

# Couples and Coping



How patterns learnt in childhood play out now

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## What I do when I'm distressed in my relationship

When I am distressed, I tend to ...

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shut down              | <input type="checkbox"/> Do something to keep my partner happy            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agree to anything      | <input type="checkbox"/> Comply but add it to my "list" to bring up later |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Attack back            | <input type="checkbox"/> Go quiet   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get overwhelmed        | <input type="checkbox"/> Point out my partner's flaws                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get angry and powerful | <input type="checkbox"/> Silently ruminate on what's wrong                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Run away/avoid         | <input type="checkbox"/>  |

## Where did I learn that response?

“

I learnt to do that when I was younger when ... (can you write about a few times that you used that way of coping?)

”

This helped me to feel (what need did it meet)?

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> safe                 | <input type="checkbox"/> seen            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> powerful             | <input type="checkbox"/> good enough     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> distracted from pain | <input type="checkbox"/> like I belonged |
| <input type="checkbox"/> connected            | <input type="checkbox"/> competent       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> important            | <input type="checkbox"/> worth something |
| <input type="checkbox"/> valuable             | <input type="checkbox"/>                 |

When I was younger it may have been really helpful, or the best way of dealing with a difficult situation

“

But now it has the following negative impacts on my partner ...

”

“

and it impacts on me negatively ...

”

### Building my Healthy Adult's capacity to manage distress

Often our old coping style is more blunt and automatic than the options we have now as adults. When we are children we have very little choice, voice or power. But as adults we have more of all of those things. Voice, for example, is a hugely important way that adults soothe - speaking about what we need with a safe person is a very important part of coping, that we may not have learnt growing up. What is different about who you are now, compared to who you were when you learnt that way of coping? (do you have more choices?)

What's different about the couple relationship you have now, compared to what life was like when you learnt this coping style? (Do you have equal power in your couple dynamic? Could you speak about what you need?)

### Are there any other ways of getting those underlying needs met?

Take some time to talk with your partner about the needs you listed above and work out together 5 ways your relationship could meet that need.