

Why Do I Need So Much Reassurance?

Sometimes we just need someone to say it.

You're doing a good job. I'm not angry with you.

You did the right thing.

You look great.

I understand why you feel like that.

You've got this.

Or even simply: *Well done.*

Hearing those words can bring an almost immediate sense of relief. Our body relaxes. We feel heard. Understood. Validated. Perhaps, for a moment, we feel a little more confident about something we had started questioning.

There is nothing wrong with wanting reassurance. Needing reassurance doesn't automatically mean that you're insecure or have low self-esteem. Sometimes we simply need another person to be with us in an experience.

Sometimes reassurance doesn't give us the answer. It gives us the feeling that we don't have to face the question alone.

Why does reassurance feel so good?

When we're struggling with something internally, we can become very caught up in our own thoughts.

Did I do the right thing?

Am I doing enough?

Are they upset with me?

What if I've made a mistake?

Then we share it with somebody else. Suddenly, it isn't just happening inside our own head anymore. We've invited another person into the experience.

A friend might tell us that our feelings make sense. A partner might reassure us that everything between us is okay. A colleague or manager might tell us that we're doing a great job. Sometimes that's enough to allow our shoulders to drop a little. We feel less alone. And there is something very human about that.

Reassurance isn't always about low self-esteem

It's easy to assume that somebody who needs reassurance must lack confidence. Sometimes that's true. But not always.

You can feel generally confident in yourself and still need someone to tell you that you're doing okay. Parents may appreciate hearing that they're doing a good job. Someone making a significant career decision might want to hear, *I think you can do this*. A person going through something painful may simply need a friend to say, *I understand*. Even somebody with healthy self-esteem can have moments when their confidence slips.

We aren't designed to exist completely independently of other people. Being seen, encouraged and understood matters. The difficulty isn't necessarily that we seek reassurance. It can be what happens when **the reassurance stops reassuring us**.

What if I need to hear it again?

Imagine asking your partner:

Are we okay?

They say yes. You feel better.

But later something changes. Perhaps they're quieter than usual. They take longer to answer a message. Or maybe nothing has actually changed at all — the uncertainty simply starts creeping back.

So you ask again.

Are you sure we're okay?

They reassure you. There's another moment of relief. Then the doubt returns. Reassurance can sometimes become part of a cycle:

uncertainty → reassurance → relief → uncertainty → reassurance

The reassurance works. It just doesn't last. And that's when it can be useful to become curious about what we're actually needing.

Why don't I believe the reassurance I've already received?

Sometimes we're hoping the next answer will finally remove the uncertainty completely.

We reread the text. We go back over the email. We ask another friend what they think. We Google. We replay the conversation, looking for something we might have missed.

Perhaps if we check one more time, we'll finally feel certain. But if the reassurance you've already received hasn't settled the uncertainty, another question may be worth asking:

Do you think asking the same thing again will give you a different answer?

And if the answer is the same, will you believe it this time? That's not about criticising yourself for asking. It's about becoming curious about what you hope another reassurance will give you.

Sometimes the need to be reassured has a history

There may also be very understandable reasons why reassurance feels particularly important. Perhaps you didn't always feel seen growing up. Maybe you wanted a parent to notice what you were doing, tell you they were proud of you or simply pay attention.

Sometimes one comment can stay with us for decades. I've heard people talk about something a teacher said at school that still affects the way they see themselves 30 or 40 years later.

Or perhaps the experience came much later. You thought a relationship was fine — and then suddenly it wasn't. You were blindsided by an ending you didn't see coming.

When something like that happens, it makes sense that you might become more alert the next time.

Are we really okay?

Would they tell me if something was wrong?

Can I trust what they're saying?

What looks like excessive reassurance-seeking in the present may sometimes make more sense when we understand what happened in the past.

When reassurance becomes exhausting

There is another side to this that can be difficult to talk about. Constantly needing reassurance can be exhausting. Not only for the person giving it. For the person needing it too.

Imagine repeatedly wondering whether you're good enough, whether somebody still loves you, whether you've done something wrong or whether everything is about to fall apart. That's tiring. But it can also begin affecting relationships.

A partner may initially be very happy to reassure: *Of course I love you. I'm not going anywhere. Nothing is wrong.*

But if they're asked repeatedly, they may eventually begin to feel that their answer isn't being trusted.

I've told you we're okay. Why don't you believe me?

Meanwhile, the person asking may interpret that frustration as further evidence that something **is** wrong. Now both people can become caught in the same cycle. One person desperately wants to feel secure. The other desperately wants their reassurance to be believed. Neither necessarily intends to create the tension.

What happens when reassurance doesn't come?

Sometimes nobody tells us we're doing a good job. The message goes unanswered. Our manager doesn't give us feedback. Our partner is distracted. A friend doesn't respond in the way we hoped. When we're relying heavily on that external reassurance, its absence can feel significant. Self-confidence can drop quickly.

We begin second-guessing ourselves. We replay what happened. We withdraw. We might feel physically anxious or sick. And silence can begin to acquire meaning that perhaps wasn't there originally.

They didn't say I did a good job, so I must have done badly.

They haven't replied, so I've done something wrong.

They haven't reassured me, so my fear must be true.

But an absence of reassurance isn't necessarily confirmation of the thing we're afraid of. Sometimes nobody has said anything. And that's all we actually know.

Can we learn to hold onto reassurance?

Perhaps part of developing greater security isn't learning never to need reassurance again. Maybe it's learning to **keep some of it**.

Think about a time when you were worried about something and somebody reassured you. Perhaps they told you that you were doing well. That you hadn't done anything wrong. That you could handle something you weren't sure you could manage.

Remember how that felt. Not only what they said. What happened in your body when you believed them?

Maybe you relaxed. Perhaps you felt lighter. Maybe something that had seemed enormous suddenly felt manageable. That feeling matters too. Instead of beginning from zero every time our confidence slips, can we begin remembering some of the moments when we were uncertain before — and things were okay?

I've felt like this before.

I was worried then too.

I wasn't alone.

I got through it.

Reassurance from another person can help us in the moment. Over time, perhaps some of those experiences can become reassurance we learn to carry for ourselves.

Final Thoughts

There is nothing wrong with wanting someone to tell you that you're okay. There is nothing wrong with wanting to feel seen, appreciated, understood or encouraged. We all need other people sometimes.

But if reassurance only brings relief for a few moments before you need it again, it may be worth becoming curious about what is happening underneath. What are you afraid the other person might say? What happens if you get the “wrong” answer? How often do you need to ask before you feel secure? And has something happened before that makes reassurance particularly important now? The aim isn't to become someone who never needs reassurance.

Perhaps it's being able to receive it, allow it to comfort us — and begin trusting that feeling enough to carry a little of it forward.

You can need other people without needing them to remove every uncertainty for you.

 **Therapist's Reflection:** When someone repeatedly needs reassurance, I don't immediately assume that they lack confidence. Sometimes we simply need to feel heard. There can be enormous relief in sharing something that has been weighing on us and having another person say, *I understand. You're not alone in this.* But if the same question needs to be asked again and again, I might become curious.

Does asking again make you feel better?

How long does that feeling last?

Do you think asking the same question again will give you a different answer?

And perhaps most importantly: *What would happen if you received an answer you didn't want?*

Sometimes reassurance helps us through a difficult moment. Sometimes we're asking it to give us a certainty that nobody else can actually provide. I don't think the answer is to stop needing people. Instead, perhaps we can begin noticing the moments when reassurance really does help — remembering what it feels like to be supported, understood and not alone — and gradually learning to carry some of that feeling with us.

Reassurance can come from somebody else. Security is what we slowly learn to hold onto ourselves.

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