

# The psychological significance of home

For some, home is a sanctuary and a means to express ourselves, for others, it's a place of great change. Sarah Niblock, CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy, and therapist Hannah Sherbersky explore the multidimensional concept of home



*What does home mean to you? More than a place to lay our heads, it can be*

*a reflection of our identity. Our notions of home are shaped by our culture, family and experiences. Exploring our sense of home can help us understand more about ourselves. In this month's podcast, I speak to UKCP psychotherapist Hannah Sherbersky about psychotherapeutic support and how it allows us to grasp the implications of how we view home.*

*Sarah*

CEO of the UK Council for Psychotherapy

*Examining our sense of home in the psychotherapeutic process can yield a deeper knowledge of ourselves*

**H**ome holds many varied and complex meanings. Our sense of home can change dramatically throughout our lifetime, and we are seeing this magnified through the pandemic, with home taking on different meanings during this time of change.

The western perception of home is influenced by economic expectations, social mobility and individualism. It is a multidimensional concept. For many, home is where we define ourselves – who we believe ourselves to be. We use our homes to distinguish ourselves – an external and objective reality reflecting our internal and subjective lived experience – and thus

our home becomes part of our identity.

Many of us see home as a comforting place to which we seek to return. It evokes feelings of security and safety, providing foundations for us to develop positive self-esteem. But this is not the case for everyone. Experience and history affect the way we view home. For some, it can bring up feelings of oppression and instability, for others it may be a place that isn't always safe.

## If foundations are rocked

Exploring our sense of home enables us to address issues that lie within the household, relationships and identity. When significant life transitions, such as children leaving home, redundancy or divorce occur, difficulties can arise. Sometimes, we need help to adapt to these changes. The right support, from friends and family or organisations that offer help and advice on specific

issues, can make a real difference.

Psychotherapy can also help, providing a trusted environment in which to discuss things we may not feel able to share with anyone else. For those who haven't lived in safe homes, the psychotherapeutic relationship can create a haven for open conversation. Exploring in therapy how home has shaped and influenced us can take us to a stage where transformation and healing is possible.



## The podcast

*The way we feel about home and where we belong is deeply rooted in our history and experiences. Sarah Niblock talks to family therapist Hannah Sherbersky about how therapy can help us understand how we develop our notions of home, and why more of us should seek to grasp the significance of our concept of home. Listen at [tinyurl.com/y6belgh3](https://tinyurl.com/y6belgh3)*

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## HOW I BECAME A THERAPIST



*Academic and psychotherapist Hannah Sherbersky outlines her career path*

I HAVE VIVID CHILDHOOD memories of waiting in the staff room of a psychiatric hospital for my father to finish work. He was a psychiatric social worker who went on to train as a group analyst working with psychiatrist Robin Skynner. I would sit quietly, listening to the staff talking about their patients and my interest in people's stories was ignited.

I qualified as a mental health nurse 23 years ago and that frontline experience still grounds me today. In my work as a family and systemic psychotherapist, my time is split between being co-director of systemic programmes at the University of Exeter, my private practice and work on an NHS inpatient unit.

My psychotherapeutic work has also afforded me other opportunities. In 2019, I took part in the BBC Three documentary *I Blame My Parents* and I've recently contributed to a couples app, Paired. @SherberskyH

## Has lockdown changed how you feel about home?

*Prompts to help you examine your relationship with your home – and whether the pandemic has altered it*

### 1 Safety versus confinement.

*Is your home a place of safety from the virus or do you feel trapped in it while in lockdown or working from home? Are you bored with being at home? If so, try changing the way the space looks to make it feel different.*

### 2 Can you separate work from home in the same space?

*If you are working*

*and living in the same place, it is important to set boundaries. Try to implement starting and winding-down rituals to signify when the workday begins and ends.*

### 3 Is your future home uncertain?

*If you are at risk of losing your home or your accommodation isn't guaranteed, call the charity Shelter on their free helpline*

*0808 800 4444 or visit [shelter.org.uk](https://shelter.org.uk).*

### 4 Has being confined put you in a difficult situation?

*If you feel unsafe, do not hesitate to seek help. There are organisations for people in your circumstances. If you are unsure where to start, visit [gov.uk/report-domestic-abuse](https://gov.uk/report-domestic-abuse). If it's an emergency or you're in immediate danger, call 999.*

## About the UKCP and how to find a therapist

• **The UK Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP)** is the leading research, innovation, educational and



regulatory body working to advance psychotherapy for the benefit of all. We have a register of more than 8,000 individual members, who offer a range of therapy approaches for couples, individuals, families and groups. We also have more than 70 training

and accrediting organisations for those who wish to become psychotherapists.

• **To find the right therapist for you, or learn how to become a therapist, visit [psychotherapy.org.uk](https://psychotherapy.org.uk)**