



5 practical things to do when you're *questioning* *your relationship.*

Gentle, practical exercises for finding clarity, trusting yourself again
and taking your next safe step.

Before you *begin*.

If you're reading this, part of you is already asking important questions. These five exercises give the thoughts that keep circling somewhere to land, so you can look at your relationship clearly and at your own pace.

There is no right order and no deadline. Each exercise has a short guide followed by a worksheet you can write on.

- i.* **Find a quiet, private moment.** Give yourself twenty minutes where you won't be interrupted or overheard.
- ii.* **Write it down.** Putting thoughts on paper slows them down and makes them easier to see clearly.
- iii.* **Be kind to yourself.** Some of what comes up may be painful. Take breaks, and reach out to someone you trust whenever you need to.

ONE IMPORTANT THING FIRST

If you are still in the relationship, worried about your safety or concerned that your former partner monitors your devices, consider whether it is safe to keep written records. Use a safe device or another secure method if necessary.

If you are in immediate danger in Australia, call **000**. You can also contact **1800RESPECT on 1800 737 732**, 24 hours a day, for confidential support and safety planning.

Write down what *actually happened.*

For the days when you remember the good times and question the bad.

When you miss someone, your mind may return to the lovely holidays, the early days, the promises and the moments you felt loved. You might start wondering whether things were really that bad.

YOUR EXERCISE

Create a private record of the incidents that hurt you, frightened you, confused you or made you question yourself. Write down what happened, what was said, how you felt and what happened afterwards. Include repeated patterns, broken promises, intimidation, controlling behaviour and boundaries that were ignored.

Keep adding to the list as you remember things. When you start doubting yourself, read it back to remind yourself of the whole relationship, not just the parts you miss.

You don't need to prove that every moment was bad.

You are allowed to acknowledge the good *without minimising the harm.*

Jacintha Field

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What *actually* happened.

Use one page for each incident. Print or copy it as often as you need, and keep it somewhere private.

DATE _____

WHERE _____

What happened

What was said

How I felt

What happened afterwards

Patterns I'm noticing

Repeated behaviour, broken promises, intimidation, control, boundaries that were ignored

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Separate what happened from *what you were told happened.*

For when you have been made to question your own judgement.

After repeated blame, denial, minimising or having your feelings dismissed, it can become difficult to trust your own interpretation of events.

YOUR EXERCISE

Choose one incident that left you feeling confused. On the worksheet, write it out in three parts: what happened, what you were told, and what you know now.

For example, you might have raised a concern about something that hurt you, only for the conversation to become entirely about your supposed shortcomings. Write down both what you originally wanted to discuss and how the conversation changed.

The goal isn't to reach a perfect verdict on every disagreement.

Give yourself space to think *without automatically accepting someone else's version of events.*

What happened, and *what I was told*.

THE INCIDENT

What happened

The observable facts as you remember them

What I was told

What the other person said about it, including any blame placed on you

What I know now

How you were treated, how you felt and whether your boundaries were respected

Identify what you *changed about yourself.*

For when you no longer recognise the person you used to be.

Sometimes the impact of an unhealthy relationship becomes clearer when you look at how much of yourself you gradually set aside. Perhaps you stopped seeing friends, avoided certain conversations, changed how you dressed, stopped sharing your opinions or constantly monitored the other person's mood to avoid a reaction.

YOUR EXERCISE

Complete the five sentences on the worksheet in writing. Read your answers without criticising yourself for the changes you made, then choose one small, safe thing you would like to reconnect with: contacting a trusted friend, returning to a hobby or making a decision based on your own preferences.

Many people adapt their behaviour to manage an unpredictable or threatening situation.

That does not mean you caused the
behaviour *or were responsible for preventing it.*

What I *set aside*.

Complete each sentence honestly. There are no wrong answers here.

Before this relationship, I used to...

During this relationship, I stopped...

I found myself walking on eggshells when...

I was afraid to...

Something I want to reclaim for myself is...

ONE SMALL, SAFE THING I'LL RECONNECT WITH

Create a plan for the moments you feel *pulled back in*.

For loneliness, guilt, promises, self-doubt and the urge to reconnect.

You might miss the person, worry about them, feel guilty about the separation or hope that this time things will be different. Those feelings can be powerful, particularly when there have been cycles of hurt followed by affection, apologies or promises to change.

YOUR EXERCISE

Write a short plan to use when those feelings arise. The worksheet walks you through your warning signs, what helps you pause, who you can contact, what you need to remember and your next safe step.

You do not have to make a major decision in the middle of an emotional wave. Give yourself permission to pause and seek support.

If contact is necessary for parenting, legal matters or practical arrangements, your plan can focus on safe, supported communication rather than complete no-contact. If you fear the other person's reaction, seek specialist advice before changing contact arrangements.

I can miss someone *without ignoring what happened*.

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My plan for when I feel *pulled back in*.

Fill this in on a calm day, then keep it somewhere you can reach it quickly.

My warning signs

What am I usually feeling or thinking when I start questioning my decision?

What helps me pause

Could I take some time, breathe, go for a walk or speak with someone I trust before acting?

Who I can contact

One or two people who will listen without pressuring me

What I need to remember

A sentence that reflects your experience, such as "I can miss someone without ignoring what happened."

My next safe step

What would help me through the next hour or day?

Rebuild your trust in yourself, *one decision at a time.*

For when you have spent a long time putting someone else's needs, reactions or opinions first.

Rebuilding your confidence doesn't require you to transform your life overnight. It begins with noticing your own preferences, recognising your needs and making small decisions without automatically assuming you are wrong.

YOUR EXERCISE

At the end of each day, answer the three questions on the worksheet. Keep your answers somewhere safe and revisit them weekly.

These decisions might be as simple as saying no to something you don't want to do, asking for help, choosing how to spend your time or acknowledging that someone's behaviour hurt you.

Over time, you can begin to recognise that you are capable of making decisions, responding to challenges and learning to trust your own judgement again. Confidence can grow as you practise listening to yourself.

You do not have to feel confident *before you begin.*

My end-of-day *check-in*.

DATE _____

What did I feel today, and did I give myself permission to acknowledge it?

What did I need today, and what did I do about that need?

What is one decision I made that respected my own values or wellbeing?

MY WEEKLY LOOK BACK

Reading back over the week, what do I notice about my own judgement?

You don't have to do this *alone*.

Reaching out is a strong and practical step. These services are free, confidential and ready to listen, whether you are in danger, unsure what to do next or simply need to talk.

Emergency

000

If you are in immediate danger

1800RESPECT

1800 737 732

24/7 confidential support and safety planning

Safe Steps (Victoria)

1800 015 188

24/7 family violence response line

Lifeline

13 11 14

24/7 crisis support

This workbook offers general information and reflection exercises. It is not a substitute for personalised advice from a qualified professional.

WORK WITH ME

I have a private practice in Albert Park, Melbourne, and offer sessions in person as well as online. If you're needing support, please reach out to me at jacintha@jacinthafield.com.

Jacintha Field is a family and child counsellor, founder of Happy Souls Kids and host of the podcast RAW with J. She writes and speaks about children's mental health, solo parenting and building resilience through the hard bits.

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