

Helping yourself

Situation: You decide to ring up a friend to invite her to join you for dinner. Your friend answers that she would love to come but that unfortunately she cannot make it. Your scales tip and you finish the conversation in a friendly perhaps somewhat flat way.

Your scales continue to tip and your thinking is:

There we go again. People always reject me. There must be something wrong with me. Nobody likes me. I am not a very attractive person. I have known this for a long time. I will probably be by myself for the rest of my life. I will never have any friends.

The feeling is:

Rejection.

Your action is:

You slump in a chair and turn on the television but you are not watching. You are biting your nails and you decide to eat the chocolate biscuits you were saving to take to work for your colleagues for morning coffee.

Your physiology:

Your heart rate is up. You feel hot and you feel a headache coming on.

CHOICES:

- You can continue with the above.
- You can decide to go out by yourself. You could meet some other people you know and you could perhaps join them. Your evening could be okay after all.
- You challenge your thinking. You ask yourself the following:
I always tell myself that I am being rejected. Where is it getting me? I am fed up with doing that. I have been doing this all my life. I do not want to feel like this any longer so what now? You say to yourself: Come on, what did you learn in this management course? Something about facts. Then you say, so what are the facts here? Instantly you become aware that your friend did not actually reject you. She did not say that she did not like you or that she wanted to end the friendship. All she said was that she could not come. You get in the mood challenging yourself and you feel that you are getting somewhere and the following thought is: What other reasons could there be for my friend to say that she could not join me? She could be tired, she had night duty at work. She could have had a different arrangement. Her elderly father is demanding and controlling and you know that your friend finds it difficult to stand up to him. Perhaps he wanted her to come and visit him. You then think that the only factor you are absolutely sure about is that your friend's response was that she could not come and that the feeling of rejection was your conclusion. You realize that as a little girl you were rejected many times as your parents had such a busy social life. That social life was more important than their only child who was forever with her babysitter. You remember how you cried in bed hugging your teddy bear. You remember that your mother's answer was nearly always: NOT NOW DEAR. You cry for little you but then you decide that you don't want to carry on with that old childhood script: Everybody is always rejecting me. You want a new script. You realize that when you talked to your friend that although you were not nasty to her, you did not even give her a

chance to explain as you ended the conversation. Why? It occurs to you that you wanted to hang on to your script. Misery!! Why misery, you think. To get me some attention, you decide. You realize that all the behaviours of the past were choices you made to help and protect you. The choices did not work, however, with a shock you realize that the choices were because you cared deeply about yourself, not because you were an idiot, one of the labels you use for yourself. More tears. Then you say: What if somebody really rejects me one day? Your answer: I can learn to deal with it. It is not the end of the world. Not everybody rejects me, I don't have to be liked by the whole world. I can like myself. There will be others who will like me as well, most likely not every person I come across. You begin to feel better. You feel that you are in control. You realize that because you had this tremendous fear of being rejected that you never opened up to people and that you had a protective wall around you to keep others out. You can see that because of your actions that you created being rejected. You feel good and you ring up a colleague. You like her and invite her. Your voice is confident and her answer is: I would love to come, for a long time I have wanted to get to know you better. You put down the phone and this time happy tears are rolling down your cheek.

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