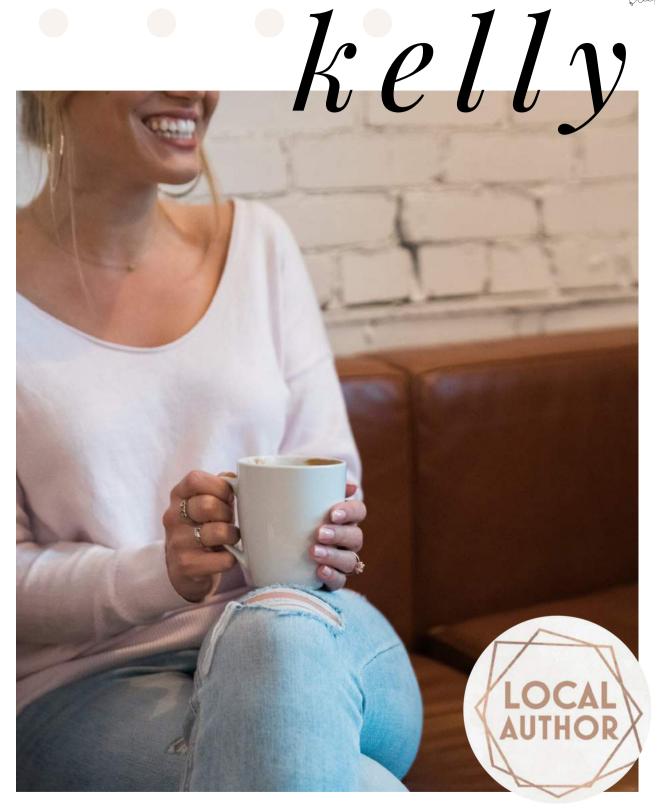
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ON LETTING WHOEVER think whatever

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# kelly

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#### 10

Why Wo We Stay When We Should Go?

#### 26

This is Burnout

#### 42

Improving Your Relationship with Fool





#### **CONTENTS**

#### WHAT'S INSIDE THIS EDITION



10 Why Do We Stay When We Should Go?



13
From a Friend to a Friend: On Your Choice to Prioritize Yourself



15
How Being Cheated
On Can Affect Your
Mental Health



18
Sex: How is it Impacting Your Relationship?



 $23 \\ \text{Some Signs You} \\ \text{Could Benefit From} \\ \text{Counselling} \\$ 



24
Ask the therapist: Is my teenager self-harming?



 $26 \\ \text{This Is Burnout}$ 



"I let whoever think WHATEVER!"



34 Smile! It's contagious.



36
Why Canceling Plans
Does Not Always
Have To Be a
Negative Thing

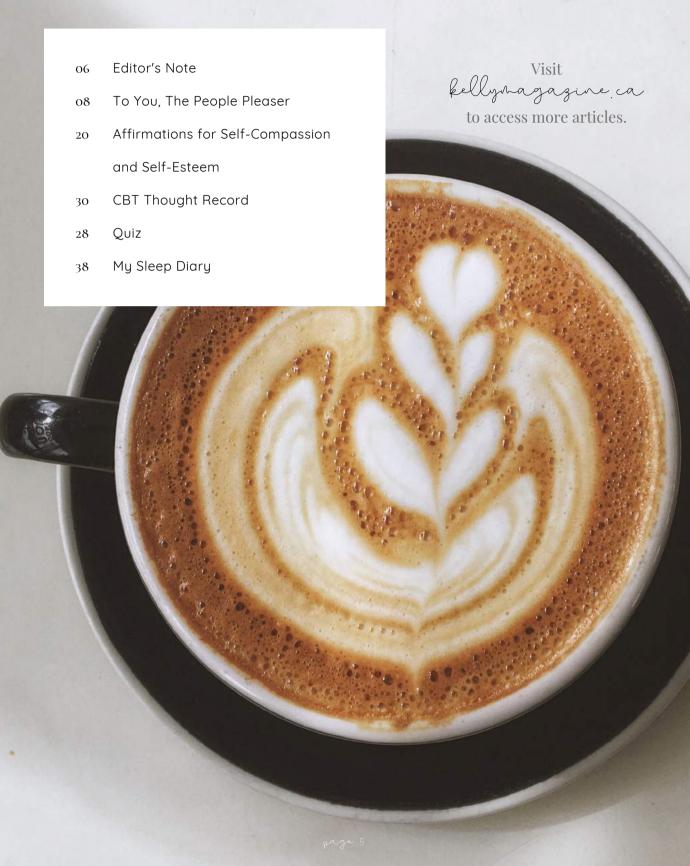


42
Improving your relationship with food



44 How to Not Get Steamrolled on Your Own Wedding

#### **MORE**



## When Someone Makes you The Toxic One



We hear all the time about the benefits of removing toxic people from your life. It's so liberating to no longer put up with the negativity, crossed boundaries, or bad feelings you get when you're around that person. It's okay to move on and focus on what is working for you, right?

But what if you're the person who has been cut off?

Life is so rarely black and white and actions can be misinterpreted.

You might be tempted to create more opportunities to reconnect, say by going to events you're both invited to, showing up at their place just to talk or drop off "stuff", or engaging them in discussion aiming to convince them that you are not toxic and they probably just misunderstood you.

Clarifying and seeking resolution is okay, to a point. And after that point, your persistence makes the situation worse. As they say, don't beat a dead horse. You can state your piece, and then you must let it be.

So if you're the one getting cut off, does this make you the bad guy?

Not at all. Distance in relationships can be an opportunity for you to do some self-reflection, figure out if you've done anything that needs to be changed, and either make those changes or simply respect that the other person has made a decision, and your time is better spent with those who want you around.

If they're asking you, through actions, words, or behaviours, to let go, do a favour for the both of you. Choose peace, and let go.

Linda Kelly, MSW, RSW



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## To you, THE PEOPLE-PLEASER

A Poem by Laura Groulx, BEd, MSW, RSW

You do well at making others feel good, but this can leave you drained and misunderstood. By giving away all you can muster, you can end up feeling a bit lackluster.

There are different reasons it's hard to say no, it's sometimes to avoid making yourself feel low. Perhaps conflict with others is what you fear, and by saying yes, you are in the clear.

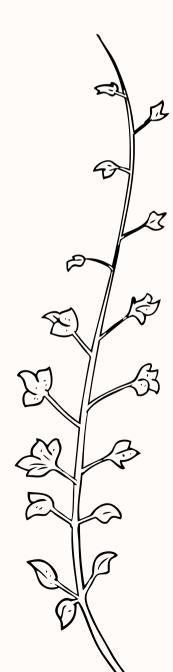
Or maybe deep down there's a fear of rejection, which could come to light with your interjection. It could also be guilt that's causing your frown, because you truly hate to let anyone down.

People-pleasing isn't necessarily bad, but if it's too much, you can back off a tad. There are ways in which to take back control, boundaries can be made to set and patrol.

Building self-worth from within is a must, attaching self-worth to others? A bust. It's impossible to have everyone else's approval, unrealistic expectations are in need of removal.

Every step you take is a choice moving ahead, so align your priorities without fear or dread. You don't need excuses to live life how you want, we have one life, so avoid those regrets that can haunt.

L.G.



PAGE 9 · KELLY MAGAZINE



#### Why Do We Stay When We Should Go?

by Laura Groulx, BEd, MSW, RSW

Deciding whether to stay in a relationship or end it seems so black and white from an outside perspective: stay If it's healthy, and leave if it isn't. However, black and white simply doesn't exist in relationships. The healthiest of relationships still have moments of conflict, and unhealthy relationships can still experience moments of joy. It's so confusing. Relationships are a lot of work – but where's the line between normal relationship work and unhealthy dynamics? Even when it's clear that the line has been crossed, there can still be so much uncertainty. To set the record straight, here are a few reasons why people stay in unhealthy relationships:

#### (ove:

Love is emotional, not logical. It's easy to view our relationship with love-blinders on; we fall in love with someone's positive aspects, and with our love-blinders fully fastened, the bad parts can be easy to ignore. Also, just because the relationship is failing, does not necessarily mean that the other person is toxic. Perhaps it's just not a good match, and this can be difficult to identify. Sure, people can end relationships because they have fallen out of love, but this is not always the case.

#### Time and Memories:

We invest a lot of time into our relationships, and time is arguably our most valuable commodity. Because of this, the thought of starting over can be a deterrent to ending a committed relationship. Also, consider the positive memories that have been created in that time – are they all for nothing? It's very easy to idolize the positive memories of a relationship when we consider the painful grief of ending a relationship. Meaning, when we

leave, we tend to focus on the good memories and forget or justify the bad, which makes it difficult to stay away.

#### Manipulation:

It is possible that one partner is manipulating the other into staying in the relationship. This can be in the form of minimizing and dismissing issues, as well as empty promises leading to false hope. In addition, psychological abuse can impact a person's confidence in their perception of the situation/reality/state of the relationship (which is a form of psychological abuse called gaslighting). If this occurs, issues in the relationship can become internalized, and the victim may blame themselves for issues rather than see the manipulative psychological abuse for what it is.

#### Lack of Confidence:

When enmeshed in a relationship, individuality can take a back seat. The relationship becomes our world, and personal values, standards, and boundaries that we once set for ourselves regarding relationships have long since been broken. Now, we're left with an unsettling feeling within the relationship, and a lack of power to do anything about it. When the issues within the relationship become the norm, it can be very difficult to change them. It takes incredible courage, strength, and confidence to leave an unhealthy relationship.

#### Shame:

Ending an unhealthy relationship can feel like airing your dirty laundry. Generally, it goes against our instinct to expose our flaws, mistakes, shortcomings, and perceived failures. Unfortunately, there is no way to end an unhealthy relationship without stepping into all of this. At the same time, this can be an opportunity to enjoy the support of the people who have your best interests in mind.

#### Finances:

This is certainly a factor. Especially so if the partner that is wanting to leave does not currently have an adequate means to provide financially for themselves. Of course, there are family laws in place to support individuals financially upon separating, but this process can feel so overwhelming and daunting. Also, realistically, finances may be tighter upon separating. This can be stressful, but remember: You can't put a price on your sanity.

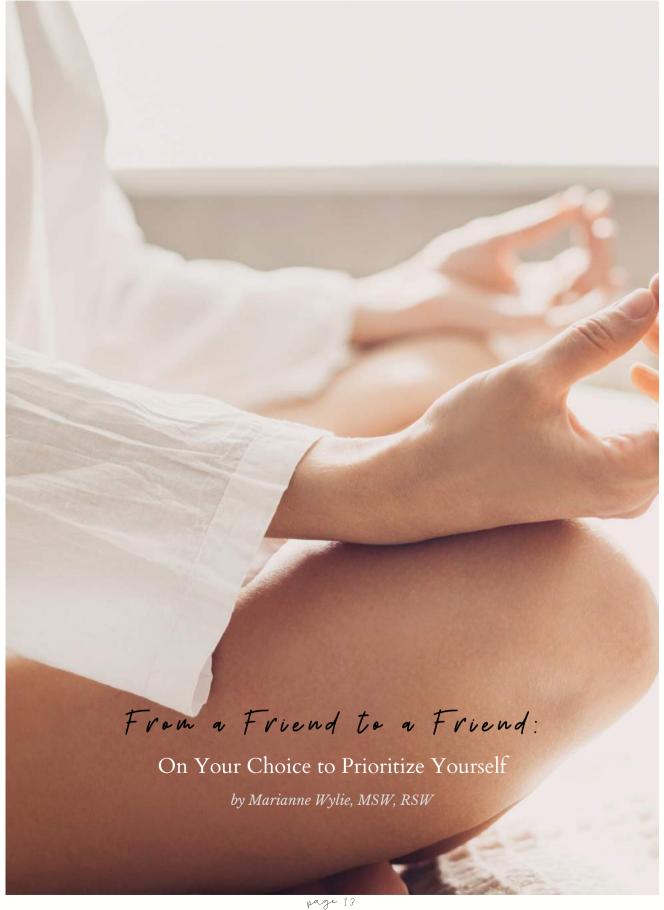
#### Children:

There is a myth that society seems to believe, stating that it is in the children's best interest for their parents to remain together, despite the state of their parents' relationship. Consider the implication of this – what do we want our children to learn? Children learn through parental modeling, as in, they learn how to approach the world based on observing their parents' actions and behaviours. We can teach them that an unhealthy relationship is acceptable, just as we can teach them that it is okay to be brave in order to put themselves first and seek out the joy they deserve in this life.

The decision to stay or to go is not an easy one, and it can feel all-consuming when you are in the middle of making it.

If you are going through it, be kind to yourself as you sort through your feelings. If you decide to stay, then really stay. Work on enriching your life and the relationship, because we all deserve our own peace and joy. If you decide to go, really go. Put yourself first and know that you're worth fighting for. Whatever you do, just don't stay in limbo forever: time goes by whether we are choosing to live or waiting to live.







The other day we had plans. You couldn't make it because you needed to rest. You seemed hard on yourself for cancelling. I know the feeling. I can be hard on myself for needing to cancel on a friend too. In fact, I would often compromise my own mental or physical health just to avoid the guilt that comes with cancelling with someone.

But I want to thank you for caring for yourself.

You showed me that taking care of yourself is a priority in your life. You value your wellness. You caring for yourself gives me permission to cancel and reschedule with a friend if I need to focus on my health. Let's say bye to the guilt that can come with self-care. So, I thank you my friend for showing me I can care for myself too.

When we allow ourselves to engage in self-care, we model to others that self-care is healthy, important and does not need to come with guilt. Go ahead, take the time you need for you. It is healthy!

Mow being cheated on can affect your mental health

by Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW

Unfortunately, in some relationships, people have their hearts broken by learning that their partner is having a relationship with somebody else. When somebody that you trusted and loved ends up betraying you, it can leave you devastated, questioning everything you know. These feelings aren't easily forgotten and are often carried into new relationships.

Initially, your mind may be overwhelmed by unfair assumptions and comparisons that tear you down. Are they better than me? Am I not good enough? What do they have that I don't?

Along with the questions come feelings of sadness, anger, and blame. While it can be easy to say that your partner doesn't deserve you and that this was their fault, being cheated on usually leads to feeling that you aren't good enough, and wondering what is wrong with you. While they did the cheating and are responsible for the betrayal, we often internalize the experience, feeding into our self-doubts and lowering our self esteem. We often tell ourselves that if we understand what we did to cause the heartbreak, we can prevent it from happening again.

While it is hard to fight off the self-deprecating thoughts and feelings that come after betrayal, you have to try. Yes, we usually give ourselves a few days of feeling bad, mourning the loss of the relationship, and binge-eating ice cream. However, we cannot let this go on forever; that much ice cream can be expensive. We need to look at the situation objectively. Infidelity is complex, and there are many factors that lead to cheating.

Learning that your partner may have a better connection with someone else can hurt,

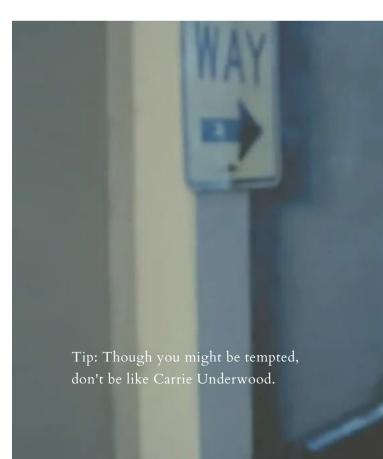
but there is nothing that you can do to change this. However, if your partner wasn't happy, then the right thing to do would have been to communicate that to you instead of cheat.

Your partner's choice to be unfaithful was theirs alone, and that decision does not reflect how valuable you are. You deserve to be with somebody who wants to be with you and notices how fantastic you are.

Here are some things you can do to help you remember your value.

## Make A List of All Your Strengths.

What positive qualities and traits do you have? What compliments have people given you? What do you like about your physical appearance? When you are feeling bad about yourself, look at this list and realize all that you have to offer the world.



#### Do What Makes You Happy

Instead of staying home and feeling bad about yourself, do things that you love to do! Painting, hiking, walking your dog, hanging out with your friends, whatever will help you feel like yourself again.

#### **Positive Mantras.**

While this can feel silly at first, it actually works. Make a list of 3-5 positive mantras. Examples: "I am beautiful," "I am smart," "I am good enough," "I am worthy of love." Every morning, say these to yourself in the mirror. When you are thinking or feeling bad about yourself, say them!

After being cheated on, you may learn warning signs or "red flags" of when somebody may be cheating. You can't control another person, you can only control yourself and focus

on creating a healthy, loving relationship so that both you and your partner are satisfied. If it happens again, it likely has nothing to do with you (even if they blame you to justify their behaviour). People aren't always right for each other for the long term, but there are far more respectful ways to end a relationship than through infidelity. Sometimes to try to prevent this heartache, you might become and anxious, controlling checking their messages, listening to their phone calls, and dictating who they can talk to. This kind of abusive behaviour is more likely to destroy the quality of the relationship than to secure it. If you stay with someone who cheated on you, then you need to find a healthy way to repair this trust. If this is a new relationship, then your new partner should not be punished for the actions of your ex.

So, what can you do to fight off the fears of being cheated on again?

## Know Your Greatness.

You are a great person, and anybody would be lucky to be with you. You deserve to be with somebody who treats you with respect and loyalty. Don't settle for someone who treats you poorly.

While it is important to take time to experience the hurt and mourn the relationship, it is essential not to let one person affect how you feel about yourself and damage future relationships. Open yourself up to trusting and loving again. You deserve somebody who will treat you right, and that person is out there. Don't settle for less.

page 17



bet this title caught your attention. Why is that? On a biological level, sex is an innate human function, similar eating. Our body craves, which results in us seeking out object of our desire, whether it be a bag of Doritos, another human being. However, sex is So. Much. More. Sure, eating can be a sensual experience that satisfies and stimulates us, but sex has all the feels: intimacy, human connection, a sense belonging, just to name a few. Feelings aside. chemical reactions occur in our brain, giving us a pleasure rush (dopamine), making us feel relaxed and good overall (serotonin), and emotionally bonds us (oxytocin). Now, stepping back to place more perspective on the deed, let's explore the impact of sex on a grander scale; what impact does

sex have on our relationship?

## SEX.

#### HOW IS IT IMPACTING YOUR RELATIONSHIP?

by Laura Groulx, BEd, MSW, RSW

Sex can strengthen a relationship in many different ways. First of all, sex is vulnerable. Not only does it expose our flawed physical body to another person, which can be a source of body-image insecurity, but we are also exposing emotional vulnerability by allowing ourselves to share our very raw, real and private wants, needs, and desires. Trusting all this vulnerability with another person can create a deeper sense of connection and intimacy.

Further, a healthy sex life can support healthy communication. Sex can be a difficult topic to discuss, even within long-term relationships. In order to continue allowing sex to bond us, we have to keep talking, especially about the hard stuff. Do you feel safe to ask for what you want? To discuss any changes in libido? To share about changes within your body? If we are able to have vulnerable conversations about sex with our partner, perhaps we can trust our partner with vulnerable conversations outside of sex.

Sex can be a self-esteem booster. Being the object of another's desire not only makes us feel desirable, but also wanted and accepted. Think about it: of all the people out there in the world, this person standing in front of you wants you. It's good for the ego, and can have a positive impact on our sense of self-worth.

On the other hand, sex can impact our relationship in a less positive way. It can be a source of conflict within an otherwise healthy relationship. If a couple is not on the same page about the frequency of sex, or what type of sexual play is brought to the bedroom, disconnect can emerge. This can leave one partner feeling rejected, inadequate, undesirable, resentful, and unloved, while the other partner could be feeling misunderstood, criticized, and ashamed.

Sex can be used as a bandage, inhibiting emotional intimacy. Both partners may be on the same page about sex - the sex is spectacular! However, at times, sex is initiated as a way to end conflict within the relationship and make up.



This doesn't seem so bad upon immediate reflection, but when we think about this more deeply, what it may actually be doing is silencing necessary and vulnerable conversations. Therefore, conflicts do not get resolved, long-standing issues can worsen, resentment can build, and partners may begin emotionally distancing themselves from each other.

Unfortunately, sex can also be used to inflict abuse into a relationship. For instance, sex can be used as a weapon, in order to gain power and control over one's partner and the relationship. This can be seen through the manipulation tactic of bribery: I'll give you this, if you give me that. Another example of this would be withholding sex, in order for the withholding partner to get what they want from the desiring partner: I won't give you this, until you give me that. Further, sex can also be used as a form of assault, and unconsented sexual activity is NEVER okay, even if it is within the context of a relationship.

Complicated, isn't it? Like I said, sex is so much more than the simple three letter word that it is. I hope this article lends confidence to your relationship if you find yourself relating to the first few paragraphs. If you find yourself relating to the latter paragraphs, there is hope and support out there! Counselling can help individuals and couples understand if their relationship can be worked on to enhance emotional and sexual intimacy and satisfaction, and to identify if it's time to call it quits.

For now, while you're reflecting on the impact that sex has on YOUR relationship, please pass the Doritos!!

#### Affirmations for Self-Compassion and Self-Esteem

by Seija Grant, MEd CP, RP

There are many ways to use selfaffirmation to strengthen your self-concept (such as compassion and esteem). I will share my favourite way of using them in the form of a 'personal mantra'. Choose 3 of these statements that you wish to believe about yourself but currently do not (or create your own!). Write them on a sticky note and place them on your mirror. Every morning when you wake up, look yourself in the mirror and repeat your 'mantra' aloud. Over time this will begin to feel true, and will very likely have a positive impact on your self-worth.

I have confidence in my skills.

I am not afraid to be wrong.

Happiness is within my grasp.

I am confident in the presence of others.

I will say "No" when I do not have the time or inclination to act.

The only person who can defeat me is myself.

If I fail, I will fail forward.

My confidence knows no limits.

I choose hope over fear.

Positivity is a choice that I choose to make.

I will not take other peoples' negativity personally.

I am a diamond. It is time for me to shine.

I am loved and I am wanted.

I will stop apologizing for being myself.

Negative self-talk has no place in my life.

My mind, body and soul are fit and strong.

I am grateful for the things I have.

I love myself for who I am.

I grow in strength with every forward step I take.

I can do anything I set my mind to do.

When I breathe, I inhale confidence and exhale fear.

I live in the present and am confident of the future.

I am self-reliant, creative and persistent in whatever I do.

I love challenges. They bring out the best in me.

Today I am willing to fail in order to succeed.

I am proud of myself for even daring to try.

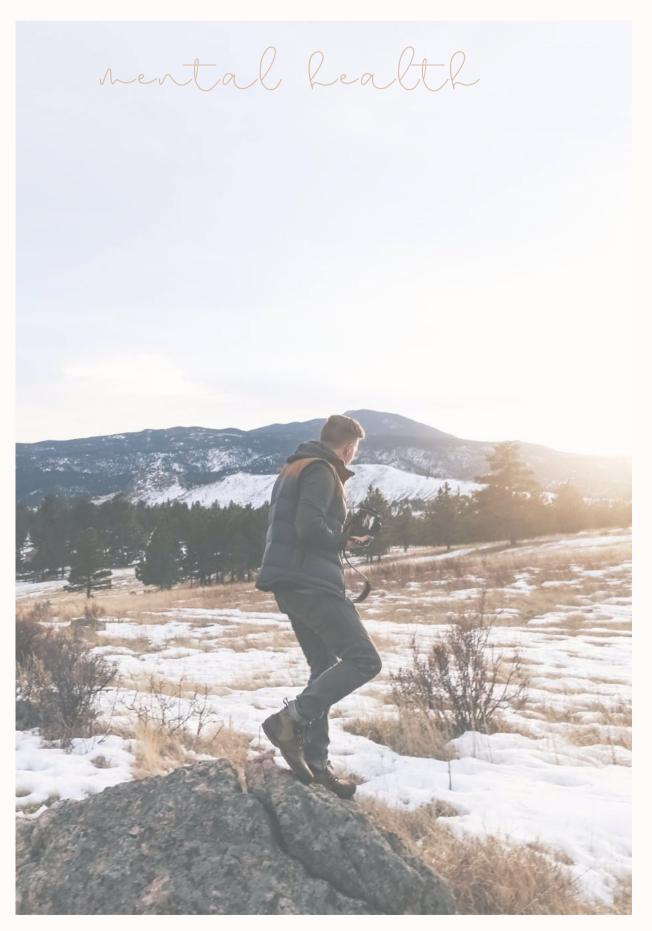
I am a unique and special person worthy of respect from others.

I like myself better and better each and every day.

It matters little what others say. What matters is how

I react and what I believe.

My mind is full of gratitude for my lovely and wonderful life.



PAGE 21 · KELLY MAGAZINE



## SHALL PASS"

- Unknown



## What are some signs you could benefit from counselling?

by Maria Drohan, AS Eng., MSW (Candidate), RSW

Some of the most important reasons to seek counseling are:

#### 1. You are going through a big life change

Big life changes can have a profound impact on our happiness. Major life events like divorce or a loss of a job can be incredibly stressful. Counseling can help you come to terms with your new reality.

#### 2. You are having harmful thoughts

If you are feeling like you could be a danger to yourself, please reach out a mental health specialist for support. This is not something you should have to deal with on your own.

#### 3. You've stopped doing the things that bring you happiness

A loss of motivation could signal that something is up. If you're normally a social butterfly and you're suddenly pulling away from your weekly sports league, for example, you could be experiencing something deeper.

#### 4. You are using substances to cope with your emotions

Alcohol and drugs can numb the bad feelings for awhile, but they don't solve the problems and usually end up prolonging your suffering.

#### 5. You just feel like you need to talk to someone

Bottom line, if you feel like you want to talk to someone, do it. There's absolutely no reason you shouldn't.



page 23

#### **ASK THE THERAPIST:**

#### Is My Teenager Self-Harming?

by Lara Hollway, MSW, RSW



## harm?

Non-suicidal self injury, or "self harm" is the act of deliberately causing harm to one's body through cutting, burning, or other means. The injuries are typically minor, can leave scars, and are usually not life-threatening. Recent studies in the US show that one-third to onehalf of teenagers have engaged in some type of self harming behavior.

#### What is self- Why do people self-harm? Is there treatment for self-harm?

Self-harm is usually not a suicide attempt. People who self harm are often feeling overwhelmed and in pain, and hurting themselves can feel like the only thing they can do in that moment to make the emotional pain go away. Unfortunately, the release of emotion that self harm offers is short lived and usually immediately followed by feelings of guilt and shame. This can create a cycle of self harm: emotional pain/shame -> overwhelm -> self harm -> short term release/relief -> feelings of guilt/shame. Counselling, especially with a counsellor experienced in working with people who self harm, can help to identify triggers, work through pain, and develop alternative coping skills. Medication may also be helpful in helping to manage some of the intense emotion and underlying distress that is leading to the self harming behavior.

#### Is my teen selfharming?

Signs and symptoms of potential self harm can include:

- · Scars, often but not always in patterns, and usually on the arms, thighs, or front of the torso
- · Fresh cuts, scrapes, burns or bruising in unusual areas of the body (not the elbows or knees)
- · Sudden shift in clothing to always wearing long pants/shirts even in hot weather
- · Mood changes, depression, feelings of hopelessness and impulsivity

#### What should I do?

If you know or suspect that your child or teen is self harming, the first thing that you need to do is to notice your own reaction. What are you feeling right now? Are you feeling panicked? Angry? Sad? Numb? Confused? It is so important to notice and acknowledge your own reaction because your teen is already likely overwhelmed and feeling shame. Adding your panic, anger or fear to this mix will only amplify the emotions, and not help to ease them. Once you have noticed and named your reaction, sit with it for a moment and decide what you need to move through this reaction and into a place where you can be a support for teenager. Managing your emotions in the face of your teen self harming is incredibly hard work. I would encourage you to reach out for support to a counsellor or a family doctor if you are feeling overwhelmed. Then, once you feel more grounded, talk to your teen.

## When is self-harm an emergency?

If you believe the self harm injury is potentially life-threatening, call 911 or your nearest emergency number immediately. Signs of potentially life-threatening injuries can include bleeding that spurts or won't stop, injuries to the face or throat, or burns that are near major blood vessels.

## Tips for talking to your teen about self-harm:

- Choose your moment. Self harm is not a lifethreatening emergency, even though it can feel like one. Take the time to choose a private moment when both parties are feeling at least moderately calm.
- Start by letting them know that you love them and you are here for them, in whatever words feel right to you.
- It is often helpful to be direct: "I saw cuts on your arm, and I am worried that you are hurting yourself. Would you be willing to talk to me about this?"
- Give them time to process and react. They might be feeling startled and vulnerable, and need time.
   Ask if you can talk more in a few hours, or tomorrow.
- When they are ready, explore the emotion behind the self harm, rather than dwelling on the action of the self harm. "Can you tell me about how you're feeling lately?" or even "What triggers you to self harm/hurt yourself?"
- Check in around suicide. "Are you feeling suicidal? Would you tell me if you were feeling suicidal?"
  - If your teen is feeling suicidal and is feeling unable to commit to safety/staying alive, ask if you can drive them to the hospital. If they refuse, call 911 or your nearest emergency number.
  - If your teen is feeling suicidal but is willing to commit to safety/staying alive, ask them if you can book them a counselling appointment or an appointment with their family doctor. Continue to check in with them about suicide, potentially creating 24 hr safety plans until they are willing and able to commit to safety for longer periods.
- Don't assume that self harm is behavior that they
  are planning on stopping. Remember that people
  self harm because they are trying to cope, and until
  they have other healthier coping tools, they may
  feel the need to continue to self harm.
- Ask them if they would be willing to talk to a family doctor or counsellor. Do they need help scheduling the appointment? If so, offer your support and be present with them.

# This <u>I</u>s Burnout by Kelly Graham, MSW, RSW

As I write this, I feel the heaviness in my eyes, wanting to shut and sleep. I feel the yearning of wanting the day to be over and the week. I have no desire to do anything. I feel my sense of caring slowly fading.

#### I'm tired all of the time

fighting my way through each day just waiting for the weekend when I can sleep. My once steady morning workout routine has now been replaced with extra sleep. I know exercise will help energize me, but it's just too hard to wake up. I'm too tired to get out of bed. My body feels heavy. It's a battle to tell myself to get up.

When I am up, I'm moving slower. I have no sense of urgency to get ready. I feel very flat. I drive to work and wonder what the day is going to throw at me. I have no energy for responsibilities.

## I have no energy for responsibilities.

I would love to take a week vacation and relax somewhere. Sadly, my bank account and bills won't let me. So, I go to work and countdown the days until the weekend. Don't get me wrong; I love my job. But sometimes it can feel overwhelming. Some days go by fast, and others seem to drag on. Some days feel so busy that I don't have time to pee.

By the time I get home, I am exhausted and don't want to do anything. So, the housework piles up. I feel guilty the house is a mess. I feel guilty, relying on my partner to take on extra responsibilities that I have no energy to do. I eat junk because I am too tired to cook.

## I eat junk because I am too tired to cook.

Well, here comes the weight gain. Then my self-esteem begins to lower. I feel angry that I can't just work out, eat healthy and look the way I want. I feel bad for my partner because I feel like I'm less attractive. He tells me I'm beautiful, but it's hard to believe him when I can't see it myself.

## I have no fe#ks left to give.

Yet people keep coming to me. They need my help, they need me to be there for them, and I want to. But my mind and body say otherwise. I try and fake my way through it as much as I can. I don't want to burden people with how I am feeling. After all, it's just burnout, right? It'll get better. I just need time to do nothing, time to recharge. But that day seems so far away. Every time I try, something comes up. I have to be with family, be a step-mom, be a good employee, be a fiancé. I need to be there for everybody else.

## I'm crying more than usual.

One more thing adds to my plate, and it makes me feel completely overwhelmed. I cry to try and release my feelings. It helps...for a bit. I have no energy or motivation to take on any more. I'm at the end of my rope, but life demands more and more of me. I don't want to fall. I don't want to be a bad employee, friend, fiancé, step-mom. But it's so hard to keep trying and trying. So, I keep juggling everything, hoping that nothing falls.

Soon I'll get time for me... soon. I say this every night, every time something else gets added to my plate. Then I go to bed



and do it all again the next day.



Questions:

Choose to what degree you can relate to the following statements based off how you have been feeling over the last week. The results of this assessment are meant for self-reflection, this is not a diagnostic tool.

Burnout can happen to employees in the workplace, to caregivers, and individuals who experience high levels of stress on a daily basis. When completing this assessment, think of the environment that may be contributing to these feelings and experiences below.

Rating:

Statements could apply to personal burnout, work-related burnout, and caretaker burnout.	Not at all (1); Rarely (2) Sometimes (3); Often (4) Very Often (5)
I Cool about a line and amount and line door at	///
I feel physically and emotionally drained.	
I feel easily irritated by the people I am surrounded with.	
I feel like I could be doing more.	
I do not have time to engage in self-care, or healthy leisure activities that I enjoy.	
I have a hard time getting motivated in the mornings.	
I have negative thoughts about my role.	——————————————————————————————————————
I feel like I have no one to talk to.	——————————————————————————————————————
I feel uninspired.	
I can't keep up with the tasks I have to complete throughout the day.	
I can't wait for the day to be over.	
I am having second thoughts about the role I am in.	
I am doing a poor job.	<del></del>
I feel misunderstood by others in my role.	
I feel an overwhelming amount of pressure.	



#### No risk of burnout:

Based off of your responses it appears that you are not experiencing burnout. Take a minute to reflect on what could be contributing to your ability to maintain good work-life balance, or what is assisting you in managing your stress levels at home. Continue to apply these strategies (e.g. setting healthy boundaries, using balanced thinking, and setting realistic expectations) to maintain this balance.



#### You may be at risk of burnout:

Now would be a good time to think about what may be contributing to the symptoms you rated experiencing Very Often, and creating a plan to prevent these feelings from worsening.

Things that could help:

Take time to engage in stress-reducing activities: This can help counteract potential stressors you may encounter throughout the day, allowing challenges to feel more manageable.

Say no when you need to: Being assertive and setting healthy boundaries whether it is within your role at work or at home, is essential to maintaining a positive overall well-being.

Take care of your physical health: Eat a balanced diet, sleep 7-9 hours a night, drink enough water, and get some exercise!

**Express yourself:** Find an outlet to express yourself, whether it means talking to someone you trust or a professional support or using a creative outlet, such as writing, art, or music.

If you scored...

14- 28
No/slight risk of burnout.
29-55
You may be at risk of burnout
56-70
You may be experiencing burnout.

#### You may be experiencing burnout:

It appears you may be experiencing burnout. Now what?

Monitor and manage the stressors that contribute to your burnout: once you've established what is contributing to your feeling of burnout, you can make a plan to address the issues.

Evaluate your options: Discuss concerns you may have at work with your supervisor or at home with your partner/family members. Maybe this will allow for expectations to change and responsibilities to be distributed differently.

Improve your outlook: If you are becoming cynical in your role, rediscover enjoyable aspects of your role, recognize others for their valuable contributions and take time away from your responsibilities to do something you enjoy.

Seek support: If you are experiencing burnout at work, talk to your supervisor about how you are feeling. There might be some modifications in your role that could help alleviate some of this pressure. If this is at home, talk to your partner or family members to explore ways to evenly distribute responsibilities. Talking to a mental health professional could help you further explore solutions to improving factors contributing to burnout.

Get into a healthy routine: Eating well, sleeping enough and getting regular exercise can all contribute to a more positive well-being and a healthy outlook on life. When experiencing burnout, it is common to let go of these behaviors which can often make things worse.

## Thought Record

#### Emotions are not wrong. They just are. How we interpret a situation reflects how we will feel about it.

Tip: Use a pencil and reuse this page.

Where were you? What were you doing? Who were you with?	What was the emotion or feeling? Rate your emotions from 1-10. Emotions can be described with one word. E.g.: angry, sad, scared.			
What was the negative automatic thought? What thoughts were going through your mind? What memories or images came to mind?	What is the evidence that supports the thought? What facts support the truthfulness of this thought or image?			
What is the evidence that does not support the thought? What experiences indicate that this thought is not completely true all of the time? Could you be jumping to conclusions?	What is an alternative thought? Write a new thought which takes into account the evidence for and against the original thought.			
What is the emotion or feeling now? How do you feel about the situation at this point? Rate your emotions from 1-10 and compare with your previous rating.				



PAGE 31 · KELLY MAGAZINE



"I let whoever think WHATEVER."

by Piper Rasmussen

The title of this article is inspired by a tweet I came across that reads: "I used to want to protect my name in situations, now I just want to protect my peace. I let whoever think WHATEVER." So, I do. I let whoever think whatever. It will never make what they say true.

Whether someone close to you has subconsciously lied out of insecurity or fear, or someone spiteful has deliberately lied in an attempt to spread misinformation or harm you or those around you (think of the crazy blonde in the movie Obsessed), a lie is still a lie, and they usually all hurt. However, thanks to a recent experience I had (being involved in someone's very inflated and inaccurate narrative of past events), this article will deal with the latter. So, if you've ever encountered a pathological liar, this article is for you.

If you've been in a situation where someone has lied to you or about you in an attempt to cause harm, here are some things you can do to protect your peace, your well-being, and your mental health:

#### 1. Words are just words and you are still you.

Words really are just words. Remember learning the phrase "sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me" as a kid? Well, it's actually kind of true. Of course, lies of all kinds can be very harmful, but unlike a broken bone, we can choose not to allow them to affect us. Let others say whatever they want. You know yourself and those you love know you, too. You are still you; no one can change that.

#### 2. The lies say more about the other person's character than about yours.

If someone feels the need to make up stories, to lie about you, or to slander your name, it often means you've got something that they don't. Whether it's a wonderful job, a great family, lots of supportive friends, confidence, self-esteem, a loving partner, whatever it is, consider whether perhaps jealousy, anger, and bitterness are behind the person's attacks towards you. That's hardly a you-problem.

#### 3. "Don't take criticism from someone you'd never go to for advice."

The kind of person who lies and spreads totally false information in an attempt to put others down (or make you look bad and themselves look better) is \*not\* the kind of person whose words or opinions you should concern yourself with. So... don't! If they are trying to get a rise out of you, don't give them the satisfaction. Let it go, continue on with your life, and let them squirm and be bitter.

#### 4. Weigh the pros and cons, and protect yourself.

If the lie could be detrimental to your personal life or career, be sure to confide the truth in people you trust. Obtain all the correct documentation should you need to defend yourself in the future. Some people are truly relentless. In situations where letting it go is not an option and you feel that the best thing to do is to call out the liar, be sure to have all the evidence so that they don't spin it on you. Liars, especially pathological ones, are often very good at this part. Be honest and direct, and try not to stoop to their level. "Never stop being a good person because of bad people."

As mentioned, having just been involved in a situation where a person consistently and shamelessly fabricated untrue stories about me and others close to me for their own personal gain, it was challenging to not let the seemingly never-ending string of lies get to me. I mean, I often have trouble even just sitting through movies that involve he-said-she-said situations in which the truth gets lost among the other person's falsehoods, so you can imagine how difficult it was having to live through it. I'm sure many of you might be reading this and nodding in agreement having too experienced the disrespect firsthand.

It's exhausting. It's infuriating. It's outright unfair. It was (obviously) detrimental to my mental health, and I knew I couldn't keep dwelling on it, because I would never be able to change this person's mind.

So, I decided to refuse to give that person any more power. The thing is, I know what's true, so it doesn't matter what this person decides to say, think, or believe. I know myself, my actions, my beliefs, and my truths, and no one can take that away.



page 33

# Smile! It's Contagious.

by Marianne Wylie, MSW, RSW

Those who know me well know that this is my favourite quote! I know, it sounds cheesy. But it works! I can't tell you how many times I have made someone smile just by saying this quote. Even if I just made them laugh or grin for being so cheesy. Regardless, I put a smile on my face and say "Smile! It's Contagious". "Why?" you ask. Because I truly do believe that a smile goes a long way – not just for the other person but for the person smiling too.

We all give off a vibe or mood into our environment and a lot of this has to do with body language. Have you ever walked into a waiting room and suddenly felt the positive energy drain from you as you notice everyone with sullen or frowning faces? The opposite is true as well. Seeing someone smile sends the message that the energy in that space is positive and welcoming. It really can brighten someone's day.

As an added benefit, it helps the person smiling by boosting their mood. Our muscles send signals to our brain which affect how we feel, so the muscles used to smile send a message that you are okay and can be happy. The brain registers this and responds by triggering positive feelings and thoughts even if you didn't initially feel this way. So go ahead... Smile! It's contagious!



## WHY CANCELING PLANS DOES NOT ALWAYS HAVE TO BE A NEGATIVE THING

by Jennifer Robinson, MSW, RSW

I am fairly confident I am not the only one who feels a bit of excitement/relief when a plan with a friend gets canceled.

This is not because I don't want to spend time with said friend, but it means I don't have to socialize, can stay home and snuggle my dog, and don't have to feel guilty that the plans didn't work out.

However, when the time comes and I am the one who wants to cancel plans because I simply don't feel like socializing, I automatically feel a sense of guilt take over and my thoughts begin to race. Will they be mad? Do I seem unreliable? What if I miss out? What if they choose to not make plans anymore with me?

These automatic negative thoughts can have huge impacts on our emotions and behaviors. And if we begin to believe these thoughts, they can even create some distance between relationships. If I FEEL like my friend is mad because I canceled plans to stay home and relax, I will probably look for every bit of evidence that this thought is true, making me feel upset, isolated and guilty, and less likely to engage with that friend at all.

When we have excuses to cancel plans (illness, work, family obligations) there is often less guilt attached to this for some reason.



page 36



However, canceling plans due to the fact that you are tired, emotionally drained, or just feel like being alone should also be a legitimate reason. Our mental health is just important as our physical health, and if we aren't listening to the cues in our body telling us we need a break and some alone time, we can often push ourselves too far, creating even more internal challenges. Sometimes people feel obligated to make up an alternative excuse because saying they are tired or are having a hard time regulating their emotions may feel as if it is not a good enough reason.

Well, I'll tell you that it most definitely is.

To sustain healthy relationships and a positive sense of well-being, we first need to take control of our emotions. If they are sending us signals that we aren't listening to or acting upon (e.g., I need to relax/I need to be alone and cry), they will continue to get louder and louder until they have gained full control.

Some days, the result of listening to your emotions may be canceling a plan you had made with your bestie weeks ago. Although it is valid for them to feel disappointment, in the long run it'll be what's most helpful for your relationship.

Taking that time to clear your head, relax, cry, clean your house, have a bath or read a book will improve the relationship you have with yourself and your emotions which will then positively impact your friendships.

With all of that being said, canceling every plan you make because of your mental health could mean there might be something more going on than just your body asking for some self-care time. It's important to find a balance in life between socializing with friends/family and spending time relaxing at home/engaging in self-care. If you are noticing you are starting to isolate yourself from your friends and things you use to enjoy, then it could be beneficial to access some professional support.

Sometimes self-care does mean spending time with friends, which can be super helpful! However, next time you find yourself with the internal struggle of pushing yourself on a difficult day to go socialize with friends OR stay at home, snuggle your dog and have a bath... listen to your emotions and respond to them, without guilt, with whatever it is you think will help most.

# My SLEEP DIARY

Tip: Use a pencil and reuse this page!

Sleep can have a significant impact on your mental health and well-being. A sleep diary or log can be helpful to increase your awareness of your own sleep patterns and what may be contributing to difficulties with sleep. Try this out for a two week period to see what's happening behind the scenes.

### WEEK 1

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY		
COMPLETE IN THE MORNING									
I WENT TO BED LAST NIGHT AT (TIME)									
I GOT UP THIS MORNING AT (TIME)									
I SLEPT FOR A TOTAL OF (HOURS)									
I WOKE UP DURING THE NIGHT (# TIMES)									

<b>A</b>	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY		
COMPLETE IN THE EVENING									
# OF CAFFEINATED Drinks today									
TIME OF LAST Caffeinated Drink									
EXERCISE COMPLETED TODAY (MINUTES)									
WHAT I DID IN THE HOUR BEFORE I FELL ASLEEP									
MOOD TODAY? (0=AWFUL, 10=GREAT)									

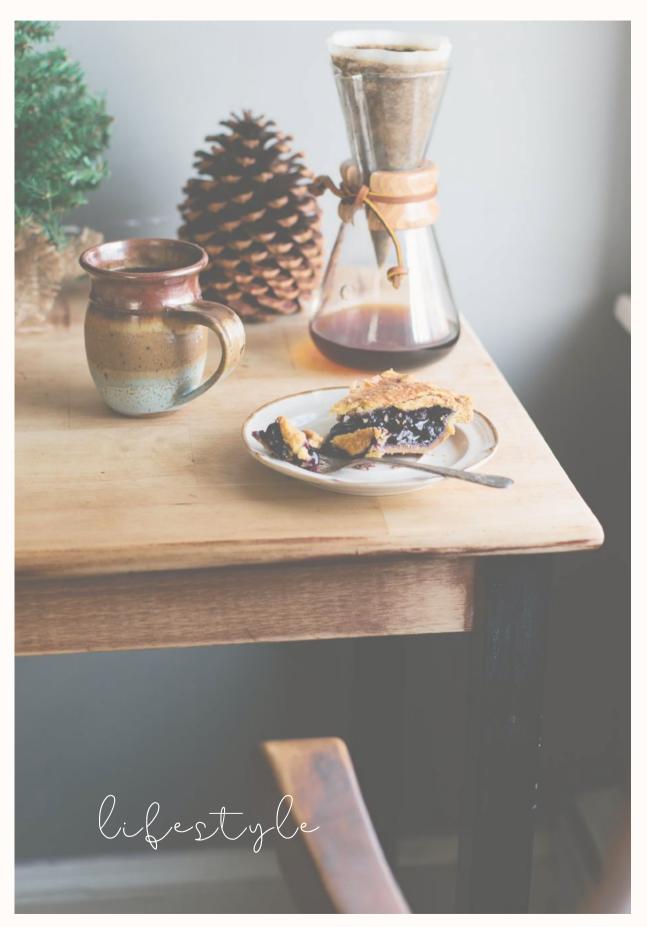


## WEEK 2

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY		
COMPLETE IN THE MORNING									
I WENT TO BED LAST NIGHT AT (TIME)									
I GOT UP THIS MORNING AT (TIME)									
I SLEPT FOR A TOTAL OF (HOURS)									
I WOKE UP DURING THE NIGHT (# TIMES)									

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY		
COMPLETE IN THE EVENING									
# OF CAFFEINATED Drinks today									
TIME OF LAST CAFFEINATED DRINK									
EXERCISE COMPLETED TODAY (MINUTES)									
WHAT I DID IN THE HOUR BEFORE I FELL ASLEEP									
MOOD TODAY? (0=AWFUL, 10=GREAT)									

Hop. Breathe. Taking deep breaths can calm down your nervous system, making it easier to manage stress and anxiety levels.



PAGE 41 · KELLY MAGAZINE



### Tips to Help Build Healthy Food Habits:

Try mindful eating.

Being mindful while eating allows you to control your food intake and can assist you in making informed decisions about what you put in your body and how much. Utilize your 5 senses while having each meal, paying attention to how the food looks, the texture, how it tastes and smells, and being aware of the chewing motion allows you to feel more connected to each bite and helps your body monitor hunger and fullness.

Rid feelings of guilt.

Enjoy the food you are eating. Don't feed yourself negative thoughts triggering feelings of guilt, shame and regret. This can increase stress levels which can impede digestion and can also have a negative effect on your self-esteem. Accepting your food choices and feeling confident with your decisions, whether it is something healthy or a treat, allows you to feel more in control of your diet and can help you build a healthier relationship with food.

Change binging habits.
You shouldn't make yourself feel bad for eating a piece of cake but

at the same time, eating one piece of cake shouldn't justify eating the entire cake in one sitting, "well I already had one piece, may as well go all out". This all-or-nothing thinking pattern can be just as harmful as those guilty feelings for making food choices that aren't the healthiest. Eating in moderation is important to maintaining a healthy diet.

Show gratttude towards your food.

Instead of looking at your food choices through a negative lens,

look at it through a lens of gratitude. Showing gratitude can create a connection between you and food, allowing you to make better choices that fit your own personal needs.

## Don't use food as a way to cope with emotions.

Practicing being more mindful with food hopefully will help you build a better understanding of feeling "full" and "hungry". If you are using this self-awareness but still find yourself reaching for food even when full maybe this might be a sign that something else is going on. When feeling unprepared to deal with uncomfortable emotions sometimes people can turn to unhealthy coping strategies, and eating is an easy one. Being aware of this emotional eating alone can be helpful, it can allow you to accept this desire to comfort yourself with food but instead make a healthier choice; talk about what's going on, exercise, journal, create, have a bath, do something relaxing and self-soothing.

## Stop comparing your eating habits to others.

Everyone is unique which means the food we put into our body (types, portion sizes, etc.) is also unique. Comparing yourself to what others are eating is not going to assist you in improving your relationship with food. It is going to trigger those negative thinking patterns, self-doubt and judgement which can all impact your confidence to make your own health-conscious decisions. For those who have to restrict their diets to accommodate to their health, (i.e. lactose intolerant or Celiac) I imagine it can be difficult to not feel some resentment towards those who don't need to restrict their diet or make accommodations. However, reframing your thinking can help get past some of these difficult thoughts.



deddings are HEAVY with emotions and pressure to conform (oh and the planning can last for years, so there's that). Apart from the stress of planning, you must work out all of your concerns about the relationship itself so you can march down that aisle with a full heart and a clear mind.

So, that's okay; you know you can handle that.

But when a single planning decision results in a barrage of attacks from otherwise well-meaning individuals (e.g., "I am so offended!" Or, "you can't do that!"), it can sap your energy and make you prone to panic. Heart pounding, weak at the knees, gasping for air in the middle of Walmart panic.

Oh yeah, this can get bad, and it can last so long that each new stressor piles on like a ton of bricks, every time heavier like your heartstrings are just getting worn out.

So how in the world do you deal with that, and not get steamrolled about your own wedding? How can you be assertive, respectful, and firm without incurring the dreaded title of Bridezilla?

### Most. Valuable. Parts-of-this-thing. (MVPs)

Your values are different from others because they represent YOU and YOUR PARTNER. No one else. Write them down. With this life-changing event, what are the most important aspects for the two of you? Tradition, family, food, decorations, intimate gathering versus getting everyone you know in on the fun, ambiance, entertainment, whatever it is. Different strokes for different folks.

#### **Priorities**

Prioritize your MVPs by numbering them, with #1 being most important/nonnegotiable. If you had to make a decision between a better dinner or more guests, which would give you the most satisfaction?

Prioritizing is about being prepared to make the better bad choice. You might not want to choose between an extra few guests and the right bouquet, but sometimes you have to. So, it's handy to know in advance that if push comes to shove, you know what you're gaining by choosing the MVP that brings the better value to you.

#### Where You End and I Begin

Everyone has opinions about weddings. They want to share their experience, they want you to take their ideas, and that's a nice thought, until it crosses a line. Boundaries must be set when someone doesn't stop at giving a suggestion, and:

a: Pesters you

b: Makes you feel guilty

c: Threatens you

d: Tries to take away your right to make decisions

People often push harder when they believe they are right. And their ideas are probably perfect...for them. If you prioritize things that are meaningless to you just to please others, the result may turn your wedding day into an event to be tolerated and not enjoyed. That would be a tragic waste.

Imagine for a moment that every single person is like a brick in a wall. We all work together to support one another, but we don't leech into each other's space. If we do, the structure of the wall crumbles.

You can be open to receiving suggestions, ideas, and offers of help. You can compromise. But it is in your best interest to guard your own space and be aware of when someone is placing their priorities on your plate.

If they feel so strongly about event planning, make sure to encourage them to plan one of their own!

#### SET Method: Support, Empathy, and Truth

Rather than engage in a battle, state your opinion while preserving the relationship.

Support – Remind them that your concern for them is unconditional (e.g., "I care very much about you.")

Empathy - Recognize and validate how they feel (e.g., "this must be upsetting for you.")

Truth – State your truth with information about how to make it right (e.g., "I've made a decision and it's important to me that you respect it.").

Always remember to use all three, since support without truth doesn't deliver the message, and truth without empathy can be hurtful when emotions are running high.

#### Deal with the Anxiety

When panic sets in, use grounding techniques to manage.

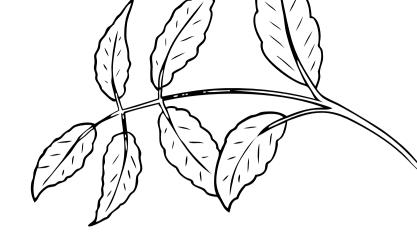
- Self-Talk: Remind yourself that this is their problem, not yours.
   "Not my circus, not my mankoys"
  )
- ("Not my circus, not my monkeys.")
  Visualization: Imagine a calm, peaceful place where the haters aren't allowed (if needed, imagine having a scary animal companion to would keep them far away. Maybe a moat, or a garden hose, too.)
- Focus on the room around you 5 things you see, 4 things you feel, 3 things you hear, 2 smells, and 1 taste.
- Breathe slowly and deeply, loosening up your stomach and letting it move in and out.
- If that doesn't work, get moving. The massive adrenaline rush can help you set a new record for speed or lifting, so go let it out somewhere productive.
- Give yourself some solitude and shut your phone off.

Reep it together. These are challenging moments, and many a warrior is forged in the heat of this kind of pattle. Stand tall, be yourself, and have no regrets.

"Jon are a child of the universe, no less than the trees and the stars; you have the right to be here."

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