

JOHN PENDAL: Coaching For People Who Feel Like Outsiders

Being in a Relationship

Here are some of the situations I've dealt with in a long term relationship, and how we got around them:

HEADING IN DIFFERENT DIRECTIONS

One of our earliest rows was over a meeting we had to get to together, and my partner wasn't ready. I left because I thought one of us should get there on time, and it seemed he didn't want to go. He said I should have waited for him.

We took that to counselling and our therapist pointed out we were concentrating on our behaviour and who was "*right*". Instead she asked us to talk about our goals.

We both wanted to get to the meeting, but because of our upbringing we went in opposite directions.

Now look at what we want the outcome to be, then how do we want to get there?

LEAVING WITHOUT SAYING GOODBYE

Another early issue was me being cooked in social situations and leaving without saying goodbye. My partner felt abandoned.

When there's a "*glitch in the matrix*" we sit down when we've had enough to eat and some sleep, and say "*how do we want this to be next time?*"

We came up with the idea of a 'social safe word'. Either of us can say a particular word to mean we want to leave.

I promise you, he uses that as much as I do.

If your solution can apply to both of you, then it's less about trying to fix one person and more about making the relationship stronger.

<https://www.johnpendal.com>

johnpendal.coach@gmail.com

Copyright © John Pendal 2019-2023 unless otherwise stated. All Rights Reserved. You are welcome to share this page with credit intact, but text must not be reprinted without permission from the author.
With the exception of *Thriving Autistic* (<https://www.thrivingautistic.org>) I have no relationship or affiliate advertising with any products, organisations or applications shared on this handout. Any resources listed here are for information only and are used at your own risk.

JOHN PENDAL: Coaching For People Who Feel Like Outsiders

AUTISTIC SHUTDOWN

Sometimes in arguments I go into autistic shut down. My partner used to be upset by that, saying I was being manipulative or abandoning him.

I have no choice, it's something that happens if I think I've upset someone.

Again, we had a chat away from the trigger and decided in future I wanted him to give me a tight hug when I couldn't speak.

It really helps - and I've started giving him a tight embrace when he's upset too.

PROCESSING TIME

I often need processing time to work out what I'm feeling. Once we had some guests and no-one could decide what to eat. Everyone kept saying *"I don't mind"*.

In frustration I made an offer, and then people started telling me why that wouldn't work.

I had to take myself away because I was so angry. After 25 minutes I worked out that it was because when I was small I used to feel that adults had set a trap for me. They'd make me choose how to do something and then tell me off for getting it wrong.

No one was setting a trap for me here, but it took me a while to work out why my feelings were spiking.

Again, we got to have a chat *"next time this is happening, how would you like it to be?"*

BEING INTERRUPTED

I hate being interrupted mid-task. If you ask me if I've eaten or drunk anything recently I can feel nagged or criticised. At the same time, I can absolutely get so absorbed in a task that I don't eat or drink and then get to the end of the day with a headache.

<https://www.johnpendal.com>

johnpendal.coach@gmail.com

Copyright © John Pendal 2019-2023 unless otherwise stated. All Rights Reserved. You are welcome to share this page with credit intact, but text must not be reprinted without permission from the author.

With the exception of *Thriving Autistic* (<https://www.thrivingautistic.org>) I have no relationship or affiliate advertising with any products, organisations or applications shared on this handout. Any resources listed here are for information only and are used at your own risk.

JOHN PENDAL: Coaching For People Who Feel Like Outsiders

My partner and I had a chat about how I wanted to be interrupted. I realised I want to be touched gently, then wait until I've made eye contact. I don't mind a physical interruption with a pause before any speech. That allows me to finish the sentence in my head before other words come crashing in.

My partner got to say how he wanted to be interrupted too.

WE ARE BOTH LOW ON ENERGY

Sometimes the only trigger is lack of energy. The other night we were getting very snippy at each other in the kitchen. Finally I said *"I'm on 25% spoons, how about you?"*

He said *"I'm on 15%"*

"Then why are we even in the kitchen? Let's cancel our plans. You go sit down, I'll get takeout."

HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE?

That's what this boils down to: how you can build the relationship so that you're kinder to yourselves and each other.

That might mean inventing your own language for things. Now we might talk about *"I'm in the foothills"* to describe a particular situation, or *"low on spoons"* if we've had no sleep.

It might mean adjusting physical contact: I like a chat when we're facing the same way, maybe on a walk or cuddling on the sofa.

When we have a disagreement we wait until we're away from the trigger, then try to work out *"so, that happened. How do we want to be next time?"*

John Pendal

<https://www.johnpendal.com>

johnpendal.coach@gmail.com

Copyright © John Pendal 2019-2023 unless otherwise stated. All Rights Reserved. You are welcome to share this page with credit intact, but text must not be reprinted without permission from the author.

With the exception of *Thriving Autistic* (<https://www.thrivingautistic.org>) I have no relationship or affiliate advertising with any products, organisations or applications shared on this handout. Any resources listed here are for information only and are used at your own risk.