

THE APPROACH

A little space to see more clearly.

COMPANION WORKBOOK

Getting to know someone more thoughtfully

Ask · Clarify · Share
Notice · Revisit

Mark Smartt's reflection framework

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WELCOME

Start with what you know.

A private reflection companion for adults getting to know someone.

Attraction can arrive before understanding. These pages give you room to separate what you have experienced from what you are assuming, consider what matters to you and choose your next step.

Use this alongside *The Approach: Dating and Relationships: Getting to Know Who Someone Really Is*, by Mark Smartt. There is no timetable to complete and no preferred relationship outcome.

A useful outcome

You can name what you know, leave an uncertainty open, ask a considerate question or make a decision that respects your needs. Continuing, slowing down and stepping away are all possible choices.

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BEFORE YOU BEGIN

Use one page at a time.

Short notes are enough. Skip any prompt that does not help you.

01 Choose a useful moment.

Try a few quiet minutes after a meeting or conversation. You do not need to record every interaction.

02 Write what you experienced.

Use a brief description. A feeling is real; the explanation for it may still be uncertain. "I do not know" is a valid answer.

03 Choose one next step.

Ask or share something only when it feels appropriate. Respect a person's choice not to answer and your own choice not to continue.

04 Stop when you have enough.

If writing becomes repetitive or upsetting, put the page down. You do not need to solve a relationship on paper.

Print or type

Print A4 at actual size, or fit to your printer's printable area. Reprint pages 6-15 as needed. For digital use, download the fillable PDF, open it in a PDF reader, type into the boxes and save a new copy. Reopen it to check your answers saved. Keep answers brief; use page 15 for more space.

Keep your notes private. This PDF has no answer-submission function. Your device or cloud service may sync saved files. Use initials if helpful. If someone may monitor your device or belongings, consider whether keeping notes is safe; see page 18.

This is a reflection aid, not therapy or a test of compatibility, honesty or safety. It cannot diagnose another person or guarantee a relationship outcome.

THE AUTHOR'S FRAMEWORK

Five ways to stay curious.

Mark Smartt's Ask, Clarify, Share, Notice, Revisit framework.

01 Ask

Be curious about what matters.

"What does a good relationship look like to you?"

An invitation, not an entitlement to private information.

02 Clarify

Check meaning before filling in the gaps.

"When you say you need space, what does that mean for you?"

Listen to the answer without cross-examining.

03 Share

Let the other person get to know you too.

"Something that matters to me is..."

Sharing is voluntary; timing and privacy matter.

04 Notice

Attend to what you directly experience.

"What happened, and how did it affect me?"

Notice words, actions and context. Do not monitor or diagnose.

05 Revisit

Allow your understanding to change.

"What do I see differently now?"

New information may strengthen or weaken an impression.

Move between these five ideas as needed. They are an author framework informed by research, not a validated assessment or a fixed sequence you must follow.

A WORKED EXAMPLE

One moment, several meanings.

Fictional example: an ordinary change of plans, not a safety concern.

01 What happened

Alex cancelled our Saturday plan on Friday and suggested Tuesday instead.

02 How I felt

Disappointed, and uncertain about how interested Alex is.

03 My first interpretation

"I am not a priority." That is my interpretation, not something I know.

04 Other possibilities

A practical problem, competing commitments or changing interest. I do not yet know which, if any, applies.

05 What I could ask and share

"Would Tuesday still work for you? I prefer a bit of notice when plans change."

06 My next step

Decide whether Tuesday suits me. Notice how the agreed plan unfolds without testing or monitoring Alex.

An alternative explanation does not cancel your needs. One changed plan cannot establish someone's character, and you can still decide the arrangement does not work for you.

WORKSHEET 01 / PART ONE

After a date or conversation

Capture the experience while leaving room for what you do not yet know.

ASK · CLARIFY · NOTICE**Date and context / optional initials**

One thing I learned about this person

What did they tell me, or what did I experience directly?

A moment that stayed with me

Describe the words or action before explaining what it meant.

How I felt before, during and afterwards

Feelings deserve attention. They do not, by themselves, prove another person's intention.

WORKSHEET 01 / PART TWO

What am I taking forward?

You do not have to reach a conclusion today.

CLARIFY · SHARE · REVISIT

What did I not fully understand?

What am I tempted to fill in for myself?

What did I share about myself?

Is there something relevant I may choose to share another time?

What strengthened, weakened or complicated my first impression?

One thing I want to remember or return to

It is fine for the answer to be “nothing for now”. For a fuller decision, use page 14.

WORKSHEET 02

Facts and interpretations

Choose one moment. Work down the page without forcing an explanation.

NOTICE • CLARIFY • REVISIT**What I directly saw, heard or experienced**

The meaning I first gave it

Another possible explanation / what remains unknown

What could reasonably clarify this?

A respectful question, more ordinary experience, or accepting that I may not know.

A statement is evidence of what was said, not proof that its content is true. You can decide a behaviour does not work for you without knowing its cause or giving it a diagnosis.

WORKSHEET 03

Questions to explore

Choose one topic for a mutual conversation, when the time feels right.

ASK · CLARIFY · SHARE

Possible topics: daily life, communication, values, friendships, faith or worldview, money, future plans, affection or intimacy. Relevance and readiness matter more than covering every topic.

What am I curious about, and why does it matter to me?

An open question I could ask

For example: "What helps you feel listened to?"

Something relevant I could share about myself

A follow-up I could use if it fits their answer

Listen, clarify and let the subject rest. Neither person owes a full history, a password or an answer they are not ready to give.

WORKSHEET 04 / VALUES

What matters to me?

Separate the values you practise from the hopes you bring.

SHARE · NOTICE

Value: a principle I want to live by, such as honesty or kindness.

Preference: something I would like, but may be willing to discuss or compromise on.

Boundary: what I will or will not participate in.

One or two values that matter most to me

How I want to show those values in my own behaviour

What I hope for in a relationship

Where I can be flexible, and where I need to be clear

WORKSHEET 04 / BOUNDARIES

A boundary I can act on

Focus on your needs and choices. You do not have to persuade someone to agree.

SHARE · NOTICE · REVISIT

For example: “I do not lend money while I am getting to know someone.” A boundary describes your participation. It is not a rule that gives you control over another person.

What am I not willing to participate in?

How could I express this clearly, if it is safe to do so?

What action is under my control if it is not respected?

What support might help me carry out that choice?

If you fear someone's reaction, you do not need to confront them or show them these notes. Consider specialist support on page 18.

WORKSHEET 05 / RECORD

Patterns over time

Record ordinary experiences of your own, including welcome and unwelcome ones.

NOTICE • REVISIT

Keep descriptions brief. A pattern may matter, but no total or score is required. Reprint this page when useful; do not turn it into a record of another person's movements.

EXPERIENCE 1**Date and context****What happened / how it affected me**

If we discussed it, what happened afterwards?

EXPERIENCE 2**Date and context****What happened / how it affected me**

If we discussed it, what happened afterwards?

WORKSHEET 05 / REVIEW

Look again, with context.

Use experience to reconsider an impression, without explaining away your needs.

CLARIFY · NOTICE · REVISIT

What seems consistent across different situations?

What might be an exception, or still be unclear?

What has actually changed, including after a conversation?

What do I understand differently now?

You do not need repeated incidents, a diagnosis or a complete explanation before taking a boundary or safety concern seriously. Positive experiences do not cancel harmful behaviour.

WORKSHEET 06

My next step

A decision for now can be enough. You are allowed to reconsider.

ASK · CLARIFY · SHARE · NOTICE · REVISIT

Looking across your notes, what matters most to your choice today?

What I know / what remains uncertain / what matters to me

For now, I choose to...

- ☐ Meet again or continue getting to know each other
- ☐ Have one particular conversation, if appropriate
- ☐ Slow down or allow more time
- ☐ Pause or end contact
- ☐ Talk privately with someone I trust or a specialist
- ☐ Choose something else, described below

My specific next action, and the main reason

When or why I may revisit this choice

MORE WRITING SPACE

Room for your own thoughts

Use this page with any worksheet. Make another copy whenever you need one.

Date / worksheet or subject

What I want to put into words

You can leave something unresolved. Put the page down when you have written enough for today.

OPTIONAL FAITH PAGE

A moment to reflect

Use this page if Christian faith is part of your reflection. You may also skip it.

“Then I consulted with myself...”

Nehemiah 5:7, World English Bible (excerpt)

Nehemiah hears complaints about debt and exploitation. He becomes angry, considers the matter and then challenges the nobles and rulers. The passage concerns injustice in his community, rather than dating.

Here it offers a faith analogy: reflection can make room for deliberate action. It is not scientific evidence for this workbook or a reason to delay seeking help.

What do I want to bring to God honestly?

This might include a feeling, a hope, a concern or an uncertainty.

What thoughtful action or support might I need?

A prayer

God, help me to see clearly, speak truthfully and respect both my own dignity and the dignity of others. Give me wisdom for my next step and courage to seek help when I need it. Amen.

RESEARCH AND SCOPE

Why these pages take this shape

Research informs the component ideas. It does not validate the whole workbook.

Mark Smartt developed the five-part organising framework. Its prompts are editorial recommendations, not a tested psychological scale. This workbook has not been shown to improve dating decisions, detect abuse or establish compatibility.

Questions and responsiveness

Huang et al. (2017), It doesn't hurt to ask: Question-asking increases liking. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 113, 430-452.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000097>

The studies concern liking and responsiveness, not honesty or safety. A 2025 correction is linked with the article.

Mutual disclosure

Laurenceau, Barrett & Pietromonaco (1998), Intimacy as an interpersonal process. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 74, 1238-1251.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.74.5.1238>

Diary studies connect disclosure and perceived responsiveness with intimacy; they do not test partner suitability.

Revisiting impressions

Brambilla et al. (2019), Changing impressions: Moral character dominates impression updating. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 82, 64-73.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2019.01.003>

Experiments show impressions can change with new information. Laboratory judgements are not real relationships.

Limits of writing

Reinhold, Bürkner & Holling (2018), Effects of expressive writing on depressive symptoms: A meta-analysis. *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice*, 25, e12224.

<https://doi.org/10.1111/cpsp.12224>

No significant long-term effect on depressive symptoms was found. Expressive writing differs from these worksheets; no therapeutic benefit is promised.

Faith reflection: Nehemiah 5:1-13, World English Bible. Support guidance and contacts: NHS and the services on page 18. Sources checked 7 October 2026.

SUPPORT AND CARE

Your wellbeing comes first.

No worksheet can establish that someone is safe.

If someone threatens, controls, coerces, stalks, sexually pressures or harms you, responsibility lies with the person choosing that behaviour. It is not your fault for failing to recognise it sooner. You do not have to finish this workbook before asking for help.

In immediate danger in the UK, call 999.

If you are worried about someone's reaction, seek specialist advice about your options. You do not have to confront them, share your notes or announce that you plan to leave.

Support contacts

Refuge / National Domestic Abuse Helpline

For women experiencing domestic abuse. Free, 24 hours.

0808 2000 247 · www.nationaldahelpline.org.uk

Respect Men's Advice Line

For men experiencing domestic abuse.

0808 801 0327 · mensadviceline.org.uk

Galop

For LGBT+ people experiencing abuse and violence.

0800 999 5428 · galop.org.uk

If notes could be found or your device monitored, consider using a safer device to seek support and whether keeping this file is safe. Outside the UK, contact your local emergency service or specialist domestic-abuse service.

Source: NHS, Domestic violence and abuse. Contacts checked 7 October 2026; service hours may change. Visit the services' websites for current availability.

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