem depends on the integrity of the individual and self-love.

### **What is integrity?**

Integrity is related to opposites: black-white, male-female, bad-good, etc. When two conflicting opposites are integrated, the result forms a comprehensive integrity. When a person is fulfilled, there is no feeling that their life falls apart whenever someone says goodbye. This doesn't mean that they don't need anyone. They choose whether to be in relationships or not.

### **How do you become whole?**

#### **1. Unite the dark and the light.**

Everyone has things they are proud of and things they dislike. This is our light and dark side. Everyone must recognise and accept their shadow aspects. Don't hide them from yourself because they appear in various relationships. You need to know yourself.

#### **2. Connect the body and spirit.**

Working with your body and engaging in practices (massage, meditation) is essential.

#### **3. Merge the mind and heart.**

The mind processes only the information it has received before. However, we cannot know everything, but we can feel a lot and listen to our intuition (mindfulness practices are an excellent way to achieve this).



## Love vs. Self-hate

"Love yourself, and others will love you." But how do you love yourself? What if someone doesn't love themselves? What should they do? Did anyone teach you about self-love when you were a child? Has anyone learned to love themselves based on the instructions they give?

Self-love is a cocktail of self-acceptance and self-respect.

### Let's delve deeper into the components of self-love:

- **Self-acceptance** involves recognising and accepting all your positives and negatives, strengths and weaknesses, and external or internal characteristics without reservation. It also means acknowledging and accepting mistakes and making peace with the past, no matter how it was.
- **Self-respect** is the ability to set and maintain personal boundaries, follow your system of values and principles, and have confidence in your beliefs.
- **Self-care** involves living according to your needs and interests. Self-care includes continuous self-improvement, timely treatment of illnesses and their prevention, and caring for your body and mind.
- Taking **responsibility** for your life, thoughts, desires, words, and actions.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

It is helpful to keep a "Daily Success Journal" and record achievements or answers under categories such as:

- What made me happy today?
- What new, good, or exciting things happened to me today?
- What was good for me today?
- What am I good at?
- The qualities that help me...

Also, an important practice is self-acceptance.

**Acceptance** means refusing to see any part of yourself, whether it's your body, thoughts, or emotions, as foreign or "not you." Learn to tell yourself that any emotion and its expression are also a part of you. Accept yourself as you are and accept the reality you are in.

**Exercise:**

Complete the following sentences:  
Self-acceptance means to me...

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If I accept my body more...

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If I dislike my body...

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If I accept my conflicts more...

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If I avoid my conflicts...

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If I accept my feelings more...

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If I deny my feelings...

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If I accept my thoughts more...

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If I avoid my thoughts...

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Read what you've written and analyse your emotions.

# Trauma

Interview with Gabor Maté: "The concept of trauma is widely used in society, often in a narrower sense than I propose. If we turn to etymology, the Greek word 'trauma' means injury. In physical injuries, tissues scar and become harder and less flexible than before. When a psychological trauma occurs, our psyche becomes more rigid and less flexible. Hardening occurs due to the rupture caused by a traumatic event. As a result, we lose flexibility and sensitivity, and our reactions to life, our sense of self, relationships, external stimuli, and so on become more rigid. From my point of view, this dynamic underlies most mental and physical pathologies."

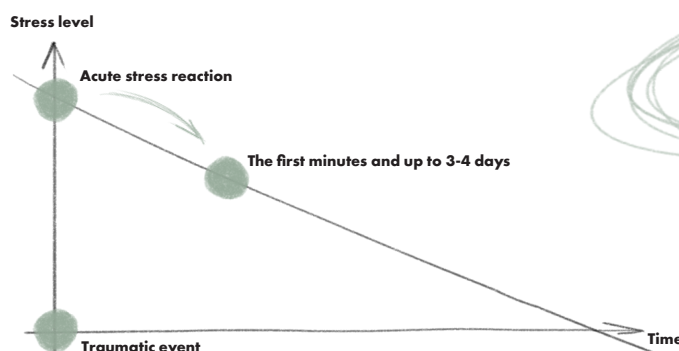
The word 'trauma' is used in daily life. Almost any event that significantly affects one's mental state is called a 'traumatic event' or 'trauma,' which doesn't always correspond to professional criteria for this definition.

**A traumatic event** is when a person believes there is a clear danger to their life, physical or mental health, or the life and health of a person close to them. This feeling arises during the event (even if it later turns out there was no real danger) and leads to physiological, behavioural, or emotional reactions.

In most people who have experienced a traumatic event, the intensity of symptoms decreases, and the symptoms subside within a month. In some people, the reactions that occur during the traumatic event persist and contribute to the development of various adaptation disorders.

Social and psychological support for people who have experienced a traumatic event is primarily aimed at reducing the risk of post-traumatic disorders and promoting the development of resilience, which will help adaptively cope with stress producing events.

Psychological "stuckness" (a state of hesitation, resistance, or inability to change) occurs when a person lacks the resources to work through a crisis.



Important! The diagnosis of PTSD is made by a psychiatrist! If you have symptoms of PTSD, you should seek a diagnosis and comprehensive treatment.

Some people believe that they can cope with traumatic experiences on their own. However, people can spend months or even years revolving around their traumatic past, remaining stuck. To move forward, it is essential to start talking about the trauma.

Gabor: "The concept of 'healing' in English comes from an Old English word that means 'wholeness.' If trauma is a rupture of connection, then healing is the restoration or discovery of that connection. By healing, you become whole again; you are not fragmented into many defensive parts that run your life. This means you don't chase after soothing in the form of drugs, sex, slot machines, or anything else. You don't run away from yourself into the spaces of the internet. You don't seek to please people to be liked. Instead, you weigh what is essential for you. Why do you prefer this?"

#### **Four main signs of psychological trauma:**

- The presence of a tragic event experienced in a state of helplessness or horror or life conditions that have a negative impact on a person for an extended period.
- Sudden memories of past events that return - horrors, sounds, bodily sensations, sometimes unrelated to what was experienced.
- Avoidance of everything that reminds or can remind of the trauma.
- Increased excitability and anxiety.

#### **How do you diagnose it in yourself? (If you observe more than 2 symptoms):**

- You have disturbed sleep or nightmares.
- Intrusive memories haunt you.
- You have lost interest in life.
- You don't want to do anything (neither at home nor at work).
- You avoid other people.
- You notice that you are often irritable.

**It's essential not only to recognise trauma but also not to get stuck in it.  
Or, if you are stuck, learn how to deal with it.**

## What to do?

- Try to communicate more - with friends, family, and people who support you. Talk about your emotions and feelings.
- Don't refuse help, even if you feel you are not understood.
- If it's challenging to talk, try writing down your thoughts and feelings on paper.
- Exercise and physical activity can help.
- Try to stick to your regular daily routine - go to bed and wake up on time, engage in daily activities, and meet friends.
- Avoid alcohol and sedatives; they won't solve the problem.
- Try reducing your consumption of coffee, tea, and other drinks that stimulate the nervous system. Eat systematically and adequately.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

If you have experienced a traumatic event, learning relaxation and anxiety reduction techniques is important. These skills will help you regain control and manage your physical reactions.

### Here are some universal exercises:

#### **Controlled Breathing**

Sit comfortably, relax your facial muscles, and take a deep breath. Inhale for a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four and then exhale fully.

**Important:** Start the exercise with a full exhale.

Repeat no more than three times to avoid hyperventilation and dizziness.

#### **Butterfly Exercise**

Sit comfortably and close your eyes. Place your left hand on your right shoulder and your right hand on your left shoulder. Start tapping your shoulders with each hand in an alternating rhythm.

# Exploring our emotions: fear, anger, anxiety, guilt, shame, joy

What are you feeling right now? Nothing.

If you were asked right now if you could say exactly what you're feeling at this moment, could you? Pause and observe what's happening within you right now.

Everyone knows the feeling of a sudden stressful situation. Your breathing quickens, muscles tense, and your heart starts beating faster. Your body initiates the "fight, flight, or freeze" response. What feelings arise?

Hello, I'm Fear, and now you know me. I quickly find a place in your body and soul and take root. I love consuming your resources.

Fear is a primary emotion that helps avoid danger. But its flip side is chronic stress, anxiety, panic, and uncertainty.

## **How can you eliminate fears that hinder you from living a full life?**

Acknowledge Your Fear - Name it. Please get to know it better. Accept it. Learn to engage with your fear.

Instructions:

- Acknowledge your fear. For example, fear that the war will last another 2-5 years.
- Get to know it better: What are you afraid of? Losing loved ones, your home, your job, etc.
- Accept it: Realise what's happening in your body, how it reacts, and when fear arises (tension, lump in the throat).
- Identify what contributes to the fear: An air raid siren, lack of communication with loved ones, constant bad news.
- Determine what you can control or influence in the situation and what you can't: Support loved ones, help, and talk about the fear.

Let's move on to looking at **anger**.

As Johan Burerberg pointed out, incredible strength is hidden in aggression, and if used correctly, it can help us greatly. Researchers have also noted that anger strengthens humans to overcome obstacles and deal with difficulties. Anger acts as a protective reaction of the body to external stimuli, danger, or violations of personal boundaries.



## When you feel anger/aggression, do the following:

- Check yourself: What's happening with me right now? What am I feeling?
- Observe what's happening in your body: Tension, clenched jaws, blushing, etc.
- Identify the feeling: For example, fear, frustration, uncertainty, anger/aggression.
- Who or what am I angry with, or what situation?
- What's behind this anger: Offense, injustice, helplessness, etc.
- Identify the need: What unfulfilled need lies behind this?
- Support: How can I help myself right now?

Remember that emotions are a natural part of being human, and understanding and working with them can lead to greater emotional well-being and resilience.

Let's try to channel our aggression and explore this place of immense resources and potential rather than directing it towards our loved ones.

**Anger** is strength, energy, action. But behind any manifestation of aggression lie unmet needs.

Let's break down what anxiety is. Anxiety is an emotional state that arises in situations of undefined danger. Unlike fear, which is a response to a specific, entirely real threat, anxiety often has a much vaguer and more difficult to identify source. When your heart races and it's hard to breathe or concentrate on anything, and you feel a trembling stirring inside, an inability to sleep – these sensations accompany anxiety. These experiences drain your strength and energy, exhausting you. In today's world, there are more than enough reasons for anxiety.

In a state of anxiety, we learn to return to the "here and now." We pay attention to the processes in our bodies, preferably by doing simple physical exercises.

Anxiety is a state of uncertainty and a lack of support. Therefore, we regain our sense of support, the ground beneath our feet. We stand up and feel our soles touching the floor. You can sit down or even lie down to feel more support.

Anxiety is a state of worry. In it, you need to learn to stop yourself, to calm down. Meditation can help with this.

During periods of fear or anxiety, your entire body tenses up. We can pay attention to relaxing the body's specific tense areas. We relax through breathing and muscle relaxation.

Anxiety is a loss of control. Since everything around is uncertain, controlling it becomes impossible. We regain the ability to control what we can – our attention, our bodies. We set ourselves some specific, simple, and real tasks.

During anxious periods, restless thoughts appear, circling around something. The task is to redirect your focus from these thoughts to something else, for example, by directing your attention to what surrounds you, your body, your breath. Name what you feel at the moment.

Guilt. The feeling of guilt is so easy to awaken in each of us, and people often use it to manipulate us. Guilt is a feeling that you experience when you have such thoughts:

- I did something I shouldn't have (or didn't do what I should have), which doesn't align with my moral standards or concept of fairness.
- Such "bad behaviour" shows that I'm a bad person (or that I tend to cause harm, have a flawed character, etc.).

The idea of my own "badness" is the main reason for feeling guilty.

This feeling can arise not only when a person is guilty. It can occur in any situation where there is intense stress.

Working with the feeling of guilt involves developing new, healthy habits in perception and behaviour.

### What to "treat" guilt with?

Since it involves unconscious processes, changes should take place there as well. The most effective way is, of course, psychotherapy.

To deal with it yourself, you can use several approaches from cognitive psychology: Identify under what circumstances and with whom you most often feel guilty. Write it down and analyse: do these situations and people have similar characteristics? Then, recall if there was a similar situation in your past, perhaps in your childhood.

When this feeling lingers, try to track what's happening to you physically and psychologically. Note bodily and mental reactions. Developing such sensitivity is helpful to learn to separate yourself from your responses and ultimately control them.

Practice self-training. Remember that the situation was in the past; you don't have to adhere to that script. Tell yourself more often that there is no perfect world, perfect conditions, and especially perfect people. The desire to be perfect can lead to neurosis. Give yourself the right to make mistakes. Remind yourself that you have control and you can cope with suffering.

### Shame.

"Aren't you ashamed? Look at yourself!"

Sound familiar? Remember how many times you heard these phrases in childhood?

It's shameful to not be like everyone else. It's shameful to be just like everyone else. Many people can lose stability from these daily pressures and admonishments.

**Shame** is "painful feelings of humiliation or discomfort caused by realising the foolishness or mistakes of one's actions." And what does the body want to convey through shame? "You just did something foolish or wrong. Stop immediately and never do it again." This message can be helpful if we make mistakes that harm ourselves or others.

## **What to do with the feeling of shame? (You can make a table.)**

Look at the roots of your shame and assess whether it is helpful. If it is, try to accept it; if not, eliminate it and start over.

- 1.** Separate your actions from your personality. We all have regrets; we do stupid things and sometimes disappoint others or ourselves.
- 2.** Understand the real reason behind your actions. You probably didn't mess up a work project because you're a terrible person; you simply made a mistake.
- 3.** See it as a lesson. Shame and guilt can become powerful motivators to work on yourself.
- 4.** Share your feelings.
- 5.** Learn to see in shame a reflection of your values.

What you are ashamed of is determined by your values. Healthy values create productive shame, and vice versa."

# Separation, loss

Separation is sometimes experienced as the end of the world, as a little death. Not all relationships are destined to last a lifetime, but an honest break can be the beginning of significant and valuable closeness between two people.

Any separation is a loss and pain. Coping with losing a loved one is one of the most challenging moments in life. During this period, understanding and silence are essential. There is no need to juggle words out of fear. It is vital to give this process space.

After any relationship breakup, a person goes through several stages:

- **Shock.** The initial days will feel painful; apathy will set in, and the world will lose its colours.
- **Denial.** The brain triggers a defensive reaction, pushing negative thoughts into the background, replaced by expectations of the partner's return.
- **Anger.** Realising that the past won't return brings aggression towards the former partner.
- **Acceptance.** Gradually, the world finds new colours, although grief periodically resurfaces.
- **Liberation.** The former partner ceases to trouble, making room for other emotions (not necessarily related to a new person).

## How to Cope with Separation and Loss:

- Allow yourself to suffer. There's no need to cheer up artificially. If you feel like crying, cry. If you want to scream, scream.
- Don't try to get your partner back. Stop if you think there's nothing left in life, and only they can fill it again. This is driven by fear.
- Healthy habits can help. Surprisingly, overcoming a relationship breakup can be achieved through proper nutrition and exercise.
- Change your environment. If everything reminds you of your former partner, consider changing your surroundings.
- Rebuild plans for yourself (from those you made with your partner) or create new ones. Think about what you want to achieve and what you can do at this stage.

- Plan meetings with "triggers" of pain. Holidays and significant dates can evoke memories and feelings. Be prepared for emotional shocks and know that it's entirely normal.

We strongly advise against overeating or drinking to cope with grief; you will harm your health and won't bring back the relationship. Random sex doesn't help with overcoming a relationship breakup, either. First, let go of the past, and only then, start with a clean slate rather than seeking revenge or looking for a replacement.

One of the reasons for the severe moral consequences of breakups is that they can force us to think about who we are.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Psychologists often recommend making lists, and in this, we join them.

For example, "11 habits of my ex that annoy me", "17 plans for the future without the ex," or "what the absence created."

Write any list - pros, cons, pluses, minuses of the ex.

This is a somewhat playful task. But if you like making lists - be sure to create one. Structuring the situation helps cope with chaos and high levels of emotions. When we make lists, the analytical part of the brain works more.

# Relationships

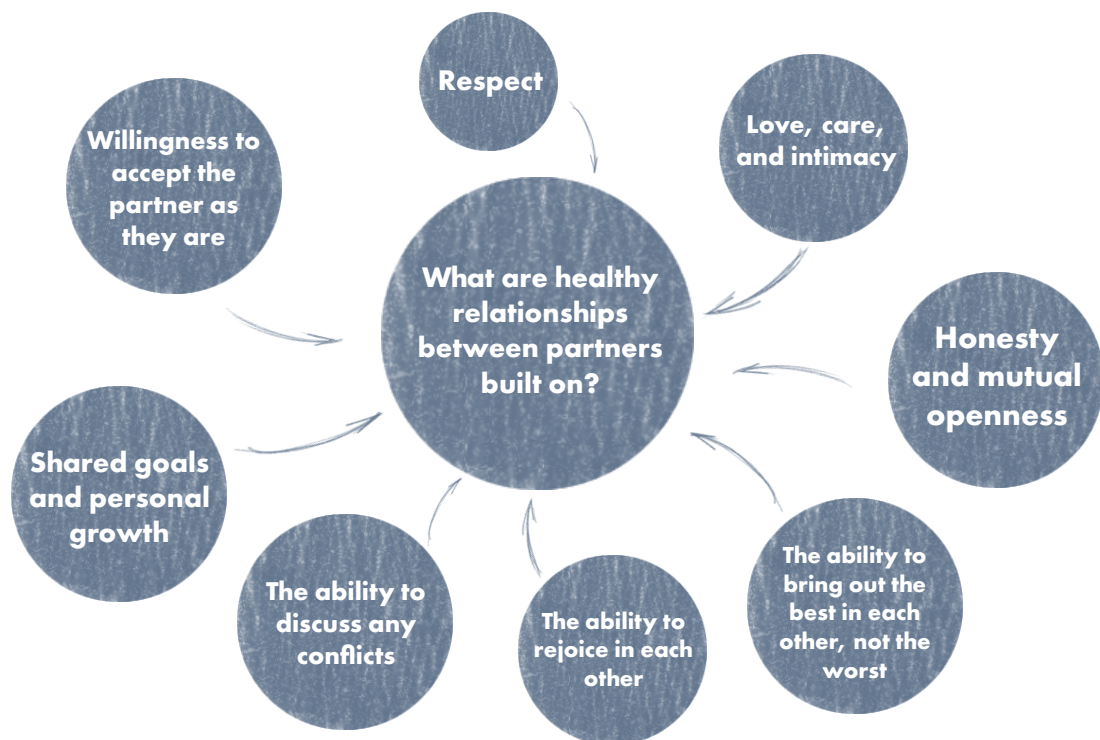
Relationships are a reflection of our self-perception. Therefore, "working on relationships" is a journey to discover ourselves. It's a journey through all the barriers, glass ceilings, and the echoes of our grandparents' voices in our heads towards becoming a stronger, more vibrant, and bolder version of ourselves. It's a journey to find our passion, the sparkle in our eyes, and our right to be ourselves.

Have you ever wondered what "I love you" means? Sometimes, relationships can't be imagined without these words. Before uttering this magical phrase, stop searching for your other half and building relationships with halves in mind; learn to accept yourself and your partner as complete individuals.

Do halves truly exist?

The most fundamental principle of mutual primal attraction between people is the perfect alignment of their psychological wounds.

Relationships don't fall from the sky. They need to be nurtured. Two adult individuals living together will inevitably rub against each other and must seek and find common solutions. The healthier they are psychologically, the easier and more productive this process will be.





Now, let's delve into parent-child relationships.

**Children** are our trials and lessons. They help us find our spark and ignite it. Children can push us to become the best versions of ourselves.

A wise adult first demonstrates faith in a child's boundless potential.

Let's have a look at Richard Bach's novella "Jonathan Livingston Seagull" if you haven't read it before.

Children are similar to the main character in the novella: fearless and inspired by their ideas. Adults should learn from children, trying not to impose their point of view but to listen to a child's thoughts and think about how uniquely and interestingly a child sees the world. This helps uncover a child's talents.

### **8 tips for communicating with children under 3 years old:**

1. Try to control your emotions.
2. Excess irritation directed towards the child can later create neurotic conditions.
3. Tactile contact. Sometimes, touches convey more than words.
4. Forget the phrase "stop crying."
5. Praise the child.
6. Pay attention to the child little by little but often.
7. Allow children to express their independence.

### **How to communicate with teenagers:**

1. Set rules. If you don't define the boundaries within which a teenager should communicate with you, they will test them.
2. Don't interfere with your child's socialisation..
3. Don't "tighten the leash." When a child becomes a teenager, parents often fear, "Now they will start drinking, smoking, doing drugs, and having sex." Out of fear, they begin to "tighten the leash," and the teenager rebels.
4. Teach children to set their boundaries and adhere to them.
5. Negotiate. Renegotiating the "parent-child" contract is a crucial issue in adolescence.
6. Parents propose the terms of the new contract.



**Maintaining a balance between a child's freedom and safety is essential.**

### *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

When was the last time you had a heart-to-heart talk with your child?

Plan a joint activity for this weekend. For example, making sweets is an excellent opportunity to spend time together and learn something new.

# Body and psychosomatics

The most precious things you have in this world are your body and your mind, and both rely on each other. Stand in front of the mirror, look at your incredible body, and say, "Thank you, my dear body, you are so unique; there's no one else like you; you're always with me; you respond quickly when there are problems, and I promise to always take care of you."

We visit doctors, undergo tests, and try various treatments, but we don't always see improvement. At some point, we might hear, "It's probably psychosomatic! Stress is the cause. Every illness is from nerves! Heal your mind, and you'll heal your whole body."

Psychosomatics asserts that the root cause of many illnesses lies in emotional experiences, stress, and psychological traumas. When the mind can't cope with these problems, the negativity is stored in the subconscious and manifests as physical ailments.

**Psychosomatics** is how our body reacts to suppressing emotions like anger, fear, or other feelings. Each time we consciously or unconsciously suppress strong emotions, our body tenses up, and over time, this tension can lead to psychosomatic illnesses.

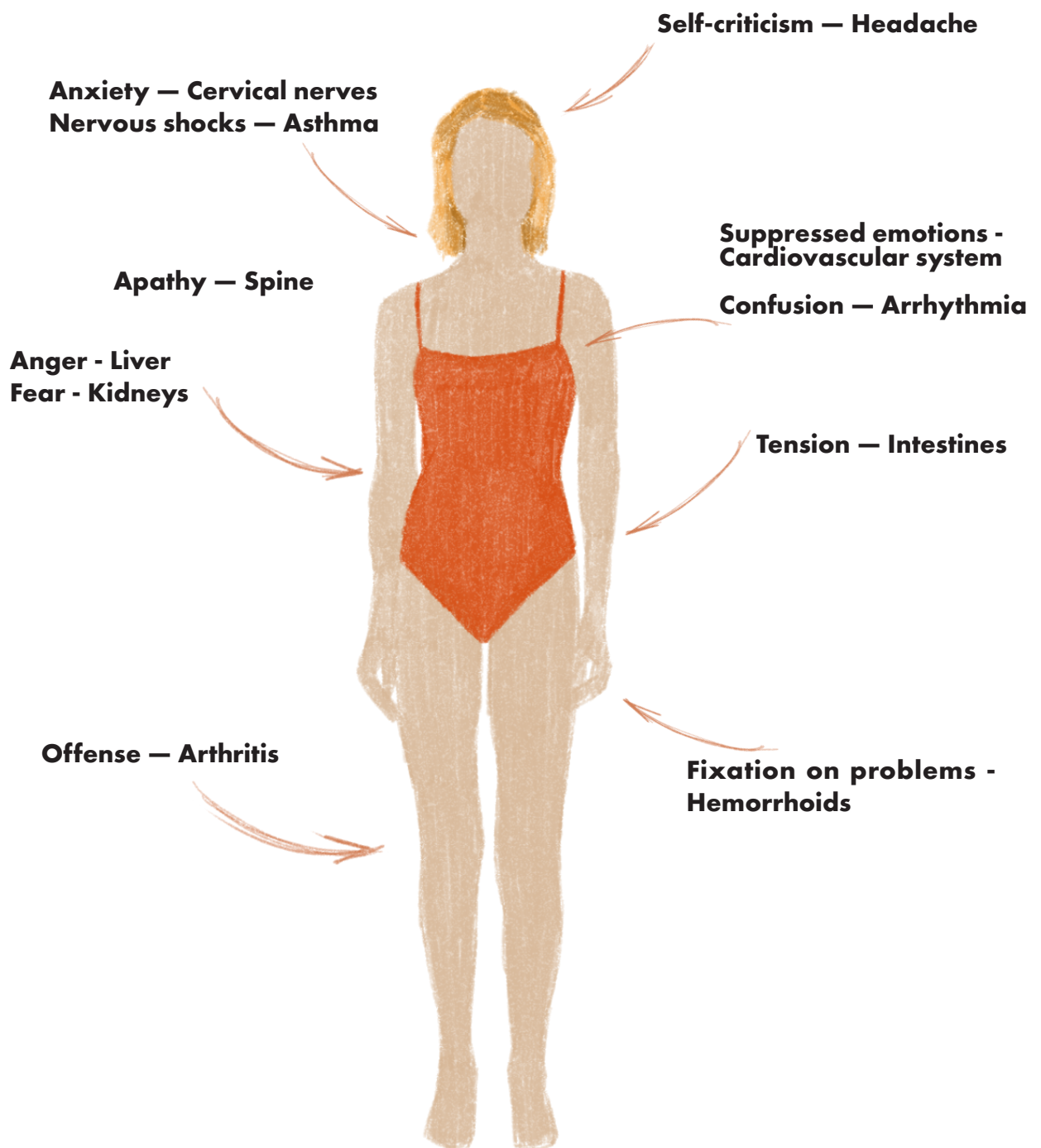
The psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud said, "Unlived emotions will return to you as symptoms." Psychosomatic illnesses are the body's way of expressing pain and suffering when there's no other outlet. It's the body's way of telling its story.

In psychology, there's often a focus on eight sources of psychosomatic illnesses:

- **Internal conflict** arises from conflicts between different aspects of a person's personality, both conscious and unconscious. For example, during overeating, one part might say, "I want to comfort and soothe myself with food to forget my problems," while another part says, "Stop eating immediately; look at how unattractive you're becoming!"
- **Conditional benefit.** This is a significant reason because illness often brings conditional benefits to a person. For instance, relieving migraines may "open one's eyes" to many underlying issues previously masked by the pain.
- **Influence by a suggestion from another person.** Often, this is rooted in words a person heard in childhood from parents, like, "You're stupid, greedy, clumsy, everything falls out of your hands," etc. When repeated, children may start displaying such behaviour, which continues into adulthood.
- **Organic speech elements.** Phrases like "My heart aches for them" or "This is driving me crazy" can sometimes become real symptoms.
- **Trying to be like someone else, an ideal.** Constantly imitating others causes a person to detach from their body. Living as someone else can lead to suffering.

- **Emotional reaction to actual traumatic events.** This could be the loss of a loved one, moving to a new place, or losing a job, for example.
- **Pathological traumatic experience from the past.** Often, these are emotional childhood traumas, mainly when a child can't verbally express feelings associated with abuse or neglect.

### The influence of feelings and emotions on health:



## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Today, let's turn to art therapy to explore our bodies. Your body always communicates with you. Try this technique and see what your body reveals.

### **Technique: "Where My Feelings Live"**

Draw your own body on an A4 sheet; you can outline your body's contour.

Listen to yourself and mark your feelings: joy, sadness, grief, anger, fear, resentment, guilt, surprise, tenderness, and anger, with colours and label them on your body's drawing.

Work slowly and step by step. Observe what is happening with you "here and now."

Questions that may help during this technique:

**When did you experience this feeling?**

**What events were associated with this feeling?**

**Who and how did your family express this feeling?**

**Was this feeling forbidden?**

The work should be thorough and without any interpretations. The result is not just the body map but also the process of understanding your feelings in your body.

# Frustration

Frustration can be a driver of new achievements or lead to depression. Let's explore this state, its causes, and how to respond to it.

**Frustration** (from Latin frustratio, meaning deception or futile expectation) is a term that experts define as a negative psychological state that arises when a person cannot achieve a significant goal or satisfy a vital need. It is primarily characterised by feelings of disappointment, tension, anxiety, and sometimes even despair and a sense of hopelessness. In a state of frustration, a person experiences a full range of negative emotions, including anger, despair, anxiety, irritability, and disappointment. Prolonged frustration can lead to a complete breakdown of one's activities and even affect one's character, increasing aggressiveness and fostering feelings of inadequacy.

Frustration is essentially the misalignment of desires and possibilities. There are harmful frustrations that can lead to psychological trauma and disorders. However, there are also potentially positive frustrations, and the goal is to recognise the difference and to keep the unpleasant but productive state that arises from them just as it is. This is where motivation and focus are born.

When we acknowledge our feelings without devaluing our desires, we start unfolding into action and seeking opportunities. Desire itself is a motivator; there's no need for additional motivation. The key is to maintain this motivation within ourselves.

Imagine the whimsical child inside us stomping its foot: "But I want it now... now! I'm so tired of waiting, working, studying - now!" You don't need to "silence" this inner child; you can speak to it respectfully: "I see how important this is to you. But right now, it's not possible. Let's plan how to get this as best as possible - without disruptions, debts, or rushing. Ultimately, what we desire should bring us joy, not drama and problems, right?" Often, our inner child will transition from impatience to bitter longing (I wanted it now), then to calm (it's possible, my desire is important, I can have it, I'm being heard), and a bit later to curiosity: how are we going to do this?

This notion of "allowing oneself" is not about purchases but about honestly experiencing all the feelings associated with the desire and its fulfilment.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

How can you overcome a state of frustration?

How can you overcome a state of frustration?

### **1. Acceptance of the Situation**

Stop blaming yourself, others, the world, or circumstances for what has happened; it's a waste of energy. Shift your focus from "who is to blame" to "what to do."

### **2. Separate the Situation from the State**

If something bad happens, it doesn't mean you have to feel bad. Distinguish between these two aspects. Remember that external circumstances have already occurred and don't always depend directly on you. However, your emotional state is entirely your responsibility; you can control and change it using various techniques.

### **3. Analyse the Situation and Draw Conclusions**

Analyse why the situation occurred and where your responsibility lies. Then, write down conclusions about what you can do to prevent similar situations in the future.

### **4. Mirror Technique**

Imagine that a less experienced friend comes to you for advice on how to deal with a similar situation. Help them separate the problem from their emotions and then analyse their actions from an external perspective. Learn to apply the principles of flexible thinking to control your actions and behaviour.

Don't obsessively pursue your goal through any means with the mindset of "achieve at any cost." In such cases, when encountering obstacles, people often fail to find solutions and feel frustrated. Instead, consciously and thoughtfully adjust your plans based on changing life circumstances.

So, embrace frustration, use it as a motivator, and allow it to guide you toward your goals with patience and adaptability.

# Self-identification

**The most important person in my life is the one in front of me right now.**

Carl Rogers

Who am I? If Carl Jung were standing here right now, he would probably say his famous words: "Everything that irritates us about others can lead us to an understanding of ourselves."

So, let's try to figure it out.

Before identifying yourself in a professional or social context, let's start with the basics: Are you an individual?

**An individual** is someone who has their own position, a strongly expressed conscious attitude towards life, and a worldview they have developed through significant conscious work.

How does a person build their individuality? Through actions. An action is not just any deed; it requires internal effort, involves a struggle of motives, and you choose the better or more appropriate action. By performing these kinds of actions since childhood, a person improves and strengthens their individuality.

- Individuality is never static. It continually finds ways to develop.
- Integrity is when you don't need to expend energy to resolve internal contradictions. In an integrated person, motives are well-structured and arranged in a hierarchy that works effectively and produces maximum results.
- The internal coherence of intentions ensures the ability to set and achieve goals. Subjectivity is the ability and readiness of a person to be the author of their own life. One of the main manifestations of subjectivity is an active life position. People actively choose their life paths and plans, boldly set goals, and aspire to be themselves.
- Awareness of the possibility of making choices is crucial. Any phrase where you say, "I had no choice, or there were no opportunities for this," immediately reveals areas where you can improve



This is why weak people act according to circumstances: they easily compromise and readily abandon their words and beliefs. Their favourite phrase is, "It's not me; it's just life."

In contrast, strong personalities can deal with circumstances, make them serve their own will, and turn them to their advantage. The favourite phrase of strong personalities is, "When life gives you lemons, make lemonade."

So, if you've read this far, give yourself an answer: Do you identify yourself as an individual? This is the most crucial aspect of discovering Who I Am.

Every time you ask yourself, "Who am I?" remember that you're in the process of growth and transformation, mastering a new level of your individuality.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

We suggest two practices:

- 1.** Write down the answers to the question: Who am I? Recall all your roles. For example, I am a mother to a daughter, I am a marketing professional, and so on. Write until you run out of ideas.
- 2.** (Continuation of the first practice). Ask your friends and acquaintances to describe Who You Are.

Engage in deep reflection.

# Values

Values play a significant role in our lives. They determine our priorities, help us make decisions, and define our goals. Values form the basis of our support and influence our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. They reflect our beliefs, ideals, and essential aspects of life. The foundations upon which values are built can vary, ranging from religious, ethical, cultural, or personal principles.

Our values are shaped through interactions with the surrounding world, including family, friends, education, and the social environment. They can also change throughout our lives, influenced by new experiences and life circumstances.

From a psychological perspective, a value is an idea we consider essential, strive for, and are willing to invest effort in achieving. Values can encompass family, career, health, friendship, freedom, success, justice, and more. Values can be individual, collective, or cultural and may differ from person to person.

Examples of values may include:

- **Identity:** A clear understanding of who you are. Building the value of identity creates a fundamental support for yourself. "I can rely on myself and move forward independently!" – not everyone can say this.
- **Family:** Many people consider family the most important value in their lives. They invest effort in nurturing and developing family bonds and relationships.
- **Health:** Most value their health and strive for a healthy lifestyle through exercise and proper nutrition.
- **Friendship:** The value that fosters mutual support, trust, and shared interests in relationships with friends.
- **Justice:** Supporters of the value of justice aim for equality, fairness, and ethical principles in their actions and interactions with others.
- **Success:** Many aspire to achieve their goals, personal growth, and recognition of their accomplishments.

Values are a crucial part of our lives. They shape our priorities, influence our decisions, and contribute to our happiness and satisfaction.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

### **Here's an exercise to help you understand your life values:**

Imagine you have eight separate pieces of paper. On each sheet, write down one of your life values. Sit comfortably, relax, and imagine the following scenario:

Early in the morning, you wake up to a beautiful sunrise. It's warm and cosy. Suddenly, your phone rings, and you're offered a magical journey to a wise sage who can help you find answers to your questions. All you can bring on this journey are your values; they act as currency. Choose one value and give it away (select one sheet and hand it over).

You arrive at the airport and hear your name. You're asked to approach the counter. You hand over another value in exchange for your journey.

You find yourself in turbulence during the flight. The stewardess informs you of a possible plane crash. However, if you give up one value, no crash will occur. You hand over a value.

The plane safely lands in the desert. It's dark, and you don't know where to go. Suddenly, you see a person offering to help you find your way. In return, they ask for one of your values. You choose one and give it away.

You're now at the foot of a mountain. Your path lies through these mountains, but you need equipment. There are two shops nearby. You can exchange two values for the necessary gear.

You continue your journey through the mountains and see a sage's hut. But there's a chasm ahead, and you can't cross it. A guide appears and offers to help you if you give up one more value.

Finally, you stand in front of the sage's hut. You enter and have a profound conversation. As it concludes, the sage thanks you for the meeting and offers to return one value of your choice to take back with you.

In the process of reflection, pay attention to your feelings and ask yourself:

- **What was it difficult/easy to part with?**
- **What helped you complete the game?**
- **How did your inner state change?**
- **What is valuable to you at this stage of your life?**
- **What meaning do you attach to specific values?**

This exercise can help you become more aware of your life values.

# Honesty

**Honesty** is a value that can improve the quality of your relationships with others and your relationship with yourself. Here are some steps that can help you be honest with both yourself and others:

**Understand Your Emotions and Desires:** Honesty begins with deeply acknowledging your emotions, desires, and values. Being honest with yourself means being open about your thoughts and emotions. Listening to your inner voice and trusting your intuitive feelings is essential. Set realistic goals for yourself and honestly assess your abilities.

**Be Open with Others:** To establish honest relationships, it's essential to show openness and sincerity in your communication. Speak the truth and avoid withholding information, but do so tactfully and respectfully. Be prepared to listen and show respect for the perspectives of others.

**Avoiding Deception:** Recognising deception and striving for honesty are crucial steps in personal growth. Here are some valuable tips:

- Remember that the truth is always better than lies. While deception may temporarily help avoid problems, it erodes trust and limits relationships.
- Be aware of your motives. Deception often arises from fear, insecurity, or a desire to avoid discomfort. Understanding your motives allows you to work on them actively.
- Acknowledge your mistakes and take responsibility for your actions. Mistakes are part of being human, and recognising them helps us grow and develop.
- Develop emotional intelligence skills. Deception is often linked to mishandled emotions. Developing emotional intelligence allows you to understand your feelings better and act more honestly.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Practice self-reflection and provide honest answers to these "uncomfortable questions":

- What do you want?
- Who do you hold responsible for specific situations in your life?
- What are you dissatisfied with?
- What problems do you have in your relationships with people?

- Do you try to constantly control others?
- Who do you frequently become offended by?
- Who do you often criticise?
- Who do you envy?
- What are you ashamed of?
- What are you afraid of?
- Who do you blame for your problems?
- What are your thoughts on money?
- What dependencies do you have?
- How do you deal with money?
- How much debt do you have?
- Do you take on something that is not your responsibility?
- Do you suffer from things beyond your control?
- What are your strengths and weaknesses?
- What 20% of your efforts bring you the most money, contentment, and happiness?
- Do you engage in sports?
- How much do you relax?
- How much energy do you have daily?

# Asking for help

**"I can't ask for help. It's difficult for me. I'd rather handle it myself."** Does this sound familiar to you? The feeling of wanting help but struggling to ask for it is something many people experience. Let's explore this together.

It's crucial to remember that those around you are not mind readers. People can't read your thoughts, just as you can't read theirs. If something is on your mind, it's essential to communicate it verbally.

**Help is an expression of care, support, and assistance to others in solving their problems or achieving their goals.** It can provide relief, solve a problem, or be there for someone during a difficult time.

## Emotions When Asking for Help:

Asking for help can evoke various emotions, which is entirely normal.

- Uncertainty.** It's common to feel uncertain when asking for help, stemming from the fear of rejection or weakness. Remember that asking for help is not a sign of weakness but rather an act of courage and self-awareness.
- Desire to be a Victim.** Some individuals may strongly desire to be seen as the one who always carries the burden alone. Recognising that asking for help when needed doesn't diminish your strength is essential.
- Relief.** When we receive help, relief can wash over us, especially when we see our problems resolved or feel supported.
- Gratitude.** Receiving help often leads to appreciation towards those providing support. Expressing this gratitude is a natural response.

## What's Challenging to Ask For:

It can be particularly challenging to ask for help, advice, or money. Some individuals find it difficult or even impossible to request these forms of assistance. However, seeking help from others is a fundamental aspect of life in society.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Try the following exercise: Write down why you believe asking for help feels abnormal to you. Then, examine each reason from a different perspective and work on each point individually. Start accepting help where you previously declined it. Monitor your feelings throughout this process.

Make it a rule to respond only after some time to offers of help, but count to ten first. Consider whether you need help now rather than focusing on why it might feel abnormal.

Consider conducting a small experiment. Recall a situation where you needed support. Imagine a friend or acquaintance sitting across from you, the person whose help you would like to have. Now, pretend to speak to this individual, using the same sentence in different ways:

- "I need you to support me in this situation."
- "I need your support in this situation."
- "I need your help in this situation."
- "I would like you to help me in this situation."
- "Please help me in this situation."

Repeat the same sentence several times to feel how it resonates with you, how your body reacts as you say these words, how you breathe, and what thoughts arise afterwards. This exercise can help you better understand your feelings and attitudes towards seeking help.



# Happiness chooses you

Happiness is one of the most desired states that every person seeks. But what does it really mean to be happy, and how can you achieve this state?

**Happiness** is a subjective concept that each person perceives differently. For some, it may be the attainment of professional goals; for others, harmonious relationships with loved ones; and for others, happiness may lie in simple joys of life, such as the pleasure of a cup of coffee or a walk in the park.

Therefore, happiness is an individual concept determined by our values, needs, and expectations. Often, we perceive happiness as something we must achieve or earn. But happiness is not the destination, it is the journey. It depends not on external circumstances or material goods but on how we perceive the world.

Happiness comes when we know how to rejoice in small pleasures, be grateful for what we have, and live in the present moment.

## **So, how can you become a happy person?**

First, you need to find your purpose and engage in activities that bring you joy and satisfaction. Work that inspires and allows for personal growth can be a source of happiness. Building harmonious relationships with loved ones is essential, sharing your joys and concerns and being ready to help and support others.

**Where should you seek happiness?** The answer to this question is found individually by each person. For some, it may be nature, art, or sports, while for others, it could be religion or spirituality. It's essential to find what gives meaning to your life.

**Can you buy happiness with money?** Material goods can provide comfort and satisfaction but are not the primary source of happiness. Money can bring temporary pleasure, but true happiness lies in deep feelings, interactions with others, and satisfaction from personal achievements.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

### **Being happy is an ability that can be developed.**

We suggest doing a practical exercise. Take a sheet of paper and write down everything that makes you happy. For example, morning coffee or a kiss from your significant other. These can be various little things. By acknowledging them in your life, your mood will improve, and you'll realise that life is worth being happy about.

# Insomnia

**Dreams and dream interpretation are the royal road to the unconscious.**

Sigmund Freud

Shhh... Silence. Time to rest.

Sometimes, the kingdom of Morpheus (the god of dreams in Greek mythology) attracts us with its mystery and enigma. We want to learn more about our state during sleep. We still don't know all the functions of sleep.

**Healthy sleep equals a healthy mind. Healthy sleep is the first thing to address if your life is filled with stress, conflicts, or problems.**

Forced or conscious sleep deprivation seriously affects mental and physical health. Even after one sleepless night, which practically happens to everyone, fatigue sets in, concentration decreases, and difficulties arise in performing complex tasks. If you don't sleep for 2-3 nights, coordination of movements and visual focus are disrupted. People become anxious, and difficulties with quality sleep, such as problems falling asleep or frequent night awakenings, arise. Sleep becomes shallow. This, in turn, exacerbates the lack of sleep, and eventually, the same symptoms appear in people who haven't slept for two or three days in a row.

**Insomnia** is a problem that many people in the modern world face. Regardless of the cause, it can be extremely exhausting and affect our psychological state. But don't lose heart!

Several steps can help you overcome insomnia and ensure healthy sleep. It's essential to create a peaceful and comfortable sleep environment. Ensure a quiet, dark atmosphere, and use a comfortable bed and pillow.

It's also important to maintain a regular sleep schedule, trying to go to bed and wake up at the same time every day. Avoid stressful situations before bedtime.

Pay attention to your habits before bedtime. Avoid consuming coffee, tea, or alcohol in the evening, as they can stimulate the nervous system and make falling asleep more difficult. Instead, have herbal tea or warm milk, which can relax you.

If insomnia becomes a persistent problem, don't hesitate to seek professional help. Sometimes, it can be a symptom of conditions like depression or anxiety.

Healthy sleep is an essential component of our physical and psychological well-being. It helps restore energy, improves mood, and cognitive functions. So, remember the importance of quality sleep and take care of your health!

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Relaxation exercise before sleep. Preparing for a healthy, restful sleep.

First, make yourself comfortable. This exercise works well when you can't fall asleep at night. Then close your eyes and imagine yourself by the bank of a beautiful river. The river flows, and you are on the bank, looking at the water. You might see something under the water, or maybe you're just gazing at the flow, but slowly shift your gaze to the opposite bank, where there's a tree with many leaves. This foliage periodically falls from the tree, as it does in autumn. Imagine taking a thought from your mind and placing it on one of these leaves. The leaf floats and lands on the water, and the river, at its own pace, carries this leaf away, taking your thoughts with it. You watch it for a while and then shift your gaze to another leaf falling from the tree. Once again, place your thought on it; the leaf lands on the river's surface, and the river carries it away. You can repeat this exercise of "placing thoughts on leaves" as often as needed until you feel your mind becoming lighter and less cluttered. Then, calmly, at your own pace, take a deep breath and exhale, and open your eyes. If you do this exercise before sleep, it can help you fall asleep quickly.

# Responsibility – It's Your Life

Have you ever thought about what responsibility and irresponsibility mean? What do we mean by responsibility? If you start thinking about it, you might recall childhood images and phrases like "You have to be responsible."

If you were to ask a child what it means to be responsible, they might say something like "doing everything well," "listening to Mum and Dad," or "doing homework." Adults use the term "responsibility" to help children understand that they should behave well and do what their parents tell them to do.

Is responsibility more than just obligation? What comes to your mind when we talk about responsibility?

We believe that responsibility holds more meaning – it's truly a precise craft, a way to be the author of your life.

Responsibility is not only about taking the consequences of your actions but also actively making decisions that affect our lives and the lives of others. It's a power over our destiny that allows us to steer our lives.

Being responsible means, in any situation, asking yourself, "What can I personally do to influence what's happening?" Being an author or a victim is a constant choice that manifests in everything.

There's no specific age when people should start taking responsibility for themselves. It's a developing process over time and depends on individual characteristics. However, this awareness typically begins during adolescence, when young people gradually become self-reliant and independent from their parents.

People should take responsibility for themselves because it allows them to control their lives and influence its course. Responsibility gives us the freedom to choose and the ability to succeed in any area of life. Without responsibility, we become dependent on others and circumstances, losing control over our lives. People who unconsciously or unwillingly shirk their responsibility may be seen as irresponsible. This can happen due to a lack of self-discipline, an inability to make decisions, or a reluctance to face the consequences of their actions.

**It's important, to be honest with oneself and acknowledge that we are the ones ultimately responsible for our lives.**

In our lives, we can choose one of two possible positions – that of the author or the victim. The first position, taken by successful and happy people, enriches your life and relationships. The second position signifies passive existence, dependence on others, and constant anxiety and insecurity.

We can and should choose our actions and attitudes toward things in life. Who, if not you, and when, if not now?

Observe your inner dialogue and change it if you notice thoughts that always blame others or external circumstances. Ask yourself, "What can I do to change or fix what is happening?"

Surround yourself with people who support and inspire you to make changes.

Responsibility is the key to personal development and a happy life.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

Practices for developing responsibility.



It will be beneficial to try replacing the "I want" demand with the question: "What do I need to do to get what I want?"

Ask yourself more often: **"What must I do to be fully responsible for my actions?"**

As developing a sense of responsibility by yourself is not always easy, you can choose a mentor (or a partner) who will encourage and, if necessary, hold you accountable. It's essential to choose someone who can adequately assess your development. It's reasonable to send reports about your progress to your partner remotely at a specific frequency. Twice a week is enough.

# Self-Concept

Here we are at the final idea.

When you finish reading the last word of this handbook, remember three simple things:

- **Be yourself**
- **Treat yourself with care**
- **Practice for change to happen.**

Self-concept: the key to self-development and happiness.

In today's world, where we are constantly occupied with work, social obligations, and the pursuit of success, it's easy to lose ourselves amidst all the noise of information. But what if we tell you that the key to self-development and happiness lies within you?

## **Welcome! Welcome to the world of Self-concept!**

Self-concept is how you understand yourself, your values, beliefs, and identity. It's our perception of ourselves, who we are, who we can become, and what goals we can achieve.

## **Self-concept determines our self-definition and influences our attitude towards ourselves and the world around us.**

Robert Burns also considered "self-concept" as a set of individual settings aimed at oneself. However, he believed that these settings could have different perspectives and modalities. There are three primary modalities of self-settings:

- **"Real Self"** – settings related to how individuals perceive their abilities, roles, and current status- their understanding of who they truly are.
- **"Mirror (social) Self"** – settings related to an individual's ideas about how others see them.
- **"Ideal Self"** – settings related to an individual's ideas about who they want to become.

One of the first steps in understanding self-concept is **self-analysis**.

- Ask yourself questions like "Who am I?" "What is important to me?" "What are my goals and objectives?" The answers to these questions will help you understand your values, needs, and desires. They will become the foundation of your self-concept.
- It's also essential to identify your strengths and weaknesses. This will help you understand which aspects of your personality you can develop and which require more attention. For example, if you realise you are good at handling complex situations but struggle with communication, you can focus on improving your communication skills.
- One way to apply self-concept in life is to use the metaphorical question "How." For example, "I want to become a strong leader," "I want to be healthy and energetic," and "I want to be a creative individual." Now, add the question "How" to these statements. These "hows" become your goals and remind you who you want to be. They can be your guiding principles and help you make crucial decisions.
- Self-concept also helps you understand your boundaries and set limits. It allows you to say "no" to things that do not align with your values and needs. For example, if you understand that your health is a priority, you can decline opportunities that harm your physical or emotional well-being.

Applying self-concept in life also means remembering that you are unique with your own needs, desires, and dreams.

Please do not compare yourself to others; everyone has their path and abilities.

Work on self-improvement and development instead of trying to be a copy of someone else. Self-concept is a lifelong process that allows us to understand ourselves better, be in harmony with ourselves, and achieve our dreams.

Use this concept to see how your relationships, career, and overall happiness improve. Remember that you are the sole owner of your self-concept, and you determine who you are and want to be.

## *SELF-SUPPORT: Putting Things into Practice*

The final exercise in this book that we strongly recommend doing. This exercise will allow you to reflect and find answers to your questions. You will find them, we promise.

So, create your self-concept using these questions:

- **Who am I? How do I see myself?**
- **How do others see me?**
- **Who do I want to be?**



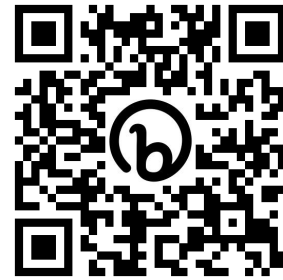
All these "I"s are considered through the prism of physical, emotional, intellectual, and social characteristics (images).

**When you know more about yourself, you better understand others.**

**Until we meet again** 



**The International  
Rescue Committee  
(IRC)**



**OPORA**