

## Social Balancing

Most social relationships have a balance between one person and the other; between giving and receiving. You give by listening to others, helping them out, and showing an interest in their lives. You receive by having them listen, asking for help and advice, and including others in the events of your life.

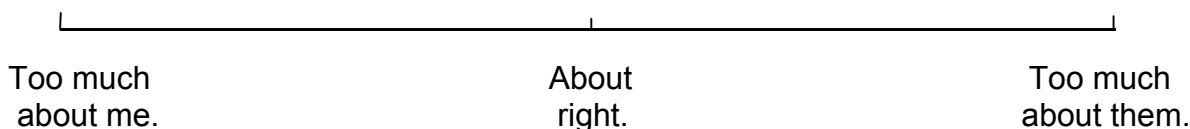
When you go through a difficult period in your life, this balance can be upset.

Sometimes you may want to ignore the pain you are in, so instead you focus entirely on the other person. You say nothing about yourself. If the other person asks, you just say *"I'm fine"* and quickly move the conversation back to them.

At other times the pain you experience may be too great to ignore. As a result, you find it difficult to focus on the other person. Your conversation shifts toward yourself. It may be hard to talk about anything other than your own problems.

Neither of these patterns is shameful or wrong. Both are normal responses to emotional pain. Unfortunately, they can have a negative effect on friendships. When you constantly shift the focus onto the other person they can feel shut out of your life. If you focus only on yourself they can feel that their own lives don't matter to you.

How do you think your own social balance has been over the last while? Mark the line.



If your social interaction has been away from the middle for the last while, this may be understandable. As you get better, however, you might wish to get a bit more balance into your relationships. It is this sense of balance, or give and take, that many people value in their social lives – much more than how witty or fascinating their friends may be. The list below gives some suggestions. Place a check mark beside any that you would like to work on in your relationships.

### More about me

- \_\_\_\_\_ Describe how you have been feeling
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask for feedback about something
- \_\_\_\_\_ Describe positive things in your life
- \_\_\_\_\_ Admit to having difficulties
- \_\_\_\_\_ Ask for help with something

\_\_\_\_\_ Say something about your life you haven't told them before

\_\_\_\_\_ Host the person at your home

**More about them**

\_\_\_\_\_ Listen with interest in some aspect of their lives

\_\_\_\_\_ Offer information to help them reach a goal

\_\_\_\_\_ Invite them to an enjoyable activity

\_\_\_\_\_ Offer transportation, childcare, or a similar favour

\_\_\_\_\_ Teach a person how to do something

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide companionship

\_\_\_\_\_ Help the person complete a task

\_\_\_\_\_ Express your interest or affection

Is this something you'd like to work on in a current relationship? If so, who is the person and what step would you like to take?

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