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The Human Need to Share Problems: A Double-Edged Sword

It is natural to want to discuss our problems with friends and family when we are faced with difficulties. We often feel lighter after sharing our burdens, a phenomenon that is supported by common wisdom and the saying "***misery loves company.***"

However, psychologists suggest that this isn't always beneficial. While sharing your problems can offer temporary relief, it also has the potential to amplify those issues. **When we verbalise our concerns, we might inadvertently give them more power, causing them to loom larger in our minds.** Additionally, sharing can transfer our negative emotions to others, spreading the burden rather than lightening it. This process can make the problem feel even bigger, as it continues to replay and grow in our thoughts, sometimes leading to a cycle of rumination and increased anxiety.

Before we explore how much and to whom we should share, let's first delve into the basic human needs behind sharing:

1. Seeking Sympathy and Emotional Support:

Often, we need a shoulder to cry on. This is a fundamental human need, as emotional support from others can be comforting.

2. Clarifying the Problem: Talking about a problem can help us understand it better, as verbalising thoughts often brings clarity.

3. Seeking Advice: We share our problems to gain different perspectives and advice from those we trust.

4. Manipulation: Unfortunately, some people share problems to manipulate others or to drag them into their personal drama.

5. Habit: For some, sharing every problem becomes a habit, even when it may not be necessary.

While the first three reasons are natural and generally well-intentioned, the last two are more problematic and can have negative implications. **Those who share with malicious intent often know exactly what they're doing, so we won't focus on that here.**

Instead, let's talk about well-intentioned individuals who may share too much and the potential downsides of this behaviour:

The Potential Downsides of Over-Sharing

- **Weakens Your Inner Strength:** Constantly relying on others to solve your problems can prevent you from developing the internal resilience needed to face challenges independently. Just like physical muscles, mental strength is built by tackling complex problems on your own, growing stronger and more confident over time.
- **Dilutes the Power of Your Story:** While discussing your issues can bring clarity, doing so with too many people can dilute your sense of control and leave you feeling powerless. Additionally, oversharing can negatively affect how others perceive you and may even drag them down emotionally.

- **You May Get the Wrong Advice:** It's crucial to seek advice from the right people—those you trust and who are equipped to help, such as coaches, therapists, or mentors. These individuals are trained to provide guidance without getting emotionally entangled in your problems.
- **It Stays in Your Head:** Sometimes, writing down your thoughts and sleeping on them can bring clarity. This reflective practice allows you to process your emotions privately before seeking external advice.
- **You Find It Hard to Shift Your Energy:** Shifting your energy to a more positive or constructive thought process can lead to better ideas and a greater sense of contentment. This doesn't mean ignoring your problems, but rather approaching them with a more balanced mindset.

- **Expecting Quick Resolution:** Learning to stay calm in uncomfortable situations is a valuable skill. It builds resilience and helps you navigate life's challenges without immediately seeking external validation or comfort.
- **Over-Optimism:** It's important to be authentic and vulnerable, but this should be balanced with self-esteem and confidence. Avoid over-optimizing or masking your emotions, as people can often sense when something is off. Being honest about your feelings, while maintaining a sense of inner strength, is key.
- **Playing the "Damsel in Distress":** Portraying yourself as constantly in need of rescue can create hyper-dependency on others. It's essential to recognize that some aspects of life are within our control, while others are not. Letting go of what you can't control is a great practice for leading a content and balanced life.

If you find yourself
struggling with life's
challenges, consider
seeking professional help.

You can contact
www.farihas.com for
transformation coaching

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References

- Emotional Contagion: Research has shown that emotions are contagious, and sharing too much negativity can bring others down. (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1994)
- Resilience Building: Developing internal resilience is crucial for mental health. Constant reliance on others can hinder this process. (Masten, 2001)
- The Role of Therapy: Professional guidance is often more effective than informal advice from friends or family. (Lambert & Barley, 2001)