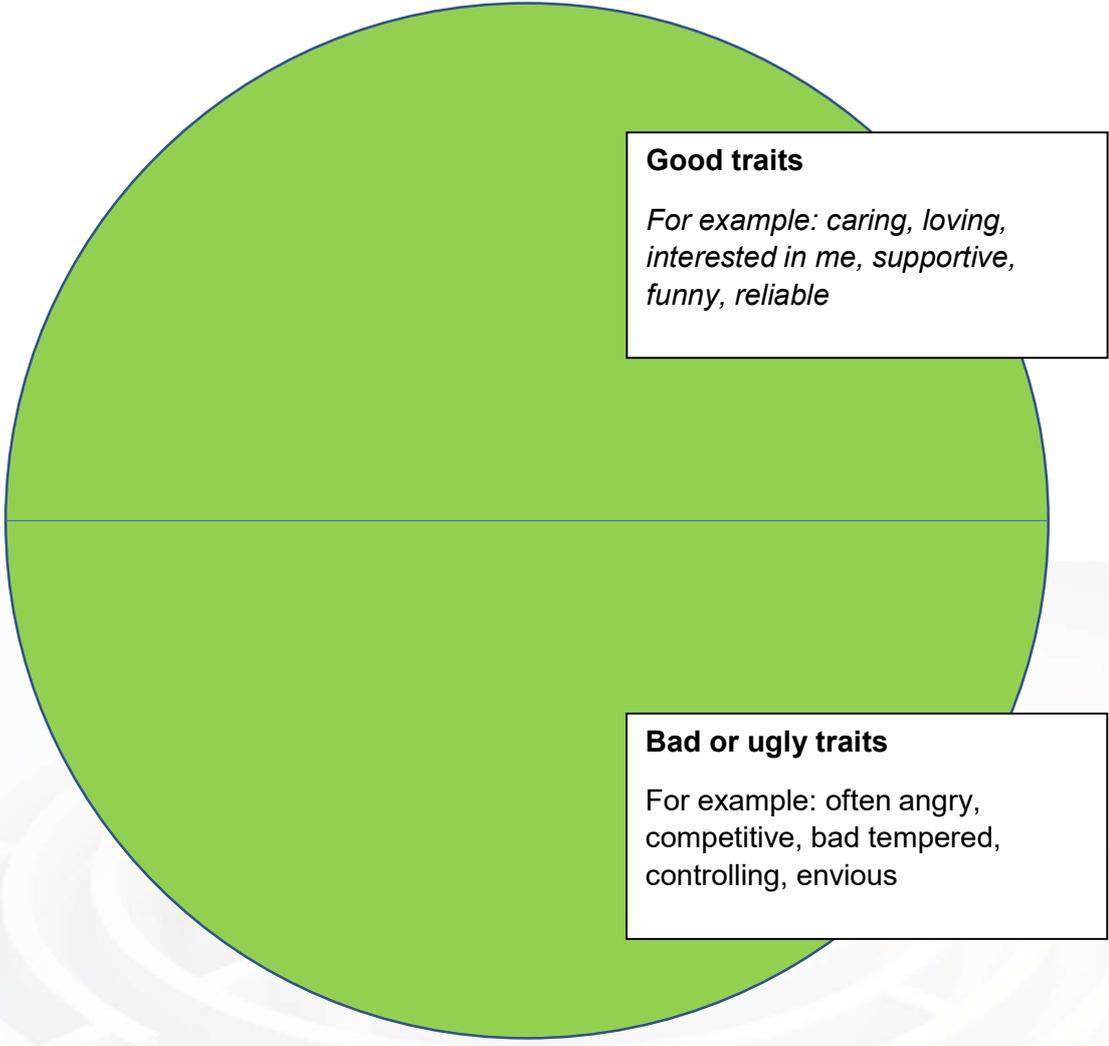


How the past influences the present - Healing old wounds

Activity 1 Characteristics of parents and partner - The good, the bad and the ugly

In this activity we would like you to consider whether there might be similarities between the qualities that your parents displayed and those of your partner.

On a sheet of paper create a circle divided into two parts (see the next slide). In the top half note down the positive traits of your parents or other people who were a significant influence in your life, for example your siblings or grandparents. You do not need to distinguish between individual people. Think of them as a combination of the two. Do the same in the bottom half thinking of negative traits.



Good traits

For example: caring, loving, interested in me, supportive, funny, reliable

Bad or ugly traits

For example: often angry, competitive, bad tempered, controlling, envious

Now compare these characteristics with those of your last or your current partner. Do you notice strong similarities? Does your partner share some of the characteristics that you have listed above? Make a mark against the characteristics that influential people from your past share with your partner. There are likely to be differences, of course, but notice if you also find surprising similarities.

Activity 2 How birth order impacts on your relationship

Consider how birth order, i.e. being the first/last/middle or only child is playing out in your past or current relationship. As the eldest of your siblings, the 'big boy' or big girl', were you always expected to look after your younger siblings or be extra responsible/serious/perfectionist and extra good at school? As the youngest; 'the little one', were you always considered to be cute/rebellious/vulnerable needing to be looked after? As the middle child were you a great negotiator/balanced/overlooked? As the only child were you self-reliant/independent/self-focused?

As the youngest/oldest/middle/only child I was expected to...	I responded by...	In my past/current relationship I still play out my birth order role by...

Activity 3

Challenges and your response pattern

In this activity we would like you to consider the typical responses that you developed when experiencing challenges or frustrations in the past.

Create a table with 4 columns (see the example on the next slide). In the first column note down recurring challenges that you experienced when growing up. These don't have to be major difficulties but important enough to cause you a certain amount of distress when growing up.

In the second column note down how you responded to these challenges. Think of responses that you developed over time to try to get what you needed by different means.

In the third column tick the box if you notice that the challenges and responses that you wrote down in columns 1 and 2 still play out in your relationships today. Are you still responding in the old way as an automatic response to a particular frustration?

In the fourth column consider whether your response to column 1 serves you well? Could it be altered, is there another way to respond that may be more appropriate now that you are an adult in a relationship? Note it down.

1	2	3	4
In the past		Now	
Challenge	Response pattern	Can you tick the box?	Alternative Response
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><i>My parents never paid attention to me.</i></p>	<p><i>I learned to tell jokes all the time so they would notice me.</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I am still doing this. When I get anxious that the person opposite me is not interested anymore I make a joke.</i></p>	<p><i>I monitor whether humour is always the most appropriate response. I pay attention to the other person paying me attention, eg they were just smiling encouragingly at me. I indicate to the other person that what I am about to say is important.</i></p>
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><i>Everyone always loved my older sister.</i></p>	<p><i>I worked extra hard at school</i></p>	<p><i>Yes, I still do the same at work to the extent that I neglect everyone close to me in my private life.</i></p>	<p><i>I notice when I work too much. I learn to prioritise and set aside time in my personal life.</i></p>