Sifting Through Self-Doubt

RELATIONSHIPS & SELF-TRUST

After a hard conversation, it's easy to swing between "it's all my fault" and "it's all theirs". Usually there's a bit of both. **This form helps you sort out what's yours to take on, what you're not sure about yet, and what isn't yours to carry.**

MINE

Mine to take on

What was fair or useful, and my part in it.

- a fair point
- something I can learn from
- something I did that I'd change

Take it on at a pace that's fair to you.

NOT SURE YET

Worth checking

What I can't tell yet, without more information.

- ask them what they meant
- ask someone I trust
- wait and see if it fits

It's okay not to decide straight away.

NOT MINE

Not mine to carry

What came from how it was said, or from them.

- a harsh or mocking tone
- unfair labels or names
- their stress or bad mood

Noticing this can take some weight off.

HOW TO USE THIS FORM

1. Write down what happened
2. Ask the four questions
3. Sort each part: mine, not sure yet, not mine
4. Choose one next step

01 Four questions to sift with

take them one at a time

1 What actually happened?

Write only what a camera would have recorded: the words and actions. Leave out guesses about what they meant.

→ **Facts first**

2 Is any of it fair?

Even if it was said badly, is there a point you partly agree with, or a specific example you can see?

→ **That part may be mine**

3 Was it said in a hurtful way?

Shouting, mocking, name-calling, "always" and "never", or being told your feelings are wrong.

→ **How it was said isn't mine**

4 Does this keep happening?

If you often leave feeling confused about what really happened, or apologising for things you didn't do, take that seriously.

→ **Talk to someone you trust**

02 Clues to look for

things you can actually check

IT MAY BE LESS ABOUT YOU IF…

The reaction came from them

- They were stressed, rushed or unwell
- They speak to other people this way too
- Their reaction was much bigger than the situation
- They wouldn't explain when you asked

THERE MAY BE SOMETHING TO LEARN IF…

There's a fair point in it

- More than one person has said something similar
- You can think of a specific example
- It was about something you did, not who you are
- You partly agreed, even as you felt hurt

Both can be true at once: something can be partly fair and still said unkindly.

WHAT THE RESEARCH SUGGESTS

In one experiment, people who were dismissed or invalidated during a stressful task felt worse and showed stronger stress responses than people who were listened to and understood (Shenk & Fruzzetti, 2011). Feeling shaken after a hard conversation is a normal reaction, not a sign that you are wrong.

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03 The moment

one conversation at a time

Who was it?

○ partner ○ family ○ friend ○ work ○ other

How much do I doubt myself right now?

0 = I trust myself · 10 = I'm sure I'm wrong

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

What actually happened

only what a camera would have recorded

What I'm telling myself about it

for example, "I always mess things up"

04 Sift it

put each part where it fits

MINE

What was fair or useful, and my part in it

NOT SURE YET

What I'm not sure about, and how I could find out

NOT MINE

What was unfair or unkind, or came from their mood

05 What I'll do

tick one or more

○ ask a question ○ say how it felt ○ take the point on board ○ apologise for my part ○ set a limit ○ talk to someone I trust ○ leave what isn't mine with them

When you said _____ *I felt* _____

Can you tell me more about _____ *I see it differently:* _____

I'm sorry for _____ *I'm not okay with* _____

06 A kinder check

after sifting

What would I say to a friend in my place?

How much do I doubt myself now?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

One thing I'll remember next time

A note of care. If someone often leaves you unsure of your own memory or judgement, especially someone with power over you, that is worth taking seriously. Writing things down and talking to someone you trust, or a support service, can help.

SOURCES

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