



# Avoidance



“ The relationship to my father is something I’ve avoided for a long time. We don’t get along. It feels like he doesn’t listen, he says things that upset me. He takes a lot of energy and puts a lot of responsibility on me without asking if it’s okay. When I was in my teens, things started falling apart between us, and I didn’t have the tools to handle it.

I’ve struggled with depression during extended periods of my life, and during those periods it was even harder to deal with the problems with my dad. What I did instead was to close myself off from people - from my family and from my dad. During this time I also used a lot of drugs, alcohol, computer games and porn. At the time I didn’t realize that I was avoiding the issue of my difficult relationship to my father. Today, I rarely drink alcohol and I don’t use drugs anymore. ”

– anonymous participant

This story shows you how you can open up and speak from the heart in the following conversation. The topic is avoiding problems and what this does to your emotional well-being - and tools to change this for the better.

## Warm up statements - answer YES/NO

- I blame myself when I run from problems
- I find it difficult to get help for my problems
- I can avoid difficult situations in a healthy way
- I drink more when I’m depressed or feeling down
- I know someone who’s suffering from drug or alcohol abuse

## Questions

- **Sometimes we don't act logical when we're feeling down. Instead of confronting our problems we avoid them. Do you relate to this kind of behaviour? How?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* What kind of avoidance can you relate to?  
Porn, work, alcohol, drugs, working out, gaming?
- **Do you watch a lot of porn? Why and when? How do you feel before/after?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* Do you use a lot of alcohol/drugs? Why and when?
- **If you notice a male friend feeling down, maybe that they are over-consuming alcohol or working/working out too much, what do you do? Do you talk to him?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* What would you do if that friend refuses to talk about it?
- **How do you think it affects the people around you when you avoid your problems? Feel free to give examples.**  
*Possible follow-up question:* Do you think a lot about what impact you feeling down has on others?
- **What are the consequences when you avoid problems instead of solving them?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* Have you ever felt that your problems grew, or that you gained new problems because you ignored the main problem?
- **Have you ever avoided difficult emotions by trying to overachieve in work or academics? Feel free to give examples.**  
*Possible follow-up question:* What should you have done instead?

## Questions for further self-examination

- **From where do you get support when you feel pressured or sad? And how do you support others when they're feeling down?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* If you don't have a person like that in your life, how can you build a relationship like that?
- **Is there a problem in your life right now that you feel like running from?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* How can you solve or handle that problem in a healthy way?
- **How can you handle your avoidance behaviour?**  
*Possible follow-up question:* If you can't solve a problem, how can you make sure that it doesn't consume you?
- **Are there certain problems that are more difficult to handle than others? Like relationships, pressure to perform, stress, grief etc.**  
*Possible follow-up question:* Do you think these problems are more difficult than others? Why?
- **Have you ever fled from problems by acting like they don't exist?**