

# This Simple Trick May Solve All Your Relationship Problems

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The Huffington Post | By Taryn Hillin Email RSS

Are you someone who gives stellar relationship advice to your best friends, but can never seem to fix your own love life? You're not alone.

Researchers from the University of Waterloo and University of Michigan set out to investigate whether or not people are actually better at giving advice to others than themselves. To test this, they conducted three studies using University of Michigan students involved in monogamous romantic relationships.

The results were recently published in the journal [Psychological Science](#).

In the first study, 104 students were told to reflect on a scenario in which they were cheated on or their best friend was cheated on. The scenarios were assigned randomly.

Researchers analyzed the responses and found that students who thought about their friend being cheated on scored higher in wise reasoning than students who were told to think about being cheated on themselves.

Next, researchers set out to test if there was a way people could exhibit the same wisdom for their own problems as they did during conflicts involving friends. To do this, researchers recruited 120 new students.

This time, using the same infidelity scenarios as before, participants were asked to work through the problem from either a first-person perspective using pronouns like "I" and "me" ("Why am I feeling this way?") or a third-person perspective using first names and pronouns like "he" and "she" ("Why is Sally feeling this way?"). For the latter, even when reflecting on a scenario in which they themselves were cheated on, participants were encouraged to use their own names.

By approaching the conflict from an outside perspective, participants exhibited better judgement and clearer thinking, even when the problem was their own.

"We are the first to demonstrate that there is a simple way to eliminate this bias in reasoning by talking about ourselves in the third person and using our name when reflecting on a relationship conflict," said study author Professor Igor Grossmann [in a press release](#). "When we employ this strategy, we are more likely to think wisely about an issue."

Lastly, researchers wanted to explore whether age would make a difference in one's ability to wisely assess personal conflict. For this, they recruited 469 U.S. adults ages 20 to 40 and 60 to 80.

Regardless of age, researchers came to the same conclusion as before, writing, "People displayed more wisdom when reasoning about a friend's or family member's problem than when immersing into and reasoning about their own problems."

The takeaway? The trick to working through your own relationship problem is simply to pretend like it's someone else's.

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