

# Healing the Abandonment Wound

*A slow return to self & safety.*

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## What Is the Abandonment Wound?

The abandonment wound is the imprint left on the psyche and nervous system when we experience perceived or actual emotional, physical or psychological disconnection, especially in formative years. It wires the body to fear being left, betrayed, replaced, forgotten or un-nurtured. It is a complex trauma.

### In adulthood, it can show up in the following ways:

- 1- Your worth is wrapped up in being **chosen**- you crave proof that you matter, especially through romantic attention.
- 2- You neglect your own **needs**, or overly fixate on the needs of others - often not even realising you're doing it, because hyper-focusing on others once kept you safe. Often feeling out of tune with your body.
- 3- You don't know when to **walk away** - you stay too long, hoping Love will finally rewrite the pain. (this can also happen in friendships, jobs, situationships etc).
- 4- You confuse **intensity** with **intimacy**- because unsafety feels familiar, safety feels boring or suspicious. Challenging relationships feel more compelling.
- 5- You experience **limerence** - obsessive crushes or fixations on unavailable, inconsistent or unsafe people that feel all-consuming, because they light up the wound.

6- You only feel regulated when **others** are regulated - peace feels unreachable unless everyone else is ok/pleased with you.

7- You **over-give**/over-teach/over-accommodate and/or **under-receive** - giving outwardly (in various ways) is your way of *earning* connecting, because you learned that Love was conditional. Though this often leaves you empty or resentful.

8- You struggle to **trust**- when people show up in healthy ways, a part of you waits for the other shoe to drop.

9- You **replay childhood roles** in adult relationships - the fixer, the caregiver, the appeaser, the invisible one etc.

10- You **downplay** your pain or your needs - afraid it'll be too much and drive people away.

11- You confuse **boundaries** with abandonment - so you either avoid setting them or feel crushed when others do.

12- You fear being a **burden** - so you don't ask for help easily, then feel unseen when no one offers. Or, you feel like you only deserve help in a transactional way.

13- You seek partners who feel **unavailable** to some extent, emotionally or literally - the **chase** mimics early survival patterns you're familiar with.

14 - You seek **validation** more than true compatibility. Being **wanted** feels like a lifeline. "Do they like me?" feels more significant than "Do I sincerely like *them*?"

15 - You subconsciously **test** people to see if they'll leave - picking fights, withdrawing, or acting "too much" to confirm the old fear (protest behaviours).

16 - You chronically **self-abandon** in small (or larger) ways- like minimising or second-guessing your feelings, desires or instincts.

## Where does this Wound Stem From?

- Emotionally unavailable or inconsistent caregivers
- Neglect, abuse or absence
- Parentification or emotional enmeshment
- Being parented by someone who displays narcissism or emotional immaturity
- Sudden or traumatic loss (e.g. death, divorce, ghosting)
- Being bullied or ostracised at school
- Conditional validation/nurture (e.g. only feeling Loved when you perform or please)
- Chronic invalidation of emotional needs

## Let's Talk ABout the Healing Journey...

Healing this wound is not about becoming 'perfectly secure'. It's about becoming aware... and then offering yourself new experiences of safety, connection & self-trust.

You may revisit the same fears at different depths. That doesn't mean you're regressing, it means your system feels safe enough to bring more forward.

# Steps & Tools for Healing

## 1. Interoception: The Practice of Reconnecting with Your Body's Signals

*Why it helps:* Interoception reminds your body that *you are not gone*. That you are listening and responding. This is the opposite of abandonment.

*Try:*

- Meet your body's most *obvious* needs every time they present themselves. Start with the basics before trying to do more (e.g. thirst, bladder release).
- Set reminders on your phone to tune in. Pause. Place a hand on your chest or belly and check-in whenever the reminder pings.
- 'RAIN' is a great tool: (1) *Recognise* what emotion or experience is present (e.g. sadness, fear), (2) *Allow* it to be there without resistance or judgement, (3) *Investigate* with curiosity... notice where it sits in your body & what it might need from you. (4) *Nurture* the feeling, whether through a comforting phrase, gentle touch or an act of meeting its need.
- Talk to your body gently, like a small child, offering yourself that level of compassion & patience

## 2. Challenge Core Narratives Around Worth

The abandonment wound often creates distorted self-beliefs that drive your nervous system. Healing means gently rewriting them.

*Try:*

- Notice your inner dialogue when you feel rejected or overlooked. How do you talk to yourself? What do you ruminate on?
- Counter it with: "What else could be true?" or "What would I say to a child who felt this way?"
- Make a list with 3 columns. In the first column, write down a self-belief you wish to unlearn. Column 2: Write about when/where you remember learning this belief initially. Column 3: write a kinder, newer belief + the actionable things you'll do to reinforce this.

**A shift happens when you realise your worth isn't based on an unavailable person's ability to affirm it.**

### 3. Choosing Safe People

You deserve relationships where your nervous system can soften.

*Try:*

- Approach all connections with more *slowness & intentionality*. If a relationship feels urgent & intense, that's usually the wound flaring up. Offer yourself enough time to truly learn about a new person.
- Set boundaries from the start. Try to catch yourself in the act of self-abandonment and gently replace it with self-advocacy.
- Be honest with yourself. Keep it real. Name red flags when you see them.
- Keep track of green flags (steadiness, honesty, respect for your pace). They may feel boring or confusing at first - push through.
- Choose people who don't require you to minimise or abandon yourself to be Loved.

**Safe relationships can literally rewire the nervous system.**

### 4. Nervous System Regulation (Short- & Long-Term)

In moments of perceived abandonment, your body may launch into survival mode. This is why healing the abandonment wound must include *nervous system work*.

#### **Short-Term Tools (for in-the-moment):**

- Vagus nerve stimulation (humming, gargling, ear/neck massage etc.)
- Use temperate to centre - e.g. warm tea or cool water
- Grounding: feet on the floor, breathing slower, naming objects in the room.
- Name the fear. Gently voice what's coming up.
- EFT Tapping
- Hand over heart: "I am here. I am safe. I'm not alone with this."
- Reach out to a safe person or cuddle a pet.

**Long-Term Regulation Practices (though this one needs its own whole document, but for starters):**

- **Daily rhythm:** Create a soft structure for your day to orient your system around safety wherever possible. Prioritise moments of pause, creativity, slowness, connection, predictability.
- **Somatic therapy /gentle movement:** Any practice that brings you into your body, that creates space for expression - walking, dancing, yoga etc - is like medicine.
- **Sleep hygiene + nervous system nutrition:** Magnesium, Omega-3s, B-vitamins. Sunlight before screen light. Balance your blood sugar.
- **Digital boundaries:** Constant connectivity mimics hypervigilance.
- **Slow joy:** Rituals that ground you in pleasure without overstimulation (e.g. tea-making, sunlight, sound baths)

**Long-term regulation rewires the body to trust that *not all disconnection is danger*.**

## **5. Reparenting the Abandoned Inner Child**

When you feel panic around perceived rejection/abandonment, it is often a younger part of you crying out.

*Try:*

- Close your eyes, visualise little you & ask: "What do you need from me right now?" Try to offer yourself just that.
- Bathe your inner child in Love, compassion, patience and all the other things you needed most but didn't receive as a child.
- Connect with your inner child often. Write. Play. Let joy return. Remind them that you've chosen them. You've chosen to stay.

**Reparenting is a sacred revolution: *you* become the one who doesn't leave.**

## 6. Practising Emotional Permanence

When the abandonment wound is active, Love can feel like it vanishes when we're not receiving immediate proof of it.

*Try:*

- Create a 'proof of Love' box/ journal - store notes, gestures, memories
- Self-reassure with reminders like: "*Their care doesn't vanish just because I can't see/feel it right now...*"
- Ask for reassurance *before* your panic erupts. This builds safe relational habits
- Catch yourself in cycles of meaning-making & practice soothing instead

**Love doesn't only exist in proximity. It lives in memory, intention & consistency.**

## 7. Soothing Limerence + the Obsession With Being Chosen

Limerence is not (necessarily/entirely) Love- it's a coping mechanism that wraps fantasy around the wound. It says: "if they choose me, I'll be okay. I'll finally have proof of my worth." (I'll be posting a longer resource on this topic soon)

*Try:*

- Recognise it. Name it, even if you literally say to yourself "I'm in limerence rn." Become the observer. You are not your thoughts. You're the one who hears them.
- Get curious: "What does this connection offer me... fantasy or actual safety?"
- Drop into your body. You can't think your way out of limerence. That's how it traps you. Instead, practice RAIN / interoception (as explained above).
- Move/express/create something from the feeling. Oftentimes, limerence is energy & emotion that doesn't know where to go. A lot of limerence is a result of being idle or under-stimulated & chasing an emotional high. Find another way to channel that. Find another release.
- Call your power back to you. What you project onto them is a reflection of your own energy, Love, life-force. Make a self-honouring list: all the things you've done/will do to stay close to yourself.
- No-contact with unsafe people

## Journal Prompts for this Wound

When did I first feel emotionally or physically abandoned/unseen/unchosen?

What did I learn to believe about myself through those experiences?

What does 'being chosen' symbolise for me? What do I believe it gives me access to?

What am I afraid will happen if I stop proving/seeking proof that I'm worthy?

What does safety *feel* like in my body? What does unsafety feel like?

How do I try to protect myself from being left? Does this involve abandoning myself?

What parts of me feel unworthy of being chosen or kept?

When/with whom does my abandonment wound flare up most and why might that be?

When/with whom have I felt seen, safe, secure?

What are some small ways I can show up for myself consistently? Ways I can choose myself?

What would it look like to stay with myself through the waves of loneliness or fear?

What would I say to the younger version of me who feared being left/unseen/unheard/unsafe?

What do I *know* (not just feel) about my worth today?

How can I honour my longing for connection while still anchoring into myself?

What can I do, right in this moment, to remind myself I am inherently worthy?