



# How to stop socialising depleting you

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Not all socialising is made equal. That doesn't make you weak.

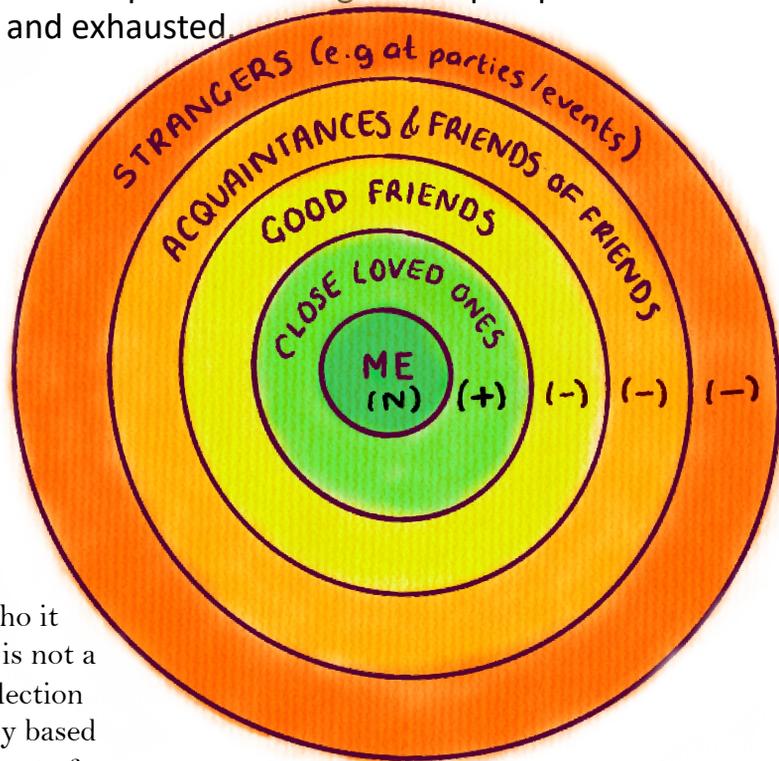
There are lots of factors that will impact on whether socializing replenishes or depletes us. Taking them into account when we plan socializing can help to prevent us from feeling overwhelmed, depleted and exhausted.

## 1. Identify your social spheres and categorise them

Spending time on your own can be really replenishing but for the purpose of working out your capacity for socialising, it is considered neutral. On the 1<sup>st</sup> green outer ring, "close loved ones" are people who you feel like it would take a lot of face time to exhaust you. These tend to be people that you already spend a lot of time with (partners, best friends, maybe family members if you're lucky).

Each ring further away from you are people who it takes more effort from you to be around. This is not a reflection of them as people. It is instead a reflection of how easy it is for you to be in their company based on your relationship. It stands to reason, for most of us, being amongst people we are less familiar with, will take more from us.

The other thing to consider is that just because people are more familiar to us, doesn't mean we are automatically comfortable in their presence. For example, you may have a difficult relationship with a parent or sibling, which means that being around them is more energy intensive, than being around a good friend. Some family members may then fall in the yellow and orange categories.



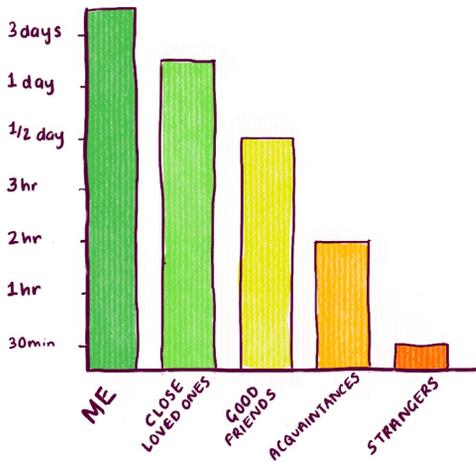
Green	Yellow	Mild Orange	Strong Orange
Best friend	Sheila	Phil	Everyone else
Partner	Sister	Marie	
Dad	Mum	Bob from work	

## 2. Identify other factors that feed into your capacity for socialising.

Two things in particular: your physical wellness (fatigue, pain, presence or absence of symptoms, energy levels) and your mood. A simple rating out of 10 where 10/10 is best possible rating and 0/10 is worst, will help you check in with what your current capacity is. This is important as we're going to use this to modify duration and/or intensity of socialising.

### 3. Plot duration against the categorised "social circles"

This is not an exact science and not set in stone. Pick time durations applicable to you and plot the different categories of people you encounter against the durations. Plot as though all other factors were good (health, stress, mood, etc). We're going to modify for that next.



This gives you an indication of your baseline capacity across different groups. Here you can clearly see that with your partner you can spend weeks of uninterrupted time but with your Aunty Nora who has a terrible tendency to pull faces at you, you can just about last 30 minutes on a good day.

If you do this, you've done something important! You've acknowledged your own capacity and boundaries. That's hard for us to do.

We don't like to confront our limitations and yet it is important that we do.

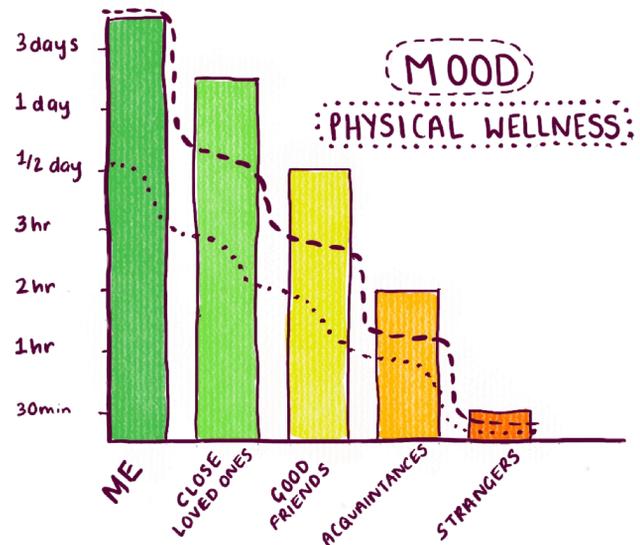
### 4. Modify durations based on how you are feeling.

The table of categories is likely going to remain a constant. Bob from work will likely remain a mild orange classification. The plotting of these categories according to duration on a good day, is generally going to remain pretty stable. Bob, alas, will only ever be happily encountered for around a maximum of 2 hours.

But your mood and your physical wellness is going to vary based on lots of different factors. This will then impact on your capacity for the different characters in the different categories.

In section 3, you plotted as though you were a 10/10 on mood and physical wellbeing (as explored in section 2).

But now we are going to consider how you make amendments for when you are not feeling your best. You'll be glad to know again, there is no hard and fast rule. The important thing is that you consider all of these factors and modify what you are asking yourself to do accordingly. As well as duration, you can also adapt type of social activity or setting. For example, socializing at home, watching a film may be more replenishing than going to a busy bar and drinking.



## About The Health Psychologist

Dr Sula Windgassen specializes in using evidence-based psychological approaches to improve chronic conditions and stress. She is a clinical academic, with peer-reviewed publications and a private practice supporting people with long term conditions, trauma and stress.

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