

Exploring learned emotional relationships

The goal of this exercise is to begin to understand our habitual patterns in our couple relationship by exploring how we learned to respond emotionally.

- 1 Fill in the following table on your own.
- 2 Consider the role of your traumatic experiences, the example of important people in your life and community, and the lessons of your culture about feelings.
- 3 Compare your responses with those of your partner.
- 4 Consider how similarities and differences between your responses influence the challenges you experience in your relationship.

	<i>Family</i>	<i>Community/Culture</i>	<i>Traumatic Experiences</i>
Which emotions are acceptable?			
How do you cope with difficult emotions?			
How do you express emotions?			
What are the benefits of following these rules?			
What are negatives of following these rules?			

Source: Adapted, with permission, from exercises in the STAIR 12-week treatment programme. Cloitre, M., Koenen, K.C., Cohen, L.R., & Han, H. (2002). Skills Training in Affective and Interpersonal Regulation followed by Exposure: A phase-based treatment for PTSD related to childhood abuse. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 70*, 1067–1074.