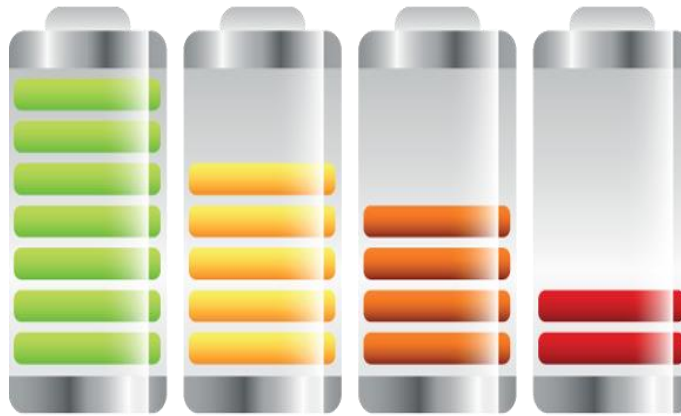


Journaling Exercise: Reflecting on Relationships

Our relationships are an incredibly important part of our lives. It is therefore important to periodically stop and reflect about how those relationships are working for us. First, it is helpful to observe how our relationships make us feel.

Does your relationship “fill you up” and give you energy?

- Excitement
- Relaxed
- Ability to be yourself
- Enjoy time together, but also OK with time apart



Does your relationship deplete you?

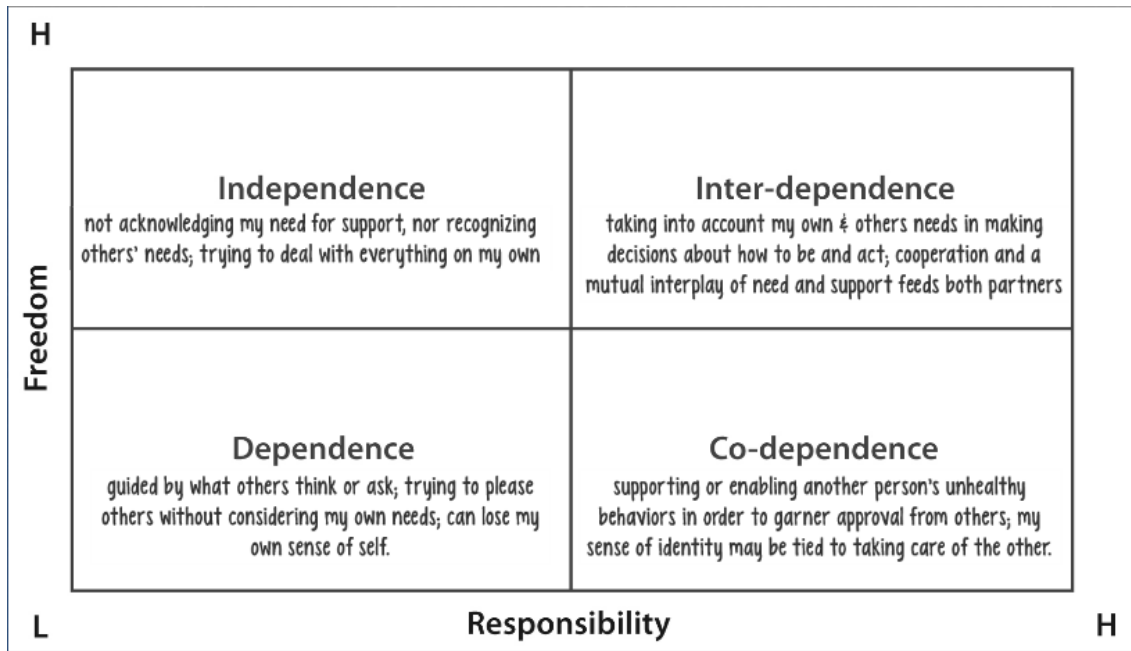
- Exhaustion
- Muscle tension
- Desire to avoid
- Sense of obligation
- Negativity
- Irritability

Think about a relationship in your life. Write for about 10-15 minutes about how that relationship makes you feel. Consider how you feel as you anticipate spending time with the person, how you feel when you’re with them, how you feel as you walk away from time with them, and how you feel when you are apart.

It is also important to make note of our own role in our relationships. One way of thinking about the way we engage is by thinking about how we establish and maintain boundaries.

Rigid Boundaries	Healthy Boundaries	Porous Boundaries
Avoid intimacy and close relationships; has few close relationships	Comfortable with intimacy and closeness	Overinvolved with other’s problems
Protective of personal information	Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share)	Overshares personal information
Unlikely to ask for help	Able to ask for help Doesn’t compromise values for others	Dependent on the opinions of others, and may ask for help even when able to do for themselves
May seem detached, even with romantic partners	Able to say “no” to others	Difficulty saying “no” to others’ requests
Keeps others at a distance to avoid rejection	Knows personal wants and needs, and can communicate them	Fears rejection if they do not comply with others Accepting of abuse or disrespect
Feels rejected when others say “no”	Accepting when others say “no” to them	Feels rejected when others say “no”

The kinds of boundaries we establish and maintain place us within these quadrants of independence, dependence, co-dependence, and inter-dependence.



Of course, all of us will fall in these different quadrants at different moments or in different relationships in our lives. However, many of us might find that we spend more time in one of these regions than the others, or that certain types of relationships seem to make us more or less likely to feel dependent, co-dependent, independent, or inter-dependent. Noticing these patterns and the impact they have on our wellbeing and happiness is the important thing.

Write for about 10-15 minutes about how you engage in your relationships. As you write, try to do so without judgment—simply make note of how you establish boundaries, prioritize your own needs, ask for support or assistance, and offer your support to others. You can also make note of how this affects the way you feel as well as the people with whom you are in relationship.

Healthy Relationship Nutrition Facts		
Serving Size		
Servings Per Container		
Calories Unlimited	Calories from Love	100%
		% Daily Value*
Equity		100%
Communication		100%
Trust		100%
Empathy		100%
Respect		100%
Independent Activities		>0%
Personal Passions		100%
Self-Esteem		100%
Compassion		100%
Fun		100%
Support		100%
Selfishness	0g	Unreal Expectations 0g
Playing Games	0g	Insecurities 0g
Drama	0g	Possessiveness 0g
Disrespect	0g	Obsessiveness 0g
Manipulation	0g	Obligation 0g

* Percent daily values are based on ideal relationships. Actual daily values may be higher or lower depending on you and your friend/partner's needs, lifestyle, personal development, stress levels, and sense of purpose.

Understanding what we need and what healthy relationships look like for us is a key part of evaluating our relationships. Exactly what “healthy” looks like will be different for different people at different times in their life. However, just as we need to get certain nutrients from our diet, we need to get certain things (like respect, acceptance, equity) from our relationships in order to be healthy. Moreover, just as ingredients like processed sugar, chemicals, and saturated fats can make us ill, things like possessiveness, disrespect, and poor communication can make our relationships unhealthy.

Write for 10-15 minutes about what healthy relationships look like for you at this time in your life, and what you can do to nurture healthy, sustaining relationships for yourself. Consider your reflections about how your current relationships make you feel, and try to identify what you need in a friend. Also, consider your observations about the way you currently engage in relationships, and identify things that you can work on in order to shift your engagement with others to be healthier for you and for the people around you.