

Hungry – Angry – Lonely – Tired

Remembering the HALT acronym whenever you are feeling low can be a great way to work out how best to move forward.

HALT may originally have been promoted by Alcoholics Anonymous, and is now a well recognised tool of recovery. Whenever you are feeling low or in distress, consider the issue below, and then take immediate action to bring yourself into balance.

Hungry

Hunger isn't just feeling like you want to eat, it's your body's need for nutrients; since your brain is organic, it needs nutrition to function properly. Just because you don't feel like eating doesn't mean your body doesn't need to eat. When your body goes too long without food your blood sugar levels drop. Your metabolism slows down as well. This leads to a general feeling of weakness, makes it hard to think and you can't rely on yourself to be functioning at your best.

Angry

Anger isn't necessarily a bad thing. Anger is a valid emotion, and all your emotions are important. What makes anger a problem is when you lose control of your temper and your behaviour becomes extreme. Anger causes you to do things that you wouldn't normally do, and you may well regret your actions later. An angry person doesn't think things through as well as one who is calm.

Lonely

Being alone isn't the same as being lonely. If you are spending time on your own, that's fine, we all need space to think. Everyone needs relationships in their lives; as social creatures, we can't develop as whole persons without social interaction. You should make time each day or so for positive, constructive interaction with someone, a friend, a partner, a parent, a sibling or even a stranger on a bus.

Tired

Being tired and run-down creates so many physical and emotional concerns; you deserve to give yourself regular, quality sleep. Don't deprive yourself of sleep when you're wishing to recover, you will be stronger and more energetic if well slept, and you'll even look better as well!

Take Action

Halt also means to stop. When you find yourself feeling depressed or out of control, stop or halt yourself; take some time to contemplate your feelings, and have a look at your energy levels in respect to Hunger, Anger, Loneliness and Tiredness.

See if one or more of them applies to you. When we are well rested, our bodies nourished, calm and not as lonely, we don't have to fight as hard to stay positive. Withdrawing and isolating yourself actually makes you feel worse.

I know it's hard if you're upset about something and want to be alone. It's OK to be alone to collect your thoughts. But be smart about it. If you need to be alone to calm down about something, go do it. But then pull yourself back together and make yourself get back to the business of living.

If you find one of the factors of HALT applies to you, fix it. It's that simple. If you haven't eaten, eat. Even if it's just a sandwich or a bowl of cereal or some crackers, eat. If you're overly angry about something, let it go. Sitting around stewing in anger doesn't do anything to help the situation, and in effect you're wallowing in the emotion. Get up and do something to get your mind off it. Take a walk, tear up paper, do something tedious. If you're lonely, go talk to someone. It helps just seeing another human being and saying hi. Talk about the weather, talk about a new movie you want to see, talk about a song you heard, whatever... just talk. Finally, if you're tired, sleep. If you don't get 7 to 9 hours of sleep every day you will start to feel bad.

By using HALT when you feel bad, you can greatly improve your mood and your life. HALT isn't a cure-all by any means, but it is a basic tool to keep your mind healthy. If you can't correct one of the factors, (e.g. if you're lonely and no one is around) do what you can with the rest of HALT.

You'll find that if you try to follow this simple plan you'll start to feel better and things won't be quite so much of a problem.

FANOS: Couples Sharing Exercise

FANOS couples sharing exercise is an acronym derived from a Greek word meaning “to shed light on” or “to bring to light.” It provides a way for a couples to connect emotionally and to build intimacy (intimacy = “into me you see” and you accept me anyways).

Each letter of the acronym represents a subject you will talk about together:

- **F**eelings: Share with your partner a feeling you have. (You may use a list of feelings if it could help you identify feelings).
- **A**ffirmations: Affirm your partner for something she has done.
- **N**eeds: State a need you have today (not necessarily one that must be met by your partner).
- **O**wnership: Take responsibility and apologize for something you have said or done.
- **S**truggles/**S**obriety: Here you have an opportunity to tell your partner the status of your struggles/sexual sobriety/recovery today (sobriety date, general struggles, recovery work, etc.). Be specific but not graphic.

Your partner also has the opportunity to check in regarding something she struggles with and works on (sobriety from overeating, raging, criticizing, obsessing about, checking on you, withdrawing, etc.).

One of you will begin the check-in and run through the entire FANOS; then the other will do the same. Talking through the entire FANOS should take no longer than a few minutes, but it gives you both a opportunity to share what you are thinking, feeling, and doing on your journey toward healing.

When you share your FANOS, it is important that the other person provide a safe environment. Their role is simply to listen, not really give feedback.

When sharing your FANOS, it is important to maintain eye contact with the person with whom you are sharing it. Eye contact may feel uncomfortable at first, but will eventually become comfortable. This is part of the benefit of this exercise. If you do the exercise with your wife or partner, remember not to give feedback. Do not criticize, correct, or shame one another. Simply listen to each other and know that the goal of this exercise is to build intimacy into the relationship. Also agree not to talk about the FANOS for 48 hours after it has been shared. The key is to create safety in the sharing time.

Here is an example of FANOS from a partner:

- **F**eelings: I’m a little scared but hopeful. I often feel fear thinking about whether you are taking recovery seriously. I’m worried that you will one day betray me again.
- **A**ffirmations: I want to acknowledge and thank you for doing the dishes today.

- **Needs:** I need recognition from my boss that I helped solve a problem for the company last week. I took a big risk to be honest and report some inappropriate conduct, and I recognize I want to be thanked.
- **Ownership:** I take ownership over my financial issues with spending. I recognize that you desire to save for our future and that my spending has often harmed us financially. I am sorry and I am trying to work on balance.
- **Struggles/Sobriety:** I've practiced healthy eating habits all day. While I have occasional periods of desiring unhealthy foods, I'm making progress in being more honest about how I've used food to cope with my feelings.

(Taken from "Shattered Vows" by Debra Laaser, ps. 184-186)

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The Role of RESCUER

(Also known as: supercaretaker, enabler, pleaser, peacemaker, controlling, good guy, mascot, hero, clown, avoider, escapist...)

In taking on this role here are samples of what a person might typically say, think, and/or do in order to participate in the victim/drama triangle pattern. Can you add items to this list?

Rescuer Statements (to others and to self):

- "I am the peacekeeper in the family (or relationship)."
- "I don't have any problems."
- "Just smile."
- "Other people need help more than I do."
- "I'll just do it." (Rather than waiting for or allowing her/him to do what s/he needs to do.)
- "S/he didn't mean it."
- "S/he needs me to take care of her/him."
- "It's not that bad." or "Time will heal it."
- "I always help people who are worse off than me...(then I suffer)."

Rescuer Thoughts (about others or about self):

- S/he knows more than I do (I give them the benefit of doubt – but not myself).
- I can make him/her/them happy (but not myself).
- I can make things better. They or s/he really need(s) my help.
- S/he wouldn't be able to make it without my help.
- It's more important that I meet her/his needs than that I meet my needs.
- I'll make him/her love me by getting them to really need me or because s/he will feel like s/he owes me for all I have done for her/him.
- Don't make waves.
- I know what's best for him/her.

Rescuer Actions (toward or for others or toward/for self):

- Doing things for people that they could (or need to) do for themselves.
- Seeking assistance for others when they could be asking for themselves.
- Taking control of situations which do not need to be controlled. Even with good intentions bossing people around.
- Manipulating others into doing things "for their own good."
- Doing homework for a child or friend (depriving them of the learning experience).
- Drug, alcohol and tobacco abuse (to escape from stress by damaging myself).
- Kids taking care of parents because parents are incapacitated physically or emotionally by

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drug / alcohol / prescription medication abuse and/or by engaging frequently in the victim role.

- Providing distraction to avoid dealing with concerns that need to be addressed.
- Hiding real feelings to protect or please or manipulate others.
- Covering up for a friend or family member's behavior.

The Role of VICTIM

(Also known as: needy, dependent, controlling, hopeless/helpless, sympathy seeker, martyr, chump, picked-on, scapegoat...)

In taking on this role here are samples of what a person might typically say, think, and/or do in order to participate in the victim triangle pattern. Can you add items to this list?

Victim Statements (to self or to others):

- "It's all your fault! (Or his fault, or her fault...)"
- "I had no choice."
- "I was forced to do it."
- "You guys are always changing the rules on me."
- "You make me mad."
- "I can't help it!"
- "I guess nobody likes me."
- "Things will never change/get better."
- "My life is so difficult/stressful."
- "My family is not fair to me." or "Life is not fair to me."

Victim Thoughts (about self or about others):

- Nobody cares and/or nobody understands me.
- I can't do it myself.
- Everyone is against me (or dislikes me, or hates me).
- I can never do anything right.
- It is all [someone else's] fault.
- I cannot function without a boyfriend or girlfriend or without my spouse or children.
- I can't trust her/him or anyone (and/or I can't trust myself).
- My life is boring. I'm not interested in anything.
- I'm helpless/hopeless.
- Others leave, reject, or abandon me.
- I deserve or need to get very upset if others do even the smallest thing that bothers me.

Victim Actions (toward self or toward others):

- Doing things just to aggravate someone who bullies me.
- Hiding real feelings and not talking about important things that need to be addressed.
- Drug/alcohol/tobacco abuse.

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- Remaining in or maintaining emotionally abusive relationships.
- Employing facial expressions and body language that communicate feeling very “put upon”.
- Avoidance of participating in healthy activities either alone or with others.
- Acting hurt or emotionally wounded to elicit sympathy.
- Exaggerating physical or emotional hurt to elicit sympathy.
- Whining/sniveling.
- The "silent treatment"-- withdrawing and refusing to communicate.

The Role of MEANIE

(Also known as: bully, abuser, perpetrator, persecutor, criticizer, bad guy, villain, controlling, troublemaker...)

In taking on this role here are sample of what a person might typically say, think, and/or do in order to participate in the victim triangle pattern. Can you add items to this list?

Meanie Statements:

- “You’re so selfish!”
- “You’re ruining my life!”
- “Yah, but you’re the jerk.”
- “You’re a drunk.”
- “You’re stupid/not good enough/not able to do _____”
- “You’re fat.” (Or some negative statement about how someone looks.)
- “You’ll never amount to much”
- “Do it or else...”
- “I told you so, dummy.”
- “Why is everyone else so incompetent?”
- Calling people (or self) names or saying mean things to others (or to self).
- Any kind of put down or mean statements/comments.

Meanie Thoughts:

- Everybody should do things the way I think they should be done.
- Everybody should be the way I think they should be.
- Everybody should see the world the way I see the world.
- I need to control them/this and make them do what I want them to.
- Control...I have to be in control.
- Nobody will know what I really feel if I am loud and aggressive.
- I take what I want from people however I need to.
- I’m always making the wrong choice/messing up/I’m just no good (being the bully to self.)
- The only way I can get what I need/want is to make others do what I want/need them to do.

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Meanie Actions:

- Doing or saying mean things to others.
- Self-injurious behaviors or suicide attempts.
- Drug, alcohol, or tobacco abuse (mean actions toward self).
- Domestic violence.
- Making others feel guilty for not living up to my expectations.
- Being mean to people because they are different in some way.
- Invading the personal or psychological space of another person.

Ways to exit the victim triangle

Breathing

Boundaries

Balancing

Respect for self and others

Re-frame the situation

Responsibility for self nurturing

Validation of feelings and of self

Kindness with boundaries

Breathing:

I remind myself to observe my breathing. I may take some deeper breaths to move more oxygen into my system. Conscious breathing helps with centering, grounding, awareness, and clear thinking. I can then choose to continue participating in Triangle Relating or choose to move toward healthy Nurturing Relating.

Boundaries:

I remind myself that it is essential to observe and honor healthy boundaries in relating with self and in relating with others. The first boundary to observe is between self and Triangle relating (“I choose not to go there, not to participate in the Triangle”). Other examples of healthy boundaries: not invading the physical or emotional space of another person with meanness, yelling, or hitting or other inappropriate touching; not being mean to self in any way; no abuse of chemicals, drugs/alcohol, prescription medications. I remind myself that another kind of boundary (not too much, not too little, but just...in the effective Nurturing Zone) is involved with maintaining balance in areas such as spending money, eating healthily, getting enough exercise and sleep, and so on...Meanwhile, speaking of balance...

Balancing:

Nurturing Relating is about ongoing balancing and learning to fine tune my skills in addressing BNN. There are a lot of essentials that I need to be addressing. Balancing my life as I endeavor to do this Nurturing involves focus on these Nurturing skills. I remind myself that I need to be moving in the direction of meeting the basic 80 – 100 BNN for self and relating in Nurturing ways with others. This art form becomes my focus and replaces the Triangle focus on manipulation.

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Respect:

I remind myself to respect myself and respect others with whom I am interacting as wonderful people, even though I or they may just have been participating, unfortunately, in triangle relating. All three Triangle positions disrespect self and/or others. Once a person genuinely practices respect s/he is off the triangle and moving toward addressing BNN.

Re-frame the situation:

I recognize that the drama, upset, and stress I am experiencing are signals that I am indeed triangling or caught on the triangle (thinking/feeling, talking, acting in the roles of Victim, Meanie, Pleaser). I read the feeling signals. I take the picture of this situation and deliberately decide to replace the Triangle/stress frame around it with a new frame of the Feelings Gauge/Nurturing Relating around it. I now recognize that my Feelings Gauge is telling me that I am low or out of nurturing in one or more areas. I have changed my view/understanding of the situation from being a victim of the Triangle to being a self-actuating Nurturing person on my way to the "Nurturing Station" to put some good nurturing in my Life Tank and to give off Nurturing kindness (with healthy gentle/firm boundaries) toward others involved in this particular situation.

Responsibility for self nurturing:

I remind myself that I am responsible for my choice about whether I do Triangle relating or healthy Nurturing relating. I can choose to think, talk, or act as a Victim, Meanie, or Rescuer. Or instead, I can choose to relate and interact in balanced, Nurturing ways toward myself, toward others, and with the world around me.

(I am not responsible for making other people choose not to play the Triangle game. However, if I am a parent I am responsible for helping and instructing my children to gradually grow out of the victim triangle pattern of relating (which is the usual pattern for a small child) and for teaching them and modeling for them how to relate in healthy Nurturing ways toward self and others. Also, if I am a parent, I need to be taking good care of my BNN so that I have the energies needed for nurturing my child's (children's) growth and development and for relating Nurturingly with my co-parent.)

Kindness with boundaries:

I remind myself to relate in interested, friendly, caring, sensitive and nurturing ways toward self and others WITH BOUNDARIES. One way to simply describe Nurturing Relating and addressing BNN: it's all about thinking and practicing Kindness with boundaries toward self, others, and the world around us.

(Genuine, unmanipulative kindness is not rescuing or "supercaretaking" or pleasing or fixing others -- or, in general, doing for others what they need to be doing for themselves, usually while not caring for my own BNN. Furthermore, kindness does not mean allowing people to walk on me or take advantage of me. "With boundaries" helps with understanding healthy Nurturing kindness, because without boundaries, too often kindness can move to Victim when the kindness gets taken advantage of...or kindness

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can move to Meanie if the kindness is not appreciated in the way the kind person expects, or the kind person responds in mean or angry ways to being taken advantage of.)

Validation:

In exiting the triangle I remind myself frequently (sometimes through days, weeks, and months) that my feelings make sense and that I, the good person having the feelings, make sense -- even if I am not sure at the moment what the sense is specifically. Just participating in the process of triangle relating produces stress and upset. So I validate myself and my feelings as a way of genuinely and effectively nurturing myself off of the triangle. Remember there is no true nurturing available in triangle relating; validation is so rarely practiced (invalidation and put downs are the norm the world over); and frequent validation practiced toward self and others is one of the most powerful nurturing practices available to human beings.