

# SANE AUSTRALIA

## SANE Australia Online Peer Group Chat

Date: 19/05/2022

**Title:** Healing into Healthy Relationships

**Description:** Have you noticed that you can find yourself in the same types of relationships or situations that are not good for you? Have you ever wondered why that might be? Join this group to explore how our childhood experiences can influence how we navigate adult relationships, and what we can do to move towards healthier or more positive relationships.

**DancingButterfly** Hi everyone. First, we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the various lands we are all joining this event from. We pay deep respect to the Elders of those Countries, past and present, and we further extend that respect to any Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people joining this group tonight. Welcome everyone to today's Peer Group Chat talking about healing from unhealthy relationships. We really value your thoughts on how these groups go, so we will send a link to a short survey at the end of this event for you to complete. While this survey is optional, it is a chance to provide feedback for us to improve our services. In case you might need to leave part way through the event, you can find the survey here now:  
[https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW](https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW)

LittleSteps (PSW)

hello Shaz51! :)

**DancingButterfly** Tonight, Peer Support Workers @DancingButterfly and @LittleSteps will be facilitating a discussion around the topic of healing towards more healthy relationships. Whether you have lived experience of complex mental health issues, you care for someone who does, or both, anyone can benefit from thinking about the process of healing from unhealthy relationships. We'll be moving through a number of discussion questions tonight, and it's entirely up to you how much or how little you are comfortable with sharing. Some of the conversation may be heavy in nature as we think about past relationships that weren't good for us. @Jynx, who moderates on the SANE Forums, is working behind the scenes to ensure our safety. If you're having any technical difficulties, please see our FAQ (<https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat/chat-faqs#what-if-i-am->

[having-a-tough-time-and-need-immediate-support](#)) or message @Jynx. We're looking forward to creating a space where we can reflect and learn together about healing into healthier relationships.

Shaz51

Hello @LittleSteps (PSW)

LittleSteps (PSW)

hello the magician! Welcome! :)

DancingButterfly

We will be starting the discussion shortly, and will just allow a bit more time for people to log on and join

the magician

hello people this is a valuable topic

Shaz51

Hello @the magician

the magician

hello there!

DancingButterfly

Welcome everyone! Feel free to introduce yourselves. I'm @DancingButterfly

LittleSteps (PSW)

Hello everyone! I'm @LittleSteps :)

The Hams

good evning

LittleSteps (PSW)

Hello @The Hams! :)

DancingButterfly

**Q1 Are you someone who grew up around unhealthy, unsupportive or distressing relationships? What is it that you are hoping to get out of tonight's group discussion?**

**A reminder of our Safety Guideline when sharing your responses:**

**“As language can be triggering or elicit a trauma response, out of respect for other people with a lived experience, please do not publish content that contains graphic or specific details, or any descriptive account, of:**

**-your or anyone else's medication or dosages**

**-eating disorder behaviours (recommending diets, descriptive weight loss/gain**

**-strategies or any numbers relating to weight, BMI, clothing size, calories or exercise)**

**-self-harm methods**

**-suicide methods**

**-sexual or physical abuse**

**-or any other content that others may find distressing or harmful in any way”**

LittleSteps (PSW)

Hello @Jacques! :)

the magician

I'm not sure how much I'm allowed to say without triggering uncomfortability

The Hams

I guess i am hoping to hear about how others have navigated distressing relationships/situations. After much reflection and writing I am realising how i was emotionally scared by things people said to me and how what they say is so manipulative that it impacted my sense of self and being.

Jacques Hi littlesteps

Jynx (Moderator) Hey @the magician good on you for wanting to be mindful of others. We encourage sharing, but also want to avoid sharing anything too graphic. It might be helpful to also focus more on the emotions you have felt rather than details of events. Hope this helps!

LittleSteps (PSW) I grew up around a range of different relationships. I am hoping to get out of the group different insights on what a healthy relationship looks like. I think relationships can look different for different people, but there are certainly red and green flags. I am interested in hearing what people have to say about this topic :)

Jacques Due to my abuse as a child I really struggle trusting people, I guess I would like to find ways to stop my childhood trauma controlling my life and affecting my relationships. And find ways to help support my partner who was in an abusive marriage

the magician what i want to gain is knowing how to detect red flags or be a wiser sense of character in looking for a covid friendly relationship. my judgement hasn't been the best so far due to distressing growing up factors.

LittleSteps (PSW) Thank you for sharing everyone - this is a safe space :)

DancingButterfly I am really looking forward to this discussion! It sounds like it is going be an interesting conversation :-)

**DancingButterfly** **Q2 Have you noticed a link or similarities between your earlier relationships in life, and your relationships in adulthood?**

the magician my Dad died at age eight of lung cancer. and I haven't had the 'nicest' stepdads or boyfriends as result. i don't feel healthy normal relationships is something that happens to me.

Jacques Yes I seem to attract friends who are not good for my well-being. Everyone I have trusted has hurt me.

The Hams Q2) Kind of. I think maybe I am the opposite. I noticed I have only ever been interested in partners who have some form of trauma or difficulty because I have grown to think that this is where empathy can be found. I think maybe I need to start looking away from that specifically and actually look towards character traits. In the end, I'm not just my illness/trauma experience. Sometimes it is hard to remember this though. It can be hard to come this realisation. It can be very confusing but i believe by engaging with it we can get closer to the truth

The Hams Feeling what you mean there @Jacques

the magician i seem to attract relatively insincere or unsympathetic friends or those that are just situational.

tyme (PSW) Hi @appleblossom! You made it!

LittleSteps (PSW) It sounds like there is a lot of pain in the chat room - we are here to sit through this with you, and we hope you will get a lot out of tonight's group!

LittleSteps (PSW) hello @Appleblossom!

LittleSteps (PSW) I suppose, as a result of earlier experiences, safety and respect are things that I value a lot more in my current friendships and relationships. These are things that I now value and seek out in my interactions with other people.

Shaz51 Yes @Jacques I was emotionally and mentally abused by my father until mum and I left but continued until his death @LittleSteps (PSW)

DancingButterfly Until I healed my childhood early relationships, I continued to attract the same unhealthy types of relationships that I had with my caregivers.

the magician here's a funny story. i was asked out for coffee by a MH professional and when i took him up on the offer after chatting he drew professional boundaries with me. he needed to control his flirting! i shot him a look but i also almost fell out of my seat. at the same time.

LittleSteps (PSW) Welcome @chibam!

chibam Hi! :) Sorry I'm late.

Jacques Wow magician, he sounds like he made a very unprofessional decision, when I had a councillor seeing me they tried to get me to go out but I just couldn't

**DancingButterfly Q3 How could we learn about what makes a healthy relationship, if we haven't yet experienced them well, or if they are unfamiliar to us?**

the magician where are healthy dating pools and what preliminary questions should you find out first?

chibam Re Q3: I think we know what we want, deep down. Like we can feel the empty space in our soul and our lives; we know what's missing - and therefore know what kind of person we need to fill that space.

Jacques Maybe we learn from our own experiences, try to see what is toxic to us and try to find people who are the opposite to the people we know. I'm too scared of being hurt I just push people away now. I have no friends in real life.

the magician he was in marketing so i thought it would be ok. not a direct client. obviously not.

The Hams hey @the magician re: dating. I think it is good to establish intentions early on. It actually reminds me of the sunscreen speech that @Jacques told me about. "don't toy with other people's hearts, don't put up with it in yours"

chibam It's like the victims of Pompeii; when they died and decomposed, they left hollows in the sediment that were the perfect shape of those bodies, so by willing in those hollows (with clay) archaeologists have been able to determine precisely what those people looked like.

Jacques Yes hams, the sun screen song sounds silly, but listen to the words carefully it is really amazing advice.

The Hams I have not been in a relationship before and sometimes I feel this means I don't know anything. But then I remember I am a good person and bad things have happened to me beyond my control. What's more is that everyone is kinda experiencing problems in some way and you don't need to go too deep until you find some level of difficulty. Maybe in the end what matters more is honesty, intent and being your own person. I know some guys who are "incel" - don't know if you know what that is - but it is a very toxic mindset.

The Hams agreed @Jacques

the magician after my teens with step dads and two destructive incidences i never took relationships too seriously . but im older now and after having a dominant boyfriend which i didn't know he was and a mr. not so lovely to put it. i want something extraordinary a best friend in a partner. i just don't see it happening.

DancingButterfly In my experience, learning how to have a healthy relationship happened through therapy. I needed to learn about myself and my patterns that contribute to the relationship dynamics. The therapeutic relationship also mirrored what a healthy relationship could look like.

Jacques Never say never magician, I felt the same way, now I have a partner who is my best friend, we are so compatible. It does happen magician

**DancingButterfly Please have a look at the resources we will include at the end of this group for information about relationship red and green flags, how to identify dynamics that are abusive, and where you can access support.**

chibam My problem is that I just never get any opportunities to meet anyone these days; before that, I had virtually zero opportunities to meet \*new\* people, and those opportunities came at the terrible cost of having to endure toxic relationships for an unreasonable stretch of time; which aggressively eats away at your will to live, and thus your capacity to be pleasant company for new contacts.

the magician i look up to my sister relationship. married 25 years and still very close. its a pet cat for me until then. but thankyou dancing butterfly.

The Hams I know some guys and girls who are divorced before they are 30 yo. There is always a pressure I guess to get married in some communities or people think that they have fallen madly in love with the right person too. Who knows. I think part of it is life. But that said, I also know some girls and guys who are cheated on a lot. one girl I was hanging out with recently was cheated on 3 times. I think my generation is still learning how to cope with relationships, dating and everything with the invention of apps and all that stuff.

**DancingButterfly Q4 What does a healthy relationship look like to you? What are qualities that you would like to have in a relationship if you haven't yet experienced them (enough)?**

Jacques Well said chibam, I feel the same way, you get hurt so many times you just give up. Sometimes it is not worth the pain from finally removing yourself from a toxic person

chibam @Jacques , I just wish there was some socially acceptable way of telling people: "I'm only here because I'm hoping I'm gonna get introduced to my future wife here. If nobody who is that kind of woman will be attending, kindly don't demand that I show up..." It would save so much grief...

The Hams Q4) Vulnerability, honesty and passion. I think the first two are crucial. When my cousin got married recently they said in the speech not to keep secrets. I think this is good. I guess in my life I need to know what I want out of life before I look for a LTR. For now I am happy to date around and see what happens. But I do feel there is sooooo much pressure on people to have someone else. This is unfair for those who don't have someone and can lead to feelings of inadequacy, incompleteness or similar. Fortunately, having suffered with mental health I think we can have more courage/tenacity to withstand the societal expecations around what is considered "normal".

Jacques A healthy relationship friendship or romantic is all down to trust for me, I can live without other things as long as I can trust. My partner and I are going slow, navigating our relationship with communication and honesty. No relationship is smooth but there need to be more positives than negatives.

the magician electricity, someone i can talk to without uncomfotability. fun things in common. a level of MH understanding. positive. proactive. likes camping. honest and trustworthy in a dependable way i guess.

LittleSteps (PSW) I believe that healthy relationships are based on mutual respect and communication. Values which come to mind, when talking about healthy relationships, are honesty and trust. I also think that, when a relationship is healthy, it can be accompanied by many feelings such as safety and dignity, in my experience.

the magician without dodgy intentions.

Jacques Yes I felt the same way hams, I was told there was something wrong with me or I was gay because I was not in and out of relationships. It is so so much pressure sometimes.

DancingButterfly In my experience, a healthy relationship encompasses qualities such as respect, safety and security.

the magician sometimes you just have to be picky

**DancingButterfly Q5 Communicating boundaries is important within healthy relationships, but given we may have had our boundaries disrespected in the past, this isn't always easy to do. What are some things we could do that could make communicating our boundaries and needs easier?**

chibam Q4: Being around them corroborates the claim that live is worth enduring. Their presence makes you want to live to see tomorrow, so you can get another day of their presence; and ideally, you will have the same effect on them. There must be innate understanding of one another; they can't be the sort of person that perpetually leaves you thinking: "WTF is going on in your head?" And through that understanding and common agenda, you can rely on their consistant support, seeing as you are both working towards the same ends. There must be absolute devotion and loyalty, because I've had more then my fill of people who bail out on you or turn on you when it's convienient for them.

the magician social groups where MH is a common factor can be good to "navigate" but you really have to get out there into functional group places.

The Hams i think picky is stigmatised hey - what we really want is compatibility and to know we are accepted. It sounds a bit old school but i think it is accurate. That said, some of us are also only looking for short term things. I guess it just depends on who the person is. The best rule I think - don't lie.

The Hams Q5) Explain what the boundaries are and why I have them. This can only work if I even know why or what they are though I guess.

the magician i agree with chibam. i have no space for anything insincere. that doesnt mean short term things cant be fun but you have to be perceptive about it.

The Hams agreed the magician

Jacques I guess having a conversation with a person you are with about your boundaries and things you are comfortable with early in the relationship,

chibam That's a real stumper; especially if your boundaries are socially unpopular, since the people you really need to communicate your boundaries to are the go-betweens who will set you up with your prospective partner. If your go-betweens are wildly different from you, ideologically, and get easily offended by your values, how do you convey what you need from them? I've wasted most of my life trying to solve this riddle, and haven't made one iota of progress...:slight\_frown:

the magician all the things you found out about the last person you wish you had of known upfront for the next.

the magician someone who fits your ideology.

**DancingButterfly** **Q6 Do you feel you have safe, healthy, and supportive relationships in your life right now? If so, what are they like, and how can we nourish those relationships? If not, what might be some ways of seeking out more positive relationships?**

chibam Q6 Nope nope nope nope nope. What are some ways of seeking out more positive relationships? Well, certainly not going to therapy.

the magician i have a very positive family life. very friendly neighbours. i meet a lot of consumers and would like that area to grow. I anticipate meeting people at work and karate.

Jacques I have an amazing relationship with my girlfriend, we have to communicate really well because we live in different states, when we do have an issue we can talk openly and honestly about the topic. With my trust issues I don't want any friends I only want to be with my partner. I do feel I am not good enough for her, but that is my issues. I feel she deserves better than me.

chibam I really wish I knew how to end up with my kind of people; the people who are capable of offering me meaningful & mutually beneficial relationships. But it's like the who world is deliberately conspiring to keep us all apart.

the magician we need a F2F peer group.

Jynx (Moderator) Re: therapy, see I dunno @chibam in my experience, therapy has been a really awesome way to actually experience a healthy relationship. I had to find the right therapist of course, but to just have someone accept me just as I am was actually really healing... just my two cents :)

LittleSteps (PSW) I do find I have a lot of safe, healthy and supportive relationships in my life. I think I can nourish these relationships by showing appreciation for those people in my life. For me, this looks like things like saying treating people with respect and expressing gratitude

the magician my psychiatrist and psychologist are very helpful i can talk deep and open and honestly. even if the psych thinks i have very high expectations.

LittleSteps (PSW) Hello @Christheart! :D Welcome!

chibam @Jynx (Moderator), but your paying a pretty penny for that "healthy relationship", aren't you? How do you know that the therapist likes you for you and not for your credit card? I'd be interested to know how determined the therapist is to make time for weekly get-togethers with you once you stop paying him/her.

The Hams in terms of romantic relationships - not me personally. But in terms of familial relationships, and friendships its okay. I think friends come and go. I have a couple who have been in my life since high school which is good. As time has gone by I've met new people - some drift away and it just does with time. It's part of life. I think making effort with the right people is key. That can be hard when youre depressed but it is what it is. I think also too it is hard to make friends with that sole purpose in mind, it is easier to find new friends in life by going and meeting new people and seeing what happens.

The Hams Loneliness is very common these days in modern developed world

chibam Sorry. That was probably a bit rude of me. My own poor experiance of therapy filtering through, no doubt.

DancingButterfly I have loving, safe and nurturing relationships in my life. I have needed to nourish these relationships through open communication, non-judgment, open mindedness and a willingness or choice to actively work on these relationships every day.

the magician as long as the professionals are helpful.

the magician too easy to catch covid

Jynx (Moderator) That's fair Chibam. I think therapy can be a model for healthy personal relationships, but not a replacement for them.

**DancingButterfly Q7 Imagining the future, if you were able to work towards healing and having more positive and respectful relationships in your life, what could this look like for your life as a whole?**

the magician everything is a calculated risk. including meeting people.

The Hams start as you mean to go on - in other words be that change or that person you want to know. You will attract those people to you as well that way

chibam @Jynx (Moderator)I suppose that must be useful for some people. But in my case, I don't need a model. I know what I need. My problem is getting united with my kin; having someone to track them down and insert me into their group. The naive new patient just assumes that's what therapy is going to provide when they are promised "help"; and by the time you realize that all therapists are willing to offer you is a "model", you are already trapped. IMHO, it should be explained MUCH more clearly to the uninitiated.

The Hams its also catch22 - you don't want to have to need others to feel better about yourself. But in order to feel better about yourself you will want others. I think its important to never hesitate in reaching out to people and speak

Jacques I have not really though about the future and friendships. I guess it would be nice to have the extra support.

the magician i would feel safe and accepted wit someone as a best friend and travel. the dreamhouse needs a bit of space. be the person you want to be and know that this partner make that more possible.

the magician positive self image comes before you start attracting the right people.  
Jynx (Moderator) @chibam I hope you do find your people soon :)  
chibam Q7: It would mean I'm not alone anymore. Every situation I get in to, I have someone beside me who "gets it", who is just as mystified by the madness of the surrounding world as I am, and who shares my yearning to escape into a better place. It means I have backup, someone to count on, someone reliable to confer with, and an example to hold on to that goodness can indeed exist in the world.

The Hams agreed @the magician  
The Hams Love it @chibam agreed 100%  
the magician that sounds wonderful chibam so well expressed.  
The Hams as well too, we don't want to fall into self pity about this  
chibam Thanks, @Jynx (Moderator) ☺  
the magician they say joy comes from pain. there must be a lot of joy coming our way  
chibam Thanks, @the magician ! ☺  
LittleSteps (PSW) I think having healthy relationships has had a huge impact on my life. I feel safer in my day to day interactions, and I feel supported in my life. However, my relationships weren't always like this, which I think shows hope that things can change.

The Hams i feel like my question may be another peer support chat for next time - but how can we deal with loneliness  
Jacques 100% magician, I'm so tired of hurting  
**DancingButterfly Q8: Have you learned anything helpful from others' experiences here tonight that you might be able to apply in your own life? If yes, what did you learn?**

chibam Ditto @Jacques  
the magician at least we all know what we dont want  
the magician ability to articulate needs and emotions  
The Hams Q8 - that I am not alone in this struggle  
Jacques Yes it feels better knowing I'm not the only one going through these thoughts and feelings. That toxic people are everywhere and I need to think more about what I want in my life.

the magician karate boundaries in terms of space and time  
LittleSteps (PSW) I think I have had the opportunity to reflect on my experiences. I also have had the opportunity to gain insights from all of you - thank you :)  
The Hams exactly Jacques - we need to think about what we want in life

chibam @The Hams I can't help but wonder what the next step is, though. Once you know what you want, how do you get it?

Jacques As is said in wear sunscreen "the race is long, and in the end it is only with yourself"

**DancingButterfly** **Q9: Tonight's topic may have brought up some heavy feelings as we talked about unhealthy past relationships. Would some self-care be helpful for you after we finish? If so, what might you do?**

the magician the resource that was available? where do we find that?

LittleSteps (PSW) Hey @the magician - they will be posted at the end of the group :)

Jacques Yes, it really shakes me up thinking about past friendships and the abuse I allowed myself to go through. I don't I will sleep tonight

the magician awesome!

chibam @Jacques LOL! That reminds me of a guy we had in school who wandered off onto the wrong track during a cross-country race, and spent about 30mins wondering why he couldn't see anybody else in the race with him...:smile:

The Hams @chibam in terms of a relationship? I'm not 100% sure. But I feel like the only way to find it is to try. Even trying to and not finding it.. that is a form of progress. But also we don't want to obsess over it. I really don't know my friend i wish i had a better answer for you. -† I think maybe the most important thing is dont obsess over it but dont cancel it out

Jacques Hahahahaha chibam

the magician turn the heater on munch on something and read a good book.

Jacques I'm off for tonight everyone, thank you so much moderators for the amazing topic. Hugs and peace to all

the magician 2 u 2

The Hams i will be taking it easy. I have a psych appointment tomorrow but also a job interview for a psw role. Getting up early to walk as well. Just gonna be easy on myself. But this has been a good chat i must say. One of the best even

Jynx (Moderator) Wow awesome @The Hams - good luck to you! <3

The Hams thanks JYnx

LittleSteps (PSW) Good luck for the job interview @The hams!

The Hams thanks all

chibam @The Hams It's hard not to obsess over it when you are expected to survive but you have nothing in your life to survive for. The love that awaits me is the only prospect of goodness or worth that I have to cling to.

The Hams Agreed @chibam have you heard of mans search for meaning by viktor frankl?

the magician thanks people i feel more positivity brimming already. never say never.

**DancingButterfly** We'd like to invite you to complete a survey reflecting on your experience in this Peer Group Chat. As we're trialling this service, we'd love to hear any feedback you may have. It will only take a few minutes to complete. Please click this link: [https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW](https://sane.au1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_5uUF0sHJRKQ6wyW)

chibam @The Hams It rings a bell, but beyond that...:neutral\_face:

the magician see people next week. until then keep safe.

The Hams give it a look @Chibam i will link you it on the forums too

The Hams thanks all and take care

Jynx (Moderator) Thanks for sharing everyone, good to have you all along for the ride :)

LittleSteps (PSW) Thank you everyone! :D

**DancingButterfly** Here are some further resources we recommend having a look at:

-How childhood trauma can affect adult relationships <https://psychcentral.com/blog/how-childhood-trauma-affects-adult-relationships>

-Relationship red and green flags <https://sawtoothmountainclinic.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/TOM-Feb-2021-Relationship-Green-Lights-c.pdf>

-Content warning: describes abusive behaviours. For awareness- 10 different types of relationship abuse: <https://www.1800respect.org.au/violence-and-abuse/domestic-and-family-violence>

-Possibilities: What it feels like when you heal and change your self-defeating behaviours <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUp2Aj8NKJI>

**If you need support:**

-1800 RESPECT (1800 737 732) <https://www.1800respect.org.au/>

-Directory of national & state-wide support + referral services: <https://www.respect.gov.au/services/>

**DancingButterfly** Thank you for joining, and we hope you enjoyed the discussion. If you'd like to be informed when our next Peer Group Chat will be taking place, you can sign up to our mailing list here <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat>. You can also ask questions for us to discuss in future peer chats!

chibam @DancingButterfly That link's me ..worried:

Jynx (Moderator) Try this one

Jynx (Moderator) <https://www.sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat>

Jynx (Moderator) Scroll down a little to see the mailing list section :)

chibam Thanks, @Jynx (Moderator)