

Exercise 20.6: Looking for the patterns in less successful relationships

Now see if you can find any repeating patterns in your troublesome or disappointing relationships. Ask yourself, as you look over your table:

- Can you see any patterns that undermined the relationship?
- Do difficulties tend to start at the beginning of relationships or after you have known each other for a while?
- As you look back, can you imagine any ways in which the problematic pattern could have been changed?
- What would have been necessary for the pattern to change e.g. extra skills or knowledge, or a change of setting?

Once again, for each relationship you have listed in the left-hand column put a tick in the table below to indicate what you found manageable and an X to mark what you found difficult. If any clusters of Xs appear across a number of relationships, these will suggest particular areas you can concentrate on to learn new skills that will help you. If ticks appear across a number of relationships, they will highlight strengths that persist even when relationships are more challenging or vulnerable.

Name	Starting the relationship	Keeping in touch	Managing difficulties	Asking for what I want	Feeling close	

Now, just as you did before, try to think about each relationship from the other person's point of view. Does this switch of viewpoint reveal anything new?

- What do you imagine the other person found difficult in this relationship?

- How would they describe their contribution to the difficulties in the relationship?
- What would they say you contributed to the relationship?
- If the relationship ended, why would they say it did?

A word of caution here. When you are feeling depressed, it can be tempting to rush to blame yourself for difficulties. While it is important to understand how you contribute to problems, because it will guide you in making changes, it is just as important to recognize the contribution other people make. It will be particularly useful to involve someone else in this part of the exercise to help you fully consider a different point of view.