

Change Your Thoughts Heal Your Life

An Eleven Week Self-Help Workbook

*Transform wounds into wisdom
and pain into purpose.
Inspire others to do the same.*



*“Home is knowing.
Knowing your mind, knowing your heart, knowing your courage.
If we know ourselves, we’re always home, anywhere.”
Glinda the Good Witch*

Telka Arend-Ritter L.M.S.W., A.C.S.W.

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About the Author

Telka Arend-Ritter, L.M.S.W., A.C.S.W. is a Michigan licensed Masters level clinical social worker specializing in individual, couple and group solution-focused therapy. She has worked as a behavioral health and addictions therapist, educator and public speaker since 1984.



Telka is the author and facilitator of a unique solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral, short-term program designed to treat stress, mood disorders, relationship problems and recovery issues. A graduate of Michigan State University, Telka and her psychologist husband own a private practice in East Lansing, Michigan. They have one adult daughter, also a Spartan.

Services Available

Telka offers solution-focused, cognitive-behavioral therapy and consulting services, most notably workshops, seminars and educational training in the high-performance skills of mood and behavioral management. Both the content and format of all programs are custom tailored to specific individual or organizational needs.

Contact Telka directly to speak to your organization, conduct classes in your area or to arrange personalized therapeutic services.

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Change Your Thoughts Heal Your Life

A work in progress.....

You may have noticed that this workbook is in the fifth printing. I actively use this material in my individual and group therapy services. Because I am continually adding new treatment information, I am always updating, changing and revising this material.

I appreciate your patience and understanding as you discover small editing errors. I have not submitted this material to a professional editor or publisher. The workbook's low cost is reflective of this decision as are the typographical mistakes that slip through in the process.

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Foreword

Years ago, I heard a story that continues to influence my work as a therapist. I usually begin speaking engagements or seminars by sharing this story I refer to as *The Fly in the Window*.

Picture in your mind, a small housefly buzzing around the perimeter of a very large glass window. On the other side of that glass, is freedom..... so close, just inches away.

In an attempt to connect with the great-out-of-doors, the fly taps its little wings against every inch of that window. Buzz, buzz, bang! Buzz, buzz, bang!

The fly repeats the only strategy it knows-banging the glass. It backs up and dives forward again and again.



“The Definition of Insanity is repeating the same thing over and over, but each time expecting different results.” Alcoholics Anonymous

Try as it might, that little fly cannot break through the solid glass.

Eventually, the buzzing stops.

The little fly’s body rests motionless at the bottom of the windowsill.

Imagine yourself stepping back now, away from the window. Creating this distance provides a larger perspective. From your new vantage point, you are able to see everything more clearly. You notice something you could not see before. Just a few feet away from the large glass window, you notice a door...



...And you are now able to see that the door is wide open.

Like the little fly, you too may feel blocked from making necessary life changes or from reaching your personal goals. If you feel tired, trapped or stuck you may also wish to seek a fresh perspective or a new direction.

Maya Angelou once said, *“You do what you know and when you know better, you do better.”*

As a cognitive-behavioral therapist, I help people solve life’s problems by learning coping strategies and seeking healthier choices. Throughout the 11 weeks, this workbook provides the tools necessary to align your everyday thoughts and actions with your highest personal values. Pain is transformed into purpose. Wounds are replaced with wisdom. Emotional healing is possible. There is an open door.

Let’s go through it together.

Telka

Introduction

*What we think determines what happens to us,
so if we want to change our lives,
we need to stretch our minds.*

Wayne Dyer

Change Your Thoughts, Heal Your Life

I developed the original version of my eleven-week program in 1989 when solution focused, cognitive-behavioral* (SFCB) therapy was gaining popularity by replacing the more traditional long-term psychoanalytic “problem focused” approach. After traveling the Midwest training other mental health professionals in this short-term, cognitive behavioral approach, I decided to offer the same life changing information directly to my patients. The idea of *Life Solutions Stress Management Series* was born. The *Change Your Thoughts, Heal Your Life Workbook* soon followed as a written reminder of the topics and tools covered in my 11-week cognitive-behavioral program. I have revised and updated my seminar series, classes, groups and workbook to combine a cognitive-behavioral model with a mindfulness approach as well as the most recent biological and neurochemical treatment information. Clinical research now confirms that thoughts have a physiological impact on health, emotions and behavior.

In my *Life Solutions Stress Management Series*, participants break through the barriers of family secrets and “no talk” rules. Fear and resistance fade away. Intimacy replaces isolation. Throughout the *Life Solutions* series, participants receive support, direction and valuable cognitive reframing skills.

This *Change Your Thoughts, Heal Your Life Workbook* provides the tools necessary to cope with anxiety, depression and anger. Weekly written assignments assist with reframing emotional wounds, resolving conflict and improving relationship skills. Readers learn to become more mindful, communicate more assertively and manage their stress with improved skills.

Whether you are reading this workbook during a solo self-help journey, as a member of a *Life Solutions* program, or while under the watchful guidance of a trained health care professional, I thank you for taking an interest in my work. I also commend you for choosing this first step toward healing your life. Take a deep breath. When you are ready, let the changes begin!

Telka Arend-Ritter, L.M.S.W., A.C.S.W.

* “Solution Focused, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy involves several essential features: identifying and correcting inaccurate thoughts (cognitive restructuring), helping to engage in healthy enjoyable activities (behavioral activation of coping skills) and enhancing problem solving skills.”
<http://www.med.umich.edu/depression/cbt.htm>

**“Do
one
thing
everyday
that
scares
you”**

Eleanor Roosevelt

*When we are no longer able to change a situation
- we are challenged to change ourselves.
Viktor E. Frankl*

Week #1 Beginning Life Changes



Begin with the End in Mind

“To begin with the end in mind is to begin with the image of the end of your life as the frame of reference by which everything else is measured.

“Begin with the end in mind is based on the principle that all things are created twice:

- Idea: a mental or first creation
- Action: a physical or second creation”

*“Begin with the end in mind” Steven R. Covey, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Free Press: 15th edition, November 2004.*

Taking Responsibility

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy teaches you to become aware of your thoughts and your actions. **Mindfulness** is the tool that helps create inner awareness. Once aware, you may consider your intention. You have a choice whether or not to align your thoughts, beliefs and values with your actions, behaviors or goals.

You may not always choose what happens to you (criticism, injustice, betrayal, hardship, crime, violence, accidents/injury or loss) And you may not always choose how you feel (fearful, angry, guilty, sad, insecure or lonely) but you always choose your response.

Stimulus:		Response
<p><i>(May be internal or external.)</i> <i>Internal = your physical sensations and emotions</i> <i>External = things outside your body such as other people, situations and events.)</i> Stimulus Examples: <i>Stress/anxiety/depression</i> <i>Arguments/conflict</i> <i>Criticism/guilt/shame</i> <i>Verbal abuse</i> <i>Bullying/intimidation</i> <i>Betrayal</i> <i>Abandonment</i> <i>Injustice/unfairness</i> <i>Change & Challenges</i> <i>Accidents/Injury</i> <i>Divorce/Loss/Death</i></p>	<p>You have A choice</p> <p>“Responsible” means: You are ABLE to CHOOSE Your Response.</p> <p>What is your intention?</p>	<p>You may choose YOUR response:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Destructive Blame/Anger/Rage <i>Feeling stuck in blame, anger, grudges and resentment.</i> <i>Waiting for “them” to change.</i><input type="checkbox"/> Wounded/ Victim/ Martyr <i>Feeling stuck in worry & helplessness: feeling unloved, inferior & abandoned.</i> <i>Waiting for “them” to change.</i><input type="checkbox"/> Avoid/ Deny/Escape Blame, worry, & anger fuel self-defeating behaviors such as: <i>over-eating, smoking, gossip, affairs, unhealthy relationships, excessive spending, shopping, gambling, alcohol/drug use or work-a-holic avoidance.</i> <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Choose Dignity & Self-Respect: <i>Align actions with values</i> <i>Role model & problem solve</i> <i>using healthy coping skills.</i>

“Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

Viktor Frankl

Week #1 Beginning Life Changes Overview

Change Your Thoughts, Heal Your Life

This self-help workbook has two components:

1. This written workbook material.
2. Personal application and discussion of the workbook material.

To succeed with this workbook, you cannot just *read* it. You must *live* it. Most readers fail attempts at “self-help” because they use workbook collection as a defense mechanism *against* change. “Yes I have the book. I have lots of books, what more do you want?” I want you to commit to completing the assignments and implementing changes, and then teach everything you learn in this workbook to someone else.

“We teach what we need to learn.” --Gloria Steinem

Workbook basics

1. Using the workbook: This workbook includes tools to enhance your personal growth.

- ❖ You cannot practice new skills if you are too sick, too tired or too stressed to comprehend new ideas. In Week #1 Beginning Life Changes, I have included the “*Creating the Best Results*” inventory to ensure maximum results. Refer back to this inventory throughout the workbook. Use it as a very basic tool.

2. Self-rated tests: This workbook includes several self-rated tests. Complete each test and then retake the tests as often as you like. Note the progress you are making.



3. Definition of “emotional health”: The term “emotional health” refers to your ability to work through your full range of emotions. You demonstrate emotional health when your emotions are congruent with your life events. When something good happens, you have happy feelings. When something sad happens, you have depressed feelings. Sometimes emotions are unstable. Sometimes emotions are not congruent with life events or may lead to self-destructive actions. As life gets harder, healthy coping skills become more essential. This workbook differentiates between normal emotional responses to stress (which require improved coping skills) and biochemical mood disorders (which require improved coping skills plus a medical evaluation). Mindful alignment of both thought and action are necessary for emotional healing. Emotional health allows you to align your behavior with your values. This alignment helps you maintain your dignity and self-respect. To gain the most from this workbook, you must become “responsible.”

- ❖ Response able: refers to being *able* to *choose* your *response*. (Stephen Covey).
- ❖ Make decisions based on your values, not based on your emotions.
- ❖ “Be the change you seek.” *Ghandi*. Only through action is knowledge transformed into wisdom.

4. Participate. This workbook is interactive. “*Begin with the end in mind.*” (Stephen Covey). Create a personal agenda for each section of the workbook. You will gain from the workbook exactly what you put into it. Write in the workbook. Record notes. Do your homework. Share your learning with others.

5. Own YOUR healing.

“A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior.”

Melody Beattie, 1987

Focus on *your* inner direction, *your* choices and *your* change. You may notice an urge to blame, criticize or judge others. You may become distracted with an overwhelming urge to give advice to others. You may have thoughts of giving this workbook to someone else before you have demonstrated permanent changes within yourself. *Focusing on another's actions and choices is a defense against working on yourself.*

Giving advice is easier than *living* advice. You may try to escape and avoid your painful emotional work by blaming your parents, your partners or your past. Blame is the opposite of insight. Do not get detoured by blame. Focus only on your healing.

6. Do not abuse alcohol or drugs while working through this material.

Yes, you read that correctly. You may take medications as prescribed, but mood-altering with alcohol or illegal drugs will stunt your progress. If you are unable to stop abusing mood-altering substances, seek and complete addiction recovery before resuming this workbook.

7. Be open to change. “*A mind is like a parachute, it only functions when it's opened.*” James Dewar

8 “Problems were never solved with the same type of thinking that created them.” Albert Einstein.

9. “It's not what happens to you that determines how far you will go in life; it is how you handle what happens to you.” Zig Ziglar

10. Breathe, Relax.....Enjoy.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters



1. I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost...I am hopeless.
It isn't my fault.
It takes forever to find a way out.

2. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall in again.
I can't believe I am in the same place.
But, it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

3. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in...it's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

4. I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.



5. I walk down another street.

Portia Nelson 1980

Portia Nelson's poem *Autobiography in Five Short Chapters* © copyright 1993 from her book *There Is A Hole In My Sidewalk*, Beyond Words Publishing, 20827 Norwest Rd. Hillsboro Oregon.

Stages of Emotional Health: How to Heal

(Also known as Boo-Boo Theory)

***“No hurt survives for long without our help,”
She said and then she kissed me and sent me out to play again
for the rest of my life.***

Brian Andreas



Children raised in healthy families are loved, supported, mentored and guided into adulthood. Children raised in wounded families are neglected, abandoned and frightened into adulthood. They report feelings of helplessness, anger, and loss. Survivors of these wounded backgrounds ask, *“What is normal? How should I feel? How do I move past this pain?”* This is where Boo-Boo Theory can help. I use Boo-Boo Theory to describe the stages necessary to heal emotionally wounded lives.

When a small child raised in a healthy family experiences her first injury, loving arms sweep her up into safety. *“It is okay honey, I am here. I am so sorry this happened to you. I know this really hurts, yes I know baby. I’m here.”*

As the child’s sobbing subsides, the loving caregiver gently empathizes and explains what is happening. Words are given to the painful experience. *“Look at this, you made a Boo-Boo. Boo-boos hurt. See the red stuff? That is your blood. Your blood is washing out the germs. You are so good. Your body knows just how to heal you. Way to go!”* The child snuffles. *“I know sweetie. Boo-Boos really hurt. It is okay to cry. I cry when I am hurting too. Let all of those tears come out.”* More hugs, a soothing voice and calm acceptance of emotional pain.

The child is now ready to learn how to heal her pain. *“Let’s hold a cold cloth on your Boo-Boo to help it feel better. There now, does that feel better? Good thing you heal so well. Here, I’ll kiss it all better.”* The magic of a Band-Aid and a loving kiss seal the deal, thus the first lesson in healing Boo-Boos is complete. Every stage is guided with loving, healing energy.

Working through painful emotions and stressful events requires three stages:

Stage 1. Acknowledge: Identify the problems (**Mind**) and Experience the emotions (**Body**).

Stage 2. Learn to understand & heal uncomfortable emotions by applying healthy **copng skills**.

Stage 3. Let go and grow!



As children grow older, they become more independent. They learn to apply their own cold cloths and fetch their own Band-Aids. Eventually children learn to trust themselves enough to heal their own Boo-Boos.

Emotional wounds heal like Boo-Boos. Emotional healing occurs when you learn to identify your painful feelings and to trust yourself enough to experience your body's response to each emotion. You allow yourself to witness every emotion spontaneously and without judgment. You learn that acknowledging pain and shedding tears are often necessary stages of the healing process. You develop coping skills that become your "cold cloth" to dull the emotional pain enough so that you are able to learn, grow and move on. This new mindfulness allows you to trust your ability as a self-healer. Your mindfulness allows you to listen to your own inner voice to guide you through difficult life decisions, significant losses and challenging emotional events.

Intentional practice of emotional health is a choice. When you choose to become a self-healer, you also choose to face the emotional pain that facilitates the healing process. Not everyone chooses emotional health. Some people sabotage their health by choosing self-defeating behaviors to deny, avoid or escape emotional pain. Rather than work through the pain, self-defeating behaviors are negative coping skills with negative consequences. You decide whether you choose to heal by using positive coping strategies or to stunt growth and healing with self-sabotage.

In the following material, you will learn:

- ❖ How to identify, experience, learn and then let go of your emotional pain.
- ❖ How to avoid self-sabotage by establishing healthy coping skills.
- ❖ How to make mindful decisions that will heal your life then live your best life.
- ❖ How to become the wise and loving soul you have always wanted to be.

I designed this workbook to light your path toward self-healing. You decide when to begin your journey.



Stages of Emotional Health

(Stages of *working through* your emotions.)

The term *emotional health* refers to emotions matching the situation or event. Claiming to be “fine” before you slam the door is *not* an example of emotional health. Smiling as you describe a traumatic event is *not* emotional health. Emotional health begins with mindful awareness of your emotions. This awareness is both intellectual, (Mind: label the emotion) and physical (Body: physiologically experience the emotion). The order of your awareness may vary. Sometimes you will identify your mood first. “*I was so angry, I smashed my cell phone.*” Other times your physical response will be your first clue. “*I didn’t even realize I was angry until after I smashed my cell phone to pieces.*”

I refer to this first stage of identifying and experiencing your emotions as “ACKNOWLEDGE.”

Many people from wounded families report awareness of only a few emotions. They say, “*I’m fine or I’m pissed,*” and “*I stuff it for a long time then I just explode!*” Women will often say, “*I can tell you how my husband feels or how my kids’ feel, but I never know how I feel.*” Prolonged exposure to stress may result in feeling “numb” or “detached from emotion.” In the chart below each emotion you are able to identify and experience.

Stage 1: ACKNOWLEDGE



(Mind) **Identify** your emotions by labeling them.

- Happy
- Joy
- Proud
- Love
- Confident
- Peaceful
- Calm
- Trust
- Accomplished
- Secure
- Responsible
- Independent
- Hopeful

- Sad
- Anger
- Ashamed
- Fear
- Embarrassed
- Guilt
- Worry
- Mistrust
- Inferior
- Insecure
- Helpless
- Dependent
- Hopeless



(Body) **Experience** your emotions:
Awareness of physical sensations.

- Sleep: Peaceful Disturbed
- Appetite: Stable ↑ ↓
- Muscles: Relaxed Tense
- Health problems:
 - Pain
 - Digestion problems
 - Bowel problems
 - Hypertension
 - Fatigue
 - Tears. Crying spells
 - ↓Memory, focus
 - Fight or flight
 - Other symptoms

Stage 2 LEARN. Emotional health requires learning healthy coping skills. Rather than remaining stuck in emotional pain, Stage 2 applies “intention”. Once you identify and experience your emotions, what is next? What is your intention? I stated earlier that “responsibility” refers to your *ability to choose your response*.

**“LEARN” is the second stage of emotional health.
This stage offers the opportunity to
transform wounds into wisdom and pain into purpose.**

Choice #1: You have the opportunity to work through emotional pain using coping skills. Coping skills are behaviors, thoughts, resources or tools to assist you in the process of working through painful emotions. Example: *“When I feel upset I take a long walk followed by a hot bubble bath. I read my motivational materials and journal my thoughts until I feel better. I respect myself for the way I cope with my emotions.”*

Choice #2: You also have the option of avoiding, denying or escaping your emotional pain by choosing self-defeating behaviors. Self-defeating behaviors are coping skills gone bad. Self-defeating behaviors relieve emotional pain but they also have negative consequences. **Bad habits and addictions are both examples of self-defeating behaviors.** Example: *“When I feel upset I comfort myself with junk food, followed by shopping. I am overweight, have wardrobes of all sizes, huge credit card debt and I feel out of control. Honestly, I don’t really feel better after I binge or spend. I am embarrassed. I am not a good role model. I don’t really like myself.”*

Responding to painful emotions with self-defeating behaviors creates self-loathing. Let’s learn to cope with uncomfortable emotions in a more positive, more mindful way.

Learn: Intention: Be the change you seek. Align coping skills with values.

Stage 2 requires that you learn from your emotions. Take a moment to reflect on these questions.

- 1. Are my feelings based on facts and reality or have I exaggerated?
- 2. What is my intention?
- 3. What purpose is served by my feeling this way?
- 4. When have I felt like this before?
- 5. What are my choices? *Do I want to complain or do I want to problem solve?*
- 6. How do my thoughts and my actions align with my values and goals?
- 7. How could I practice coping skills?
- 8. What advice would I give a beloved who feels as I do now?
- 9. Am I living my best life?
- 10. If I am not living my best life, how could I? *What’s my best response?*

Stage 3. LETTING GO

Thus far, you have learned that



EMOTIONAL HEALING = PROCESS OF WORKING THROUGH EMOTIONS

People often ask, “*Can I just skip ahead to the “Letting Go” section? I want to feel better NOW. I want to be OVER this emotional pain.*”

The answer is no. The third stage of emotional health is last in the sequence for a reason. Let us review the order:

Stage 1: ACKNOWLEDGE (Identify and Experience emotions: mind and body).

Stage 2: LEARN (Intention: Transform wounds into wisdom and pain into purpose using healthy coping skills).

Once you have successfully completed stage one and two, you will discover that stage three is the result of a job well done. It just happens. Once you *work through* it, you are able to get OVER it.

Stage 1 + Stage 2 = Stage 3



Stage 3. LET GO and GROW

Once a lesson is learned, the emotional pain heals. Transformation occurs.

“Letting go” is the natural result of *working through* your pain.

Example: When remembering your past, you **identify** emotional wounds of sadness, anger, blame, guilt, anxiety and shame. You grieve over what you always wanted, but never received. You rage over what you could not stop and that which you had no control. Your emotional pain is raw and alive. You **experience** all of your wounded feelings. Your body reacts with sleep difficulty, appetite disturbances and stress related illnesses. You have a choice regarding your emotional pain. You may choose to **learn** or you may choose to *self-destruct*. You may choose to *heal* or you may prolong and repeat your *pain*.

Eventually you learn to take responsibility for creating the life you desire. When you release the need to blame, you begin to replace blame with intention. You learn that forgiveness is a gift you give yourself. Forgiveness is not about *them*. You learn to treat yourself as a beloved person. You learn the coping skills necessary to feel worthy of your self-healing. When you actively pursue your dreams, you realize that you have **let go** of your emotional wounds.

“Letting go” happens while you are busy making healthier choices.

**You now understand the stages of emotional health.
It is time to make your decision.**

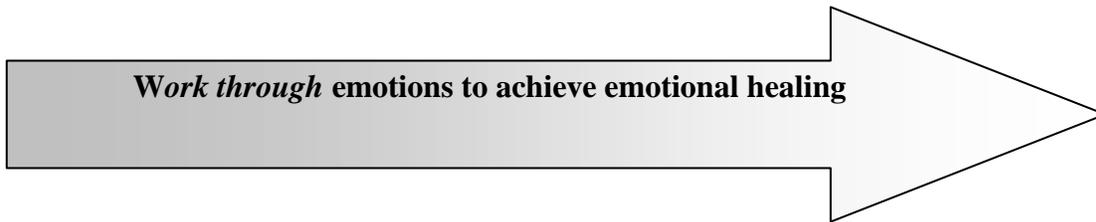
**Do you
work through
your emotional pain
using healthy coping
skills ?**

Or

**Do you
deny, avoid and escape difficult
emotional work by using
self-defeating behaviors?**

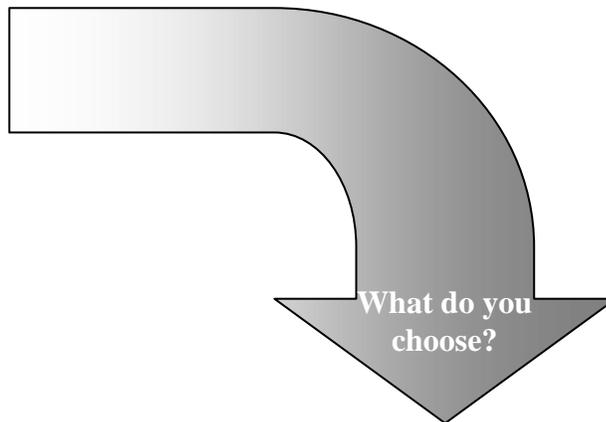
The choice is yours. The next two pages explain the stages of emotional health in contrast to self-sabotage in a detailed visual layout. In your mind, picture this layout as a choice at all times.

Choice #1 Cope.



Choice # 2 Cop Out

Deny, avoid and escape emotions with self-defeating behaviors: bad habits and addictions.



STAGES OF EMOTIONAL HEALTH

EMOTIONAL HEALTH = PROCESS OF WORKING THROUGH EMOTIONS
With coping skills

Stage 1: Acknowledge

Identify (Mind) & Experience (Body)

(Also referred to as your Internal Stimulus)

(Mind) Label Emotions:		Bodily Sensations:
Joy	Sadness	Sleep
Happiness	Anger	Appetite
Peace	Anxiety	Muscles
Acceptance	Jealousy	Digestion
Pride	Embarrassment	Pain
Serenity	Resentment	Fatigue
Trust	Mistrust	Irritability
Confidence	Inferiority	Restlessness
Security	Insecurity	Memory, focus
Healthy Guilt	Shame	Tears
Independence	Dependence	Hypertension
Hope	Hopeless	Illness

Stage 2: Learn

(Response)

Consider emotions as OPPORTUNITIES for understanding.

Rather than feeling defeated by your emotions, use your emotions as an opportunity to problem solve and to practice coping skills.

- * What is your intention?
- * What are your choices?
- * How could you cope?
- * What may be learned?
- * What must change?
- * What is the *right action to role model*?

Stage 3:

Let Go and Grow

Emotional pain heals when coping skills are applied.

Letting go is the natural result of working through emotional pain.

Letting go evolves over time.

Letting go transforms wounds into wisdom and pain into purpose.

When *EXPERIENCING* Your *EMOTIONS* becomes too uncomfortable, **COPING SKILLS relieve your pain.**

Coping skills are behaviors, thoughts, resources or tools that assist you in the process of working through painful emotions. Examples of coping skills: meditation, healthy nutrition, exercise, recreation, positive attitude, cognitive reframing, problem-solving strategies and medication as prescribed.

Self Defeating Behaviors: Cop Out



A **cop out** is when you relieve your pain and stress with a self-destructive quick fix that allows you to deny, stuff, avoid or escape painful emotions.

Coping out with self-sabotage & self-defeating behaviors creates problems in your life. These **Bad Habits** and **Addictions** mess up your life with negative and harmful consequences.

**You choose
your
response.
Cope
or
Cop out?**

**Are you
living
your
best
life?**

Bad Habits

Addictions

Habitual complaining, blaming, worrying

Excessive spending, shopping, clutter, computer gaming, eating and obesity.

Dysfunctional relationships: gossip co-dependence: (obsessing about other people's behavior and thoughts) affairs, betrayal, excessive porn

Rage addiction: yelling, screaming, temper tantrums, threats, verbal abuse physical abuse, domestic violence

Substance Addictions: caffeine, nicotine, alcohol, prescription drug abuse, illegal drug use.

Sexual addiction

Self-mutilation

Crime

Creating the Best Results: Coping Skills Enhance Progress

Use the list below as a guide to make the most out of the time, energy and money you are investing in your self-healing. Remember: **“Responsible” means *response able: able to choose your response.***

**To achieve goals you have never achieved before,
you must be willing to do things you have never done before.**

- 1. Practice good health care.** *If you have not seen a doctor within the past 12 months, make an appointment to see one now.* Ask for laboratory tests to assess potential medical problems.
- 2. Become alcohol free and discontinue marijuana use.** Alcohol is a depressant. Marijuana negatively effects motivation. Both interfere with self-healing and insight.
- 3. Limit or reduce caffeine.** 250 mg or more (three or more servings) of caffeine may cause caffeine intoxication or caffeine withdrawal. Symptoms include: sleep disturbance, restlessness, poor concentration, agitation, irritability, heart palpitations, shakiness, headaches and stomach upset.
- 4. Improve your nutrition and eating habits.** Food allergies and poor nutrition negatively affect your overall health including your mood, energy level, concentration and sleep. Start to recognize hunger signals in your body. Eat only when you feel hunger. Choose healthy food to fuel your body. Avoid using food for emotional comfort or self-sabotage. Consider the possibility of food addiction. Watch the video featuring David Kessler MD author of the 2009 best-selling book *The End of Overeating* at <http://youtu.be/3OqJhbSeUI8>
- 5. Practice physical activity.** Physical activity reduces stress and produces “feel good” brain chemistry. Consult your physician prior to beginning new strenuous physical activity.
- 6. Create a safe environment for yourself and your family.** Decide to stop all name-calling, yelling, screaming, blaming and shaming. Choose to stop all hitting, slapping, pushing and spanking. **Refuse to participate in violence or abuse of any kind.** You will not feel successful while living with verbal or physical abuse.
- 7. Consider the option of a psychiatric evaluation.** A trained health care professional can evaluate symptoms of anxiety, depression, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), chronic pain, insomnia and addictions.
- 8. Practice healthy sleep habits.** Set a regular bedtime. Plan for enough sleep to wake feeling rested.



- 9. *De-clutter, clean and organize your living space.** Your environment strongly influences your mood and energy. Sort through your life both literally and figuratively. Need help? Visit www.flylady.net or Gretchen Rubin at www.happiness-project.com, www.youtube.com/user/GretchenRubinNY. Only focus on what you can do. Never focus on what you cannot accomplish.
- 10. Educate yourself.** Use the Internet or your public library. Watch inspirational, motivational videos on www.ted.com to start your educating yourself. For the playlist of my favorites, visit my www.TelkaArend-Ritter.com or my Facebook page: www.facebook.com/TelkaArendRitter.LMSW
- 11. Create support.** Reach out to healthy, supportive role models. Community support groups are listed on the Internet and in local newspapers.
- 12. Practice mindfulness.** Begin journaling or meditating to increase your awareness of your emotions and thoughts. Read page 23 for easy meditation instructions. The public library and the Internet have free resources for meditation and journaling.
- 13. Begin a hobby or rekindle an old one.** Develop a number of personal interests. Balance your time between work and play.
- 14. Own your time.** This is your life, take responsibility for it. You choose your own time lines and schedules. Choose wisely. Your time reflects the value you place upon yourself.
- 15. Treat yourself like a beloved.** In every thought and action, ask yourself if you are responding to yourself in the same way you would respond to a loved one. Are you living the advice that you would give a best friend?
- 16. Make decisions based on your values, not based on your emotions.** Examples of emotional decisions: *"I did it because I was tired, upset, angry, worried, afraid, lonely"* etc. Values based decisions: *"I did it because I believed in it. It was the right thing to do. I acted as a role model. I did what was right, even when it wasn't easy."*
- 17. Decide to stop codependent thinking:** *"A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior"* (Melody Beattie). Ask yourself "Is this my business?" "Who owns this problem?" and "Do I have any control over this?"
- 18. Be a role model, not a critic. 19. Be a problem solver, not a complainer.**
- 20. "Be the change that you seek." Gandhi.**

Beginning Life Changes: Stress Prevention Test.

Score each item below according to how true each statement is for you (within the past 2 weeks).

(1) = Almost always (2) = Usually (3) = Sometimes (4) = Rarely (5) = Never

- ___1. During an average week, my overall intake of food balances out to be healthy and nutritious.
- ___2. BMI: normal = score 1, Over weight= score 3, Obese and extreme obese= score 5. (Refer to BMI chart on the next page).
- ___3. I schedule a regular bedtime and I prioritize and maintain healthy sleep habits.
- ___4. I have at least one person within 50 miles who will help me in an emergency.
- ___5. My lifestyle is active to the point of perspiration at least three times a week.
- ___6. I am smoke free. (Non-smokers score 1, second-hand smokers score 3, smokers score 5).
- ___7. I drink no more than 1 alcoholic drink per day (women). No more than 2 drinks per day (men). Non-drinkers score 1. (There will be more alcohol information on upcoming pages).
- ___8. I drink fewer than five servings (250 mg) of caffeine per day. (No caffeine score 1).
- ___9. I give and receive affection regularly. (Pets count!)
- ___10. I gain strength from my beliefs.
- ___11. I regularly attend social, recreational or leisure activities with others.
- ___12. I spend time daily doing something that I enjoy.
- ___13. I speak openly with one or more trusted people at least once a week.
- ___14. I practice good health care by attending regular medical, dental and vision checkups.
- ___15. I pace my day so that I feel accomplished, successful, comfortable and healthy.
- ___16. I set personal goals for myself and spend time achieving them.
- ___17. I do something for fun at least once a week.
- ___18. I consistently put important tasks ahead of unimportant tasks.
- ___19. I manage my expenses. I budget within my income.
- ___20. I practice relaxation, breathing exercises, meditation or prayer once each day.

Any item scored (1) or (2)-great job! You are preventing stress well in those areas. Any item scored (4) or (5) indicates room for improvement.

Body Mass Index Chart for Adults

Calculate your body Mass Index

BMI	Height (in)																		
	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72	73	74	75	76
Wgt. (lbs)	4'10"	4'11"	5'0"	5'1"	5'2"	5'3"	5'4"	5'5"	5'6"	5'7"	5'8"	5'9"	5'10"	5'11"	6'0"	6'1"	6'2"	6'3"	6'4"
100	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13	13	12
105	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	16	16	16	15	15	14	14	14	13	13
110	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15	14	14	13
115	24	23	23	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	14	14
120	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16	15	15	15
125	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	18	18	17	17	17	16	16	15
130	27	26	25	25	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16	16
135	28	27	26	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	19	19	18	18	17	17	16
140	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18	17
145	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	23	23	22	21	21	20	20	19	19	18	18
150	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19	18
155	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	20	20	19	19
160	34	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21	20	20
165	35	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21	20
170	36	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	22	22	21	21
175	37	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	23	22	21
180	38	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	23	22
185	39	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23	23
190	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24	23
195	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	27	27	26	25	24	24
200	42	40	39	38	37	36	34	33	32	31	30	30	29	28	27	26	26	25	24
205	43	41	40	39	38	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29	28	27	26	26	25
210	44	43	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29	28	27	26	26
215	45	44	42	41	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27	26
220	46	45	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28	28	27
225	47	46	44	43	41	40	39	38	36	35	34	33	32	31	31	30	29	28	27
230	48	47	45	44	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	30	29	28
235	49	48	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29	29
240	50	49	47	45	44	43	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30	29
245	51	50	48	46	45	43	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	32	31	30
250	52	51	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31	30
255	53	52	50	48	47	45	44	43	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32	31
260	54	53	51	49	48	46	45	43	42	41	40	38	37	36	35	34	33	33	32
265	56	54	52	50	49	47	46	44	43	42	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33	32
270	57	55	53	51	49	48	46	45	44	42	41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34	33
275	58	56	54	52	50	49													

BMI Scoring

Normal Weight = 19-24
 Obese = 30-39

Overweight = 25-29
 Extreme Obesity = 40-54

Note: BMI values rounded to the nearest whole number. BMI categories based on CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) criteria.

Beginning Life Changes ADHD Inventory:

Do distractions, difficulty staying on task or problems finishing projects interfere with your success? (Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may be causing the problem.

According to the National Institute of Health, ADHD affects an estimated 4.4 percent of adults in the United States in a given year. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and very high levels of activity.*

Below is an ADHD checklist from author Jeffrey Freed's 2007 book, *4 Weeks To An Organized Life with AD/HD*. **Check the box for each YES answer.**

- 1. Do you procrastinate, regularly putting off tasks that, for you, require a lot of mental energy?
- 2. Do you have difficulty completing tasks or projects?
- 3. Do you often forget or find yourself late for appointments?
- 4. Do you feel restless or full of nervous energy and compelled to do things?
- 5. Do you have trouble organizing yourself to do a complex task?
- 6. Do you fidget or squirm, needing to move some part of your body if you have to sit or keep still?

Consider these as well

- 1. Do you find yourself lost in your own thoughts, even when someone is talking to you?
- 2. Do you have difficulty throwing things away, even if they have little value or specific usefulness to you?
- 3. Do you react quickly to conflicts?
- 4. Do you sometimes blurt things out then wish that you hadn't spoken?
- 5. Do you take things to heart, finding yourself easily hurt and sensitive?
- 6. Do you find most of these problems disappear when you have something fun or interesting to do?

Scoring: Yes to 6 or more of the 12 symptoms suggests the need for an evaluation from a trained health care professional. Untreated ADHD may interfere with your ability to finish the assignments in this workbook or follow-through with practical application of the tools.

Beginning Life Changes Inventory: When is substance use a problem?

Definitions: One drink= 5 oz. of wine, 12 oz. of beer, 1.5 oz. liquor (80 proof).

Moderation: According to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*, “drinking in moderation is defined as having no more than 1 drink per day for women and no more than 2 drinks per day for men. This definition is referring to the amount consumed on any single day and is not intended as an average over several days.”

Binge drinking: The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism defines binge drinking “as the amount of alcohol leading to a blood alcohol content (BAC) of 0.08, which, for most adults, would be reached by consuming five drinks for men or four for women over a 2-hour period.”

Denial: “A psychological defense mechanism in which confrontation with a personal problem or with reality is avoided by denying the existence of the problem or reality.” *Don’t even know I am lying.*

Use of alcohol may be either a coping skill or a self-defeating behavior. Use the criteria below to determine whether your use has become a problem. The information below is based on the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V updated in 2013) the manual that physicians, therapists and insurance companies use to define and diagnose substance abuse and dependence. Please notify your therapist or a physician if you identify a problem.

DSM V- Substance Use Disorder: *Check all that apply in a 12 months period

- Use results in an inability to fulfill a major obligation
- Recurrent legal problems.
- Continuing to use despite the objections of others or evidence that use is causing problems.
- Increased tolerance
- Withdrawal symptoms
- Using greater amounts than intended or using more frequently than intended.
- Unsuccessful efforts to reduce, control or quit use.
- Excessive amounts of time involved in getting, using or recovering from the substance.
- Use causes reduction or impairment in ability to fulfill major social, family, school or job duties.
- Use in potentially dangerous situations: driving under the influence, use near small children, use while operating machines or using sharp objects.

**Two or three symptoms indicate a mild substance use disorder, four or five symptoms indicate a moderate substance use disorder, and six or more symptoms indicate a severe substance use disorder.*

When is Caffeine use a problem?

Caffeine intoxication is defined as consumption of *250 mg or more of caffeine And 5 or more of the following symptoms: Check all that apply.

- Muscle twitching
- Restlessness
- Flushed face
- Stomach upset
- Nervousness
- Increased urination
- Heart pounding
- Excitement
- Can’t sit still
- Insomnia
- Rambling speech
- Rambling thoughts.

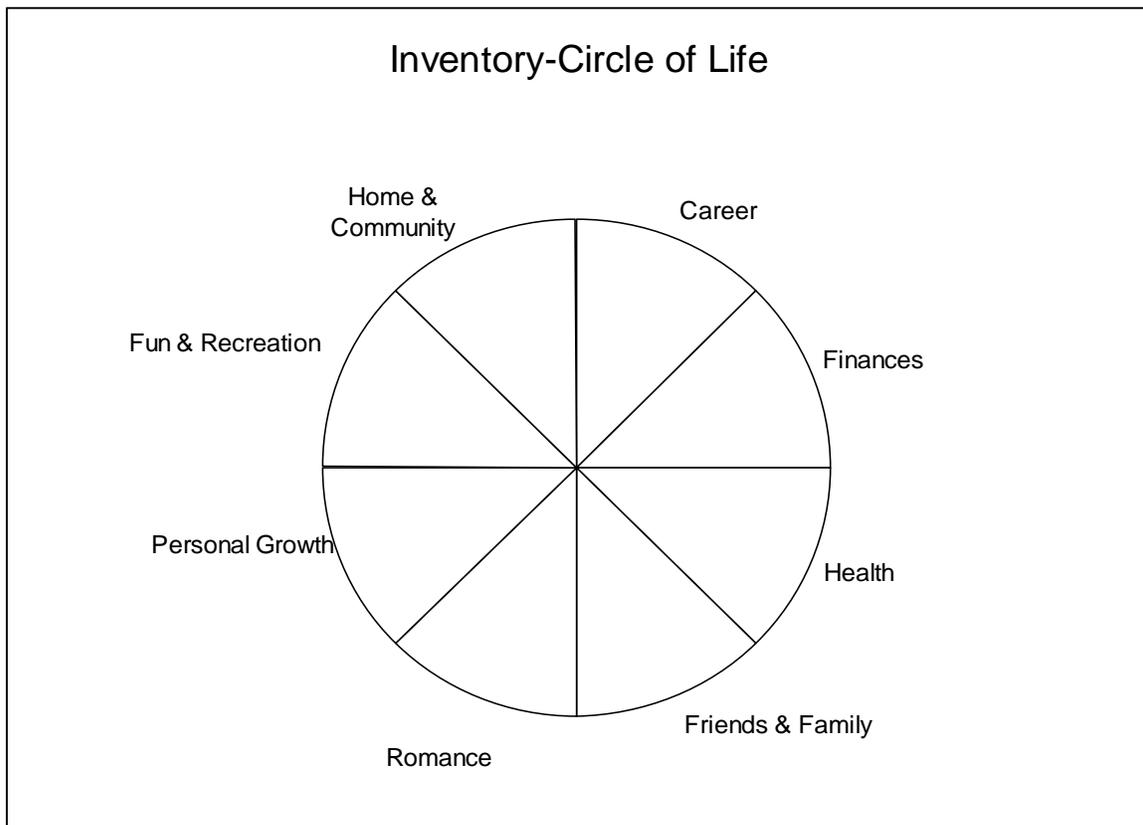
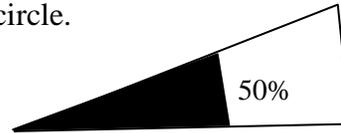
*12 oz soft drinks’ caffeine range s from 33.9 mg (Coke) to 55.2mg (Diet Mountain Dew).

*8 oz serving of brewed coffee ranges from 95 to 200 mg.

Beginning Life Changes Inventory: Are You Living Your Best Life?

Instructions: The eight pie-shaped sections in the Circle of Life below represent the various areas of your life. Using the center of the circle as zero percentage and the outer edge of each pie shape as 100%, rate your level of satisfaction with each area by shading in percentage of the pie section that indicates your level of satisfaction.

Example: If you are 50% satisfied with your career, draw a line across half of the pie shape. Darken the half nearest the center of the circle.



Is this your best life?

Score: 80-100% satisfaction = no action is required.

Less than 80% = **Does your satisfaction rating match your values?** Example: “You decide that your 50% satisfaction with career is OK, because you’re in school or focused on parenting.” Or “60% satisfaction with health or romance is OK because you’ve accepted your chronic medical condition.”

✓ **If you desire a higher satisfaction rating, what improvements will you make?**

✓ **Create an action plan to improve the least satisfactory elements of your life.**

Beginning Life Changes: Mindful Breathing Meditation

Use this technique to relax your mind and body.

Practice mindful breathing regularly as you continue through this workbook.

1. Position your body comfortably in a chair. Adjust your position until your whole body is comfortable and relaxed. Place your feet firmly on the floor. Now wiggle your toes. Your feet have grounded you into this moment. Focus on your wiggling toes. You are not time traveling. Your attention is here in this moment. Relax your toes. 
2. As you are mindful of being present in your body, take a deep breath. Notice a cooling sensation around your nostrils as you inhale. As you exhale, notice the warmth around your nostrils. Mindful of your breathing and this cooling then warming sensation, calmly continue to breathe deeply. Fill your lungs with air. Hold it. Gently exhale your warm breath. 
3. As your lungs fill with air and you are aware of the coolness around your nostrils, say to yourself "*All is well in this moment.*" Hold the breath for a moment and then warmly exhale, saying, "*I choose peace. I am safe.*" Repeat this process until your body is relaxed.
4. You are now focused on your breathing. Your body is relaxed. As you experience this pleasant state, let your mind create a visual image of a special peaceful place. This image may be anywhere you feel peaceful-indoors or out-of-doors. Examples: in a cozy bedroom, in a warm bubble bath, under a shade tree near the beach or even floating in the sky on a big fluffy cloud.
5. Once you have envisioned your special place-a place filled with pleasant thoughts, settle deeper into that imagery. Breathe in the freshness of the air.
6. As you inhale deeply, affirm that all is well in this place. As you exhale, affirm the beauty and perfection of your surroundings. Let your body melt into the special setting you have lovingly created in the safety of your mind.
7. You are filled with peace. You feel connected to time and space. You are safe here. This is a sacred place. All problems seek healthy solutions in this place.
8. As you breathe mindfully, thank yourself for finding this peaceful sanctuary. Exhale knowing that you can return to this peaceful state at anytime. You will always feel calm and secure here. You are loved here.
9. When you are ready, slowly return your mind to the present with the understanding that you always have the ability to choose this relaxed sanctuary of inner peace.
10. Take another moment. Open your eyes feeling relaxed and refreshed.

Quick refresher for when you have less time:

- ❖ Close your eyes. Place your feet firmly on the ground. Wiggle your toes. Relax.
- ❖ Take a deep breath. Notice a cooling sensation around your nostrils as you inhale. As you exhale, notice the warmth around your nostrils. Calmly focus on your nostrils as you inhale and exhale.
- ❖ With each new inhale, remind yourself that a new breath is a new start. Breathe in new insight and new awareness. Each fresh breath is a fresh start.
- ❖ Raise and lower your shoulders in a comfortable stretch.
- ❖ Tense and release the muscles of your body as you inhale and exhale deeply.
- ❖ You have physically reduced tension and relaxed your body.
- ❖ Repeat this mindful breathing several times until you feel calm and clear.

Points to remember

 **Relaxation, meditation and deep breathing exercises may feel awkward and difficult at first.** Yes, I felt stupid the first time too. Do not give up! An overwhelming urge to get up to go “do something...anything...” is normal. Just stay calm despite your urge to flee. You are not failing when your mind races and your muscles twitch. It is all part of the process of calming down and relaxing. Practice makes it much easier. As you spend more quiet time with yourself, you will learn to trust yourself. You will become more comfortable focusing your attention inward.



 **Just a few minutes of focused breathing and guided thoughts are enough to make a BIG difference.** You do not need 20 or 30 free minutes to practice the techniques above. You will notice your body responding in just a few moments. Never use “no time” as an excuse. Start practicing your mindful breathing each time you wait at a stop light or take a break from work. Take a moment to breathe mindfully each time you shower or bathe.

If you prefer, you may watch and listen to meditation videos on line:

Clearing Negativity: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9ytcwBgJNE>

Mindfulness Meditation, Dr. Jill N. Henry: www.slidehare.net/DrJill/the-practice-of-mindfulness

Louise Hay: Affirmations: <http://youtu.be/zoVYez7Aa00>

4-minute exercise presents you with a chance to practice mindfulness skills:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=iH3_64mLCU8

Week #1 Beginning Life Changes Homework



1. Review the items in your “Stress Prevention Test” Note the items rated “4” or a “5”. Also note your “Best Life Inventory”. Which unsatisfactory elements of your life are you willing to change? Write them here:

2. List the things you are choosing to DO DIFFERENTLY to achieve the results you are looking for. (Be specific in your action plan.)

3. Set aside a few moments each day to breathe and reflect on your progress. The time set aside is:_____

4. Feel free to report your progress each week to your support group, friends or therapist. Sharing your success with others demonstrates positive role modeling. Working through the lessons and tools in this workbook will keep you motivated and inspire others to do the same.

Optional resources:

- ❖ **Use the bibliography of recommended readings in the back of this workbook to locate additional resources to compliment your journey through this self-help program.** Find those resources at your local library. To access the Capitol Area District Library on the internet, visit www.cadl.org. To access the state of Michigan’s “virtual” library, visit the Michigan electronic library website at: www.Mel.org.
- ❖ **Start practicing meditation and relaxation techniques this week.** For additional help, seek community resources offering free meditation or yoga classes. Several cable networks offer yoga programs. Free guided videos are available on the Internet.
- ❖ **For more information about how your lifestyle affects your longevity, visit www.realage.com.** Take the real age challenge!

Week #2

Stressful Relationships.

Google

Web Images Group News Local

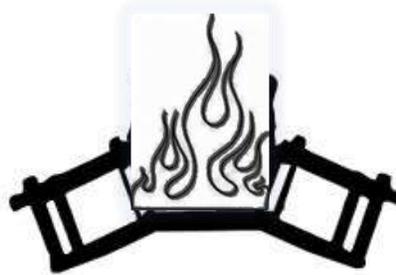
100% Stress-Free Relationships

Google Search I'm Feeling Lucky

No Results

Relationship Stress:

“The hardest thing to learn in life is which bridge to cross
and which to burn.” David Russell



“Relationships-of all kinds-
are like sand held in your hand. Held loosely, with an
open hand, the sand remains where it is. The minute
you close your hand and squeeze tightly to hold on,
the sand trickles through your fingers. You may hold
onto some of it, but most will be spilled.

A relationship is like that. Held loosely, with
respect and freedom for the other person, it is likely
to remain intact. But hold too tightly, too
possessively and the relationship slips away and is
lost.”

Author Unknown

The “Tight Shoes” Analogy Challenge your beliefs

We all have childhood beliefs that we later grow to understand were not actually true. One such belief came in the form of an analogy I refer to as “tight shoes”. I was a young girl trying on shoes before the start of the new school year. “Your feet can’t be *that* big,” I remember hearing my mother say. Her comment made me wonder, could the shoes pinching my feet be the correct size? They must be. My mother, my gene pool, standing beside me in her tiny little feet insisted, “You just couldn’t have grown *that* much.”

In that moment, I remember making the connection between shoes and pain. I formed the belief that shoes are supposed to hurt. That is why Band Aids have special sizes for blisters. For years, I wore shoes like a burden. I endured uncomfortable, ill-fitting shoes much like the women generations before me who endured the confines of girdles and corsets.

I am embarrassed to admit that when the day came for me to purchase *my own* shoes, I did not change my belief. Still believing that shoes hurt, *I chose* to continue buying tight shoes. I remembered TV commercials depicting *other* people rubbing *their* aching feet. Products to treat burning and aching feet lined the drug stores shelves-further proof that shoes hurt. Shoes and pain seemed like a perfect fit.

And so it went for several more years until taking my first step toward the mind shift that would challenge my beliefs. I married a man who did not know that shoes were supposed to hurt. He suggested that if my shoes felt tight, perhaps I could try a larger size. WHAT??? Permission to feel comfortable in shoes? Could it be true?

My final step toward a complete mind-shift arrived with my pregnancy. I was getting bigger *everywhere*. I read in a mothering magazine that during pregnancy women’s feet could actually grow a whole shoe size and that was *okay*. Change was *normal*. Growth was *expected*. For the first time ever, I bought shoes that fit without any pain at all!

I consider myself very lucky. My distorted belief just involved *shoes* and pain. As a behavioral therapist, I treat people who suffer from beliefs that connect *relationships* and pain or even *life* and pain. **The belief in pain is learned through role-modeling, chaotic lifestyles, neglect, domestic violence, abuse and addictions of every kind. Once learned, this belief in pain creates a cycle fueled by self-destructive choices. The cycle continues until healthier thinking and alternate choices transform the wounds into wisdom or opportunity.**

Although my distorted belief was very minor in comparison, I still did not learn to change my life immediately. As long as my belief in pain went unchallenged, I spent my own money purchasing more tight shoes. **I was responsible for *normalizing* my discomfort rather than seeking ways to *heal* it.**

Einstein understood the lesson of tight shoes when he said that problems are never solved with the same type of thinking that created them.

**Change begins once we grant ourselves permission to grow.
With this permission, painful thoughts, behaviors or habits are
transformed into valuable life lessons.**

Over the years, I have received a variety of responses to my tight shoes analogy. Many people confide their secret childhood beliefs that are

“not good enough”

“worthless,”

“unwanted,”

“stupid,”

“ugly,”

“failures,” or even

“unlovable”

because someone told them so.

The courageous people who declare their power to heal and change those beliefs continue to inspire me. My favorite response came in a greeting card sent by a young woman several years after she had completed treatment. She added a personal note detailing her successful recovery and transformed life. That card, now hanging on the back of my office door reads,

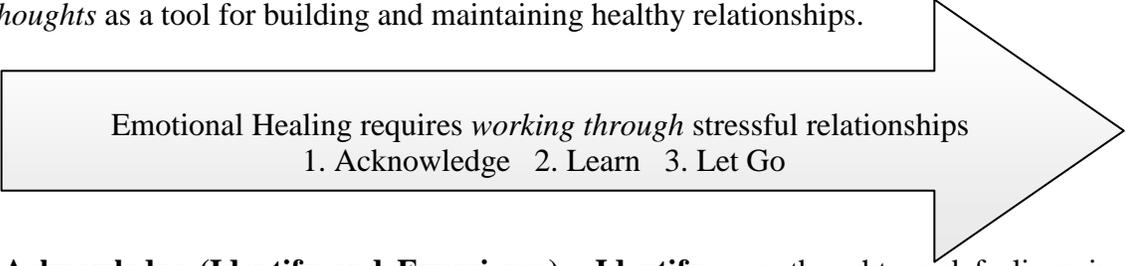
“Life is too short to wear tight shoes.”

When *life* hurts, rather than normalizing pain with self-sabotage, let’s challenge that belief. Let’s shop for a better fit.



Stressful Relationships Overview

Relationship stress consists of the beliefs, actions and emotions of the people sharing a relationship. This week you will learn how to choose healthy, *assertive thoughts* as a tool for building and maintaining healthy relationships.



Emotional Healing requires *working through* stressful relationships
1. Acknowledge 2. Learn 3. Let Go

1. Acknowledge (Identify and Experience). **Identify** your thoughts and feelings in each relationship. **Experience** your physical emotions.

- ❖ **Aggressive** thoughts and behaviors create abusive relationships.
- ❖ **Passive** thoughts and behavior create dependent relationships and attract aggressive partners.
- ❖ **Assertive** thoughts and behavior create healthy relationships and attract assertive relationships.

2. Learn. **The choices you make in relationships reflect the value that you place upon yourself.** Every relationship is an opportunity to learn. Stressful relationships offer the most challenging lessons.

- ★ **Assertive relationships make decisions on values, not emotions.**
- ★ **Assertive relationships understand personal rights and ask, “do I have the right?” They ask, “who owns this problem?”**
- ★ **Assertive relationships consider compatibility “as is,” without waiting, hoping or insisting that others’ will change.**

3. Let Go. Once you *work through* your aggressive or passive thoughts, you are free to become an assertive person. Assertive people attract healthier relationships. They experience acceptance rather than judgment, love instead of fear.

* **Love is a brain thing.** According to the February, 2011 issue of *Scientific American Mind* Magazine, Researchers studied brains of people who indicated they were experiencing passionate love, maternal love or unconditional love. Researchers identified neurotransmitters and other chemicals in the brain and blood that prompt greater euphoric sensations such as attraction and pleasure. Conversely, researchers believe psychiatrists might someday help individuals who become dangerously depressed after a heartbreak by adjusting those chemicals.

As you journey through this workbook, be aware that healing “stressful relationships” is a difficult task. Stage 1 of emotional healing requires that you identify and experience YOUR feelings, choices and roles in stressful relationships. This will be painful and difficult.

Be loving and gentle with yourself as you work through this chapter. Take responsibility without blaming yourself or others.

Remember Maya Angelou’s words, “*you do the best you know how, and when you know better, you do better.*” Remember that you are human.

Cherie Carter-Scott’s
Rules for Being Human
Guidelines for life

1. **You will learn lessons.** You are enrolled in a full-time school called “life on planet Earth.” Every person or incident is your teacher.
2. **There are no mistakes--- only lessons.**
“Failures” are stepping-stones to “success.”
3. **A lesson is repeated until learned.** It is presented in various forms until you learn it. If you are here, there are still lessons to be learned.
4. **If you do not learn the easy lessons, they get harder.** Pain is one way the universe gets your attention.
5. **You’ll know when you have learned a lesson when your actions change.** Only action can transform knowledge to wisdom.
6. **“There” is no better than “here.”** When “there” becomes a “here,” you’ll notice another “there” that again looks better than “here.”
7. **There is no right or wrong--- but there are consequences.**
The universe never judges us; it only gives opportunities to balance and learn.
8. **Your life is up to you.** Life provides the canvas; you do the painting.
9. **Your answers lie inside you.** All you need to do is look, listen and trust.
10. **You’ll tend to forget all this.**
11. **You can remember any time you wish.**

Cherie Carter-Scott Ph.D. is the author of “*If Life is a Game, These are the Rules: Ten Rules for Being Human*” Broadway: (September 15, 1998).

Stressful Relationships Most Frequently Asked Question

Question: *“I always worry about what other people think. How do I overcome my fear of what they’ll think?”*
Olivia, age 21

Answer: “You wouldn’t worry so much about what others think of you if you realized how seldom they do.”
Eleanor Roosevelt.

1. You don’t actually know what other people are thinking unless you ask them. Your worry is based on thoughts that originated from within YOUR head, not theirs.

When worried about what “they” think, ask yourself the following questions:

- *What do I think? What are MY thoughts and opinions right now?*
- *What information or evidence am I using when I assume what “they” think?*
- *If I think positively about “them,” what makes me assume “they” would not reciprocate?*
- *If, on the other hand, I am judging “them” negatively, don’t “they” also have the right to judge me?*

2. Let’s assume “they” actually have negative thoughts about you. So what? What exactly is so worrisome about conflict, criticism, judgment or an opposing view?

Perhaps your thought process works like this:

If “they” don’t like what I say → then “they” won’t like me → then I will be rejected... → then I will feel shame and guilt... → then I will feel unloved and abandoned... → then no one will ever love me... → I will be alone forever.... Oh No! I’m an unlovable outcast!

STOP!

Is this thought process true? Are you in relationships with people who condemn or abandon each other when a difference of opinion arises? Seriously? If yes, you may be in an oppressive relationship.

If this thought process is true, you may want to re-evaluate the health of your relationship. Would you recommend a relationship like this?

If this thought process is not true, if it is simply a fear....then challenge that fear. Have a conversation. *“I was afraid to share my opinion with you because I was afraid of your reaction. I realize now that I need to be honest with you.”*

Stressful Relationships Thought Inventory

Identify your thoughts below.

Check each statement you are able to identify with.

Section A:

1. “If they would just follow my advice, they wouldn’t have a problem.”
2. “I have to yell to get what I want. They don’t listen.”
3. “If I don’t step in and fix their problems, they will ruin their lives!”
4. “I’m usually right, so I must insist that others listen to me.”
5. “I wouldn’t have to be so mean if they would not be so stupid.”



Section P:



1. “They make me feel like I can’t do anything right.”
2. “I never get to do what I want to do.”
3. “S/he manipulates and controls me by making me feel guilty.”
4. “I can’t say what’s on my mind because I’m afraid I’ll hurt someone’s feelings.”
5. “I hate conflict so I just give in. It’s easier that way.”

Scoring Section A. Thoughts endorsed in Section A are *aggressive* thoughts. These thoughts violate other people’s rights to make their own decisions and to be responsible for their own lives. Aggressive thinking leads to bullying, domineering, controlling and manipulating behavior. Aggressive thinking lacks empathy and struggles with compromise. Aggressive people will engage in scorekeeping, power struggles and may become verbally, emotionally or physically abusive. Blinded by the thought that they “are right” they often lack insight regarding their dominance. They truly believe their aggression is “for another’s own good”.

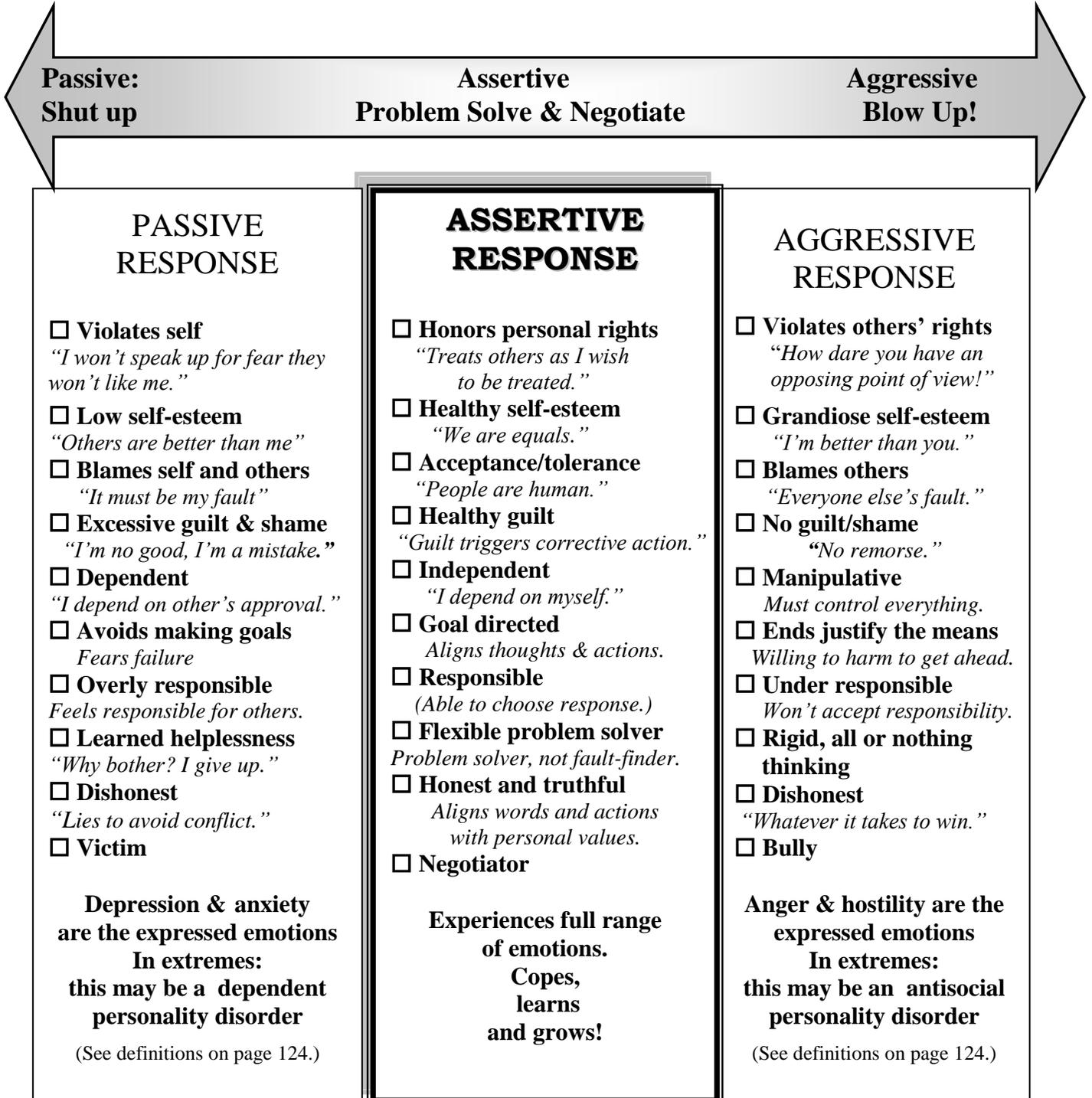
Scoring Section P. Thoughts endorsed in Section P are *passive* thoughts. Passive thinking leads to martyrdom and playing the victim. Although passive people claim to be powerless or feel used, they often attempt to gain control through inflicting guilt or expressing passive dependency. Passive people avoid taking responsibility for themselves. They feel selfish, guilty or unworthy when advocating for personal rights.

The chart on the next page describes the range from passive to assertive and then to aggressive thinking. Healthy relationships demonstrate *assertive* thinking. Assertive thoughts role model values. Use the columns on the next page to continue identifying your thought process.

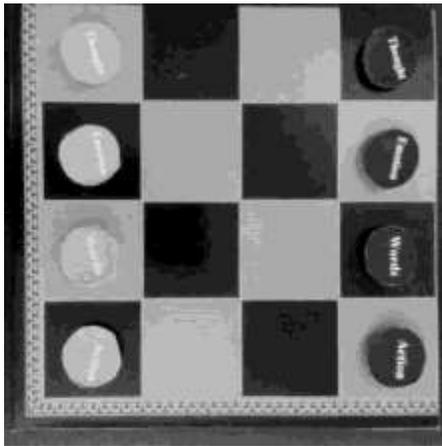
Range of Human Responses

Responses vary based on your experiences, mood, the people and the situation.

Check all items that represent your thoughts and feelings in relationships.



Checkers Cheating: Boundaries Tool



Establishing healthy boundaries is like learning to play checkers. Just like checkers, healthy boundaries have rules. **Boundaries determine what is yours, what you have the right to do and what is off limits, or cheating.**

Rules: Each adult has his/her own set of checkers. (Own boundaries.) In this analogy each checker represents:

- Thoughts
- Emotions
- Words
- Actions

Just like with checkers, playing fair in relationships requires healthy boundaries:

- Each person has his or her own thoughts (*No one else controls your thoughts*)
- Each person has his or her own emotions (*Someone may trigger your emotions, but your emotions belong to you.*)
- Each person selects his or her own words (*Your voice belongs to you.*)
- Each person determines his or her own moves/actions (*You are responsible for your actions.*)

Cheating: You are not allowed to touch or move another's checkers.
(Even when you *think* you are right, you don't *have the right*.)

People may trigger responses from each other, but each person is responsible for their own responses (checkers). No blaming allowed! **Examples of checkers cheating unhealthy boundaries:**

"I never tell you anything because I don't want to make you mad".

"You don't love me."

"What is wrong with you?! I can't believe you did that!"

Playing by rules, taking responsibility for your own actions = healthy boundaries:

"I feel uncomfortable dealing with conflict. I withhold information from you to avoid conflict."

"I feel unloved. I need to take some time to sort through why I feel this way."

"Help me understand your point of view, I don't get it."

Healthy boundaries allow strategy, tact, communication and problem solving. You may assist others when granted permission:

"How may I help you?"

"What do you need from me?"

"Are you open to advice about your.....?"

Be “Responsible” (Able to choose your response)

As you continue to sort out the difference between your aggressive, passive and assertive responses, consider how you tend to feel in your relationships. Passive and aggressive responses tend to create stress and anxiety. Assertive responses create positive role models capable of healthy love. Using the columns below, notice how each response works through emotions and relationships. Which response do you choose?

Passive or Aggressive Response:

I **acknowledge** that I...

- Protect/rescue
- Manipulate
- Own another’s problems
- Take over/bulldoze
- Tolerate or reward bad behavior

I **identify & experience**...

- Fear
- Worry/anxiety
- Guilt/shame
- Anger/resentment/blame
- Victim/martyr
- Chaos

I learn to be...

- Blaming
- Judgmental
- A complainer
- Win/lose thinker
- Perfectionistic
- Passive or aggressive

I am fear-based.

I need to control everything and everyone because of MY fears.

I want to make choices for other people because I am afraid of their decisions.

I give advice, but I do not live my advice.

I use chaos to avoid taking responsibility.

I never relax. I am afraid that if I relax or slow down, “all hell will break loose.”

I do not trust that everything will be ok.

Assertive Response:

I **acknowledge** that I...

- **Inspire and encourage**
- **Role model**
- **Maintain clear boundaries**
- **Compromise, negotiate**
- **Teach people how to treat me**

I **identify and experience**...

- **Love**
- **Faith**
- **Empathy**
- **Compassion**
- **Acceptance of what I can’t control**
- **Inner Peace**

I learn to be...

- **Responsible (able to choose response)**
- **Nonjudgmental**
- **A problem solver**
- **Win/win thinker**
- **A negotiator**
- **Assertive**

I am love-based.

I understand that I control only MY response, I cannot control other people’s responses.

I believe others have the right and ability to make their own choices.

I am a role model. I live by my values.

I choose peace over chaos.

I am mindful.

I trust in my ability to handle whatever comes my way.

Assertive Thoughts

Your relationships are as healthy as your thoughts. **Stressful relationships lack assertive thoughts.** Below are the personal "rights"* that empower you throughout life. **These rights create assertiveness.** These are rights, not obligations. You may choose to honor them or you may choose not to. The power lies within you. *These rights were inspired and adapted with permission by Charles Whitfield M.D. The Personal Bill of Rights in *Healing the Child Within* (1987).

Assertive Thoughts

1. *I have the right to make decisions based on my own values, standards and beliefs.
2. I say YES when I mean YES and NO when I mean NO.
3. **I have the right to say NO without feeling guilty.
4. I have the right to *trust myself* enough to experience *all* of my emotions.
5. *I have the right to protect myself by ending conversations when I feel violated, afraid, angry, unsafe or for *any reason* that I choose.
6. I have the right to treat others and myself with dignity and respect.
7. I have the right *not* to take responsibility for another's problems, actions or feelings.
8. I have the right to learn from my mistakes and to allow others to learn from their mistakes.
9. *I have a right to accept myself and others as human without having to be perfect.
10. *I have the right to allow myself and others to grow and change without judgment, comparison or competition.
11. *I have the right to allow myself and others to live in the present moment without the past as a weapon or baggage.
12. I have the right to be responsible for *my* choices, *my* feelings and *my* behavior.
13. I have the right to experience the *consequences* of *my* choices.
14. I have the right to feel happy, relaxed and safe.
15. In every moment, I am responsible for whether I choose love or I choose fear.

16. I have the right to detach or let go. (See “Letting Go” poem on page 224).
17. *I have the right to take my time.
18. *I have the right to change my mind.
19. I have the right to be comfortable with my beauty.
20. I am responsible for the value that I place upon myself.
21. I can trust in myself and trust others who EARN my trust.
22. I am responsible for when I choose to feel wounded.
23. I have the right to take care of myself first. “Self First” is not *selfish*.
24. I have the right to “be the change I seek.”
25. I am responsible for the life I have chosen.
26. I have the right to forget all of these rights.
27. I can remember them anytime I wish.



Application

Remember that EVERYONE has all of these rights, even the people you don't like.

***Differentiate your personal rights from professional workplace rights.** Rights preceded with an asterisk (#1, #5, #9, #10, #11, #17, #18) Are “Right Action Thoughts that *may not* apply while you are representing an employer or punched in on a time clock. Within labor law guidelines, your employer has the right to enforce job requirements: codes of conduct, performance standards, production quotas and company policies.

****Got guilt?** #3. *I have the right to say NO without feeling guilty.*

Healthy guilt functions like an alarm signaling wrongdoing. Once identified, remorse with corrective action and new insights will relieve healthy guilt.

If no wrongdoing occurred, perhaps the label of “guilt” is incorrect. A more accurate emotional description may be “*worried about retaliation or fearful of disappointing another*”. Using the correct emotional label helps eliminate unnecessary shame.

More Assertive Thoughts

“Good To know” File



Now that you have identified your rights and understand that EVERYONE shares these rights, it's time to put them into a mental file. The **“Good to Know” File** is a mindfulness tool. You create this mental file by acknowledging information at face value. **You receive information without judgment, fear or emotional reaction.** Rather than become wounded, guilty, angry or fearful, you simply acknowledge the information. *“It is what it is.”* You can use your “good to know” file to store information that will help you determine your *right action.*”

Example: If someone has a pattern of lying or is critical of you, rather than responding with denial, anger, shame or defensiveness, simply place that piece of information in your “good to know” file. The next time this person speaks to you, pull up the file. **This file allows you to establish reasonable expectations of this relationship.**

Reasonable Expectations: Apple Tree or Banana Tree?



Your “good to know file” is most useful when combined with “reasonable expectations.” I use the following tree analogy to clarify “reasonable expectations.”

Imagine that an apple tree represents an assertive relationship. The apple tree bares the fruit of *assertive thoughts: love, trust, respect, loyalty, empathy, compassion, communication, conflict resolution and problem solving.*



Now imagine that a banana tree represents a stressful relationship. The banana tree bares the fruit of **fear, distrust, deception, disrespect, anger, betrayal, manipulation, verbal or emotional abuse** and perhaps even **addictions or violence.**

Using this analogy, ask yourself if, while sitting under a banana tree, “am I expecting an apple?” People often complain, “they *NEVER* listen to me!” or “I was cheated *AGAIN.*” And “I can’t believe they *KEEP* doing that!”

Are you climbing a banana tree, looking for apples? Are you mad each time you find another banana? What did you expect?

- ✓ Use your “good to know” file to collect information about people.
- ✓ Once collected, use the data in the file to determine whether you have realistic expectations about your relationships.
- ✓ Realistic predictions minimize denial and improve your ability to maintain assertiveness.

Week #2 Stressful Relationships Homework

1. Mindfulness requires that you become self-aware. Stop your constant focus on what “*they*” feel, think or do. Tune in to what YOU feel, think and do. **Self-awareness leads to self-care.** Neither of which are selfish. Great self-care demonstrates an assertive role model. Take **great** care of yourself. Create quiet reflection while you are gardening, bathing or walking-any activity which brings you peace. Practice using your *Assertive Thoughts*. Journal your progress.

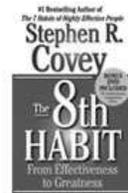
2. Continue working on the recommendations in Week #1. Organize and declutter your living space. This therapeutic activity allows you to change your energy flow from being stuck in the past with cluttered thinking, to clearing out the old and making room for the new.

3. Consider a support group to address specific types of relationship stress such as: parenting, caregiver fatigue, divorce, domestic violence, mental illness and addictions. **For info about marriage retreats visit:** www.retrouvaille.org “Retrouvaille... a lifeline for Marriages, A program to Help Couples Heal and Renew their Marriages.”

4. Consider using your local library. Keep a book at bedside for just 5 minutes of reading per night or listen to a book while driving, walking or doing daily activities. **Choose a book that will motivate you to live your best life.**

Recommended resources:

The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People & The 8th Habit, both by Stephen Covey.



The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate by Gary Chapman. Internet resource:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rDuiwX_0Cg

The Happiness Project by Gretchen Rubin. Link: <http://happinessprojecttoolbox.com/>

The Happiest Toddler on the Block: How to Eliminate Tantrums and Raise a Patient, Respectful, and Cooperative One- to Four-Year-Old. by Harvey Karp.

Lectures in the Course in Miracles by Marianne Williamson.
Link: <http://youtu.be/1JKFtDnucUA>

Power of Intention by Wayne W. Dyer.
Watch the 1-hour seminar: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBdf0sCXYJI>

Sacred Contracts: Awakening Your Divine Potential by Caroline Myss
Link <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dkvREHczeVU&feature=related>

Week #3

Understanding Moods

Coping with Depression and Anxiety



“I am now the most miserable person living. If what I were feeling were equally distributed to the whole human family, there would not be one cheerful face on Earth. Whether I shall ever be better, I cannot tell. I awfully forebode I shall not. To remain as I am is impossible. I must die or be better it appears to me.” Abraham Lincoln



“You can’t be depressed *and* grateful at the same time. Whenever you doubt that you have anything to be grateful for, hold your breath. You’ll soon be grateful for air.”

Bloomfield and McWilliams

Both quotes above are from the book *How to Heal Depression* by Bloomfield and McWilliams

Week #3 Overview

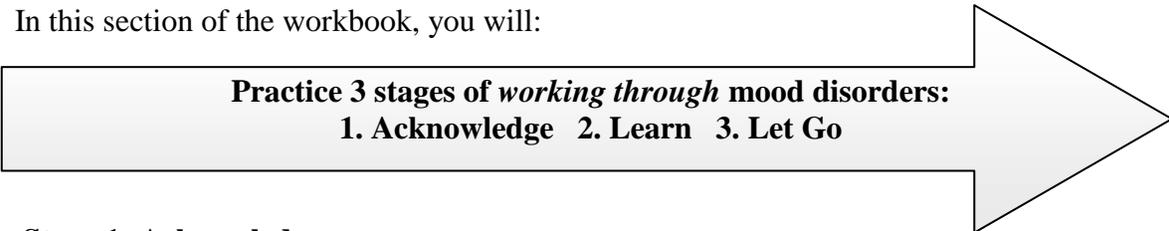
Are you crazy?!!! The stigma of “mental illness”

According to the 1999 Surgeon Generals Report,¹ 20% of Americans suffer from some form of mental illness. This broad category of “mental illness” includes mood disorders, thought disorders, substance abuse disorders, eating disorders, and learning difficulties.

As a behavioral health therapist, I am well aware of how society trivializes, devalues and misrepresents emotional health. “Mental” has become a derogatory term. The outdated belief that mental illness is a character flaw or personal failure justifies the common practice of punishing, blaming, shaming and even abandoning those who suffer from mental illness.

Mood disorders such as anxiety and depression are brain diseases. Like other medical conditions, psychiatric mood disorders deserve acknowledgment and treatment without prejudice or cultural bias. Perhaps as the mental health stigma lifts, society will address anxiety and depression as openly as asthma, diabetes, cancer and heart disease.²

In this section of the workbook, you will:



**Practice 3 stages of *working through* mood disorders:
1. Acknowledge 2. Learn 3. Let Go**

Stage 1: Acknowledge

Identify the difference between normal human emotions and medical mood disorders. Become familiar with the physical symptoms associated with mood disorders by completing a mood disorder checklist.

Stage 2: Learn

Learn the coping strategies necessary to manage mood disturbance including when to consult a health care professional and when to consider medication.

Stage 3: Let Go

Release the shame, embarrassment and stigma associated with emotional illness. Once you truly accept the fact that mood disorders are diseases of the brain, you may discover a new respect for everyone who faces these life challenging medical conditions.

1. *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*. To receive a copy of the Executive Summary of *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, call toll free 1-800-789-2647 or visit the website http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/chapter2/sec2_1.html#epidemiolog.

2. Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act of 2008 (HR 6983) was signed into law in October 2008, effective January 2010. H.R. 6983 does not mandate group health plans provide any mental health coverage. However, if a plan does offer mental health coverage, then, it requires: Equity in financial requirements, such as deductibles, co-payments, coinsurance, and out-of-pocket expenses. Equity in treatment limits, such as caps on the frequency or number of visits, limits on days of coverage, or other similar limits on the scope and duration of treatment and equality in out-of-network coverage.

“I am in that temper that if I were under water I would scarcely kick to come to the top.”

John Keats British poet, (1795-1821)

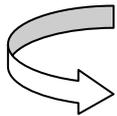
Frequently Asked Question:

*“I’ve been diagnosed with a mood disorder.
I don’t understand. How did I get it?”*



Medical understanding of brain chemistry and mood disorders is continually evolving and improving. Current research indicates that mood disorders may be:

- ❖ **Inherited**
- ❖ **The result of prolonged exposure to trauma or stress.**
- ❖ **Secondary to another medical condition.**
- ❖ **The result of an allergy or environmental toxin.**
- ❖ **Secondary to substance abuse or addiction.**
- ❖ **A side effect of a medication.**



This imbalance in biochemistry leads to a

- ❖ **Change in thoughts and quality of life.**
- ❖ **Impairment in ability to cope or function normally.**
- ❖ **Impairment in ability to problem-solve.**

Mood disorders are not a single illness. There are several different types of anxiety and depression. There are also varying degrees of severity in each type. **Depending on the severity and type of the illness, “normal” functioning is replaced with symptoms of:**

- ❑ **Lethargy or restlessness**
- ❑ **Stagnation or impulsivity**
- ❑ **Self-doubt or grandiosity**
- ❑ **Anhedonia (Inability to experience pleasure) or euphoria**
- ❑ **Poor concentration or ruminating and obsessing**
- ❑ **Sleep and/or appetite disturbance.**

As mood disorders become more severe, symptoms increase. Severe mood disorders may become chronic or disabling. The first step toward understanding emotional health is to know the difference between *normal human emotions* and *medical conditions*. The definitions and self-rated tests on the next few pages will help you differentiate.

Let's clear up the confusion regarding emotions and illness.

Depression

This word has multiple meanings.
It can refer to an emotion or to a medical illness.

Depression

Describes an **emotion**

- **Sad or Blue mood**
- Normal and human
- Situation specific
- Congruent with life events
- Temporary
- Romantic
- Passionate
- Manageable
- Non-life threatening



Depression

Refers to a ***medical illness**

- **Brain disease**
- Biochemical imbalance
- Several types:
 - Seasonal Affective Disorder
 - Dysthymia
 - Post-partum Depression
 - Major Depression
 - Bipolar Disorder
- Disease may become fatal



*Although 20%-25% of the Americans suffer from mental illness, according to the National Institute of Mental Health (www.nimh.nih.gov) 2008 statistics, approximately 7% of the overall population is diagnosed with a *serious mental illness* (excluding substance abuse) defined as resulting in serious functional impairment, which substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities.

When is **Anxiety** healthy?

Let's look at the difference between emotions and disease:

Healthy Anxiety Is a Warning Device	Unhealthy Anxiety Is Worry	Anxiety Disease: Is a Medical illness
<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Coping Skill➤ Concern➤ Alert➤ Helpful➤ Focused➤ Manageable➤ Situation specific ➤ Energetic➤ Goal-oriented➤ Motivating➤ Task Oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Self-Defeating Behavior➤ Fear based➤ Learned Behavior➤ Exhausting➤ *Fantasy-based worry➤ * “Time travel” & “What if....” worries ➤ Lacks problem-solving➤ Not useful ➤ Draining➤ Bad habit	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Brain disease➤ Over-active amygdala➤ “False alarm”➤ Exaggerated fear response ➤ Internal focus➤ Several types of Anxiety: <p>Generalized Anxiety Disorder Social Phobia Agoraphobia Specific Phobias Panic Disorder Acute Stress Disorder</p>

☞ **Healthy anxiety** A helpful “warning device” is a reality-based worry that triggers a preventive or positive action.

☞ **Worry** *The terms “fantasy-based, time travel and what if... worries” refer to worries about imaginary events. Worries related to uncontrollable, unavoidable bad things that may or may not happen in the future or have occurred in the past, are unhealthy and serve no useful purpose. These types of unhealthy anxiety may be a learned behavior or the result of a biochemical imbalance in the brain.

☞ **Anxiety disease** Reoccurring disturbing thoughts, images, or compulsive behaviors may be a symptom of anxiety diseases such as PTSD and OCD. Please discuss these symptoms with a trained health care professional.

What are the levels of anxiety?

Use the diagram below to identify your anxiety level: mild, moderate, severe or panic. Some mild to moderate anxiety symptoms respond well to relaxation, yoga or meditation. Additional symptoms resolve with the elimination of caffeine. **Consult your health care professional if your anxiety symptoms cause distress or interfere with your quality of life.** Medication, when taken as prescribed, can also serve as a coping tool for moderate and severe anxiety disorders.

Mild “Healthy” Anxiety

- Body is “ready” and “alert” like a tennis player anticipating the serve.
- Good level of anxiety for school and work.
- Normal heart rate and pulse rate.
- Feeling “in control” without intense fear or anxiety.
- Continues to be capable of insight but may become slightly impatient or irritable.
- Aware of surroundings.
- Good concentration.
- Good attention span.
- Good problem-solving.
- Good decision-making.



Moderate Anxiety

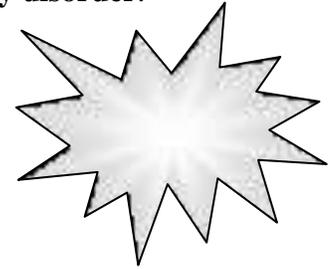
(Increased discomfort)

- More emotionally fragile.
- Moodiness common.
- Nervousness, dread.
- Difficulty controlling negative thoughts.
- May become either angry or tearful.
- Breathing faster, heart-pounding, headache.
- Fatigue, difficulty falling asleep.
- Dry mouth, tightness in throat.
- Restlessness, butterflies in stomach, nausea, diarrhea, heartburn, belching.
- Muscles tight, muscle tension or increased pain.
- Perspiring, sweating.
- Talking louder or faster, unable to listen as well.
- Trouble thinking or making decisions.
- Worry. Ruminating: repeating thoughts over and over.
- Attention, concentration and learning impaired by anxiety.



Severe anxiety is frightening!

Severe anxiety may result in an emergency room visit or a consult with your physician. These symptoms are so uncomfortable and distressing many folks fear a cardiac or pulmonary problem. After a complete battery of tests rules out other medical causes for the symptoms below, doctors will inform you that your symptoms are “stress” or “nerves” also known as **an anxiety disorder**.



- Body feels hot
- Urge to use the bathroom: nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.
- Breathing shallow and rapid or feeling like you can't breathe.
- Speech-rapid, constant, loud or high pitched.
- Chest pain, rapid heart beat, feel like having a heart attack and it may feel as if someone is sitting on your chest.
- Headache.
- Wringing hands, trembling, shaking, pacing, twitching and other involuntary movements.
- Intense moodiness: anger or tears.
- Out of body feeling: wooden, strange or unreal. Unable to perceive whole situation or experience.
- Feeling powerless, insecure, low self-esteem, inadequate, helpless, “victim” thinking.
- Unable to hear and understand new information. Learning is blocked by anxiety.
- Emotions may trigger “fight or flight” response.

PANIC

Panic level of anxiety includes ALL of the severe symptoms above, BUT EVEN MORE INTENSELY. Panic includes a real fear of death. People who experience PANIC usually seek medical attention.

What is causing all this anxiety?

Anxiety disorders, like depressive disorders, are **diseases of the brain**. Anxiety diseases involve problems in at least two areas of the brain: the **amygdala** and the **hippocampus**.

Neuroscientists are constantly gaining a greater understanding of the brain's complexity. In simple terms, an **anxiety disease involves your brain signaling a fear response when no danger is present**. This signal creates a **“false alarm.”**

Once you understand that your anxiety is a false alarm, you may train yourself to respond differently to the false signal. Your brain works like this:

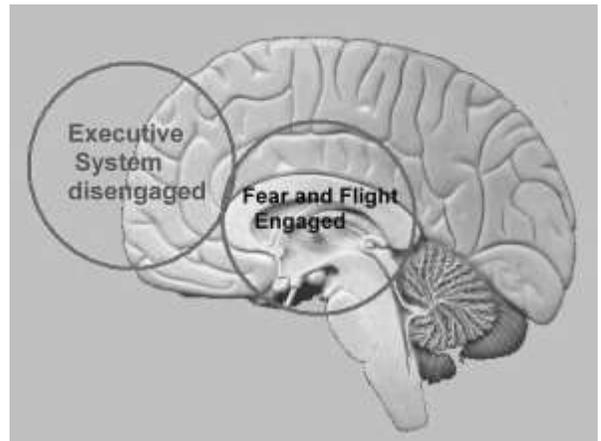
Stimulus (information) comes in through the senses ⇒ to the nerve endings ⇒ to the spinal cord ⇒ to the cerebral cortex ⇒
to the thalamus (part of the brain that only takes in the information).

The thalamus ⇒ sends the information to the **Amygdala that attaches a “Fight or Flight” response**..... BUT the amygdala must consult the **hippocampus** that performs an executive function in the brain similar to a **librarian pulling past information together** to organize memory. (Danger? No danger? What now?)

When the signals between the amygdala and the hippocampus do not work properly, **anxiety problems occur**. These **chemical imbalances and brain dysfunctions result in “false alarms”** (fear response attached without cause). Although the alarm is false, the fear **FEELS REAL**.

This overactive or enlarged amygdala and under functioning hippocampus interfere with the brain's ability to problem solve and cope normally.

Anxiety disease is the result of an amygdala attaching a fear response when no real danger is present and the brain's inability to problem solve once the fear is attached.



A **panic disorder** is an anxiety disorder that is characterized by extreme symptoms such as severe feelings of terror, rapid breathing and rapid heart rate, shortness of breath, dizziness, numbness or tingling, trembling, stomach upset, and hot flashes.

A **phobia** is an extreme, irrational fear of a specific object or situation. A phobia is classified as a type of **anxiety disorder**, since anxiety is the chief symptom experienced by the sufferer.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a type of brain disorder that may occur due to **exposure to direct or witnessed traumatic event** such as or threatened death, serious injury, violence or sexual abuse. Including learning that the traumatic event occurred to someone close, experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; employees repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse). Check each box that applies:

1. Presence of one (or more) of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning 30 days or more after the traumatic event(s) occurred and lasting more than one month:

- Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s).
- Recurrent distressing dreams related to trauma.
- Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring.
- Distressed reactions to cues/reminders of the trauma.

2. Persistent (one or more) avoidance of reminders associated with the trauma:

- Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about event.
- Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).

3. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two (or more) of the following:

- Inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s) (typically due to dissociative amnesia and not to other factors such as head injury, alcohol, or drugs).
- Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., "I am bad," "No one can be trusted," "The world is completely dangerous,")
- Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others.
- Persistent negative emotion state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame).
- Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities.
- Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others.
- Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (e.g., inability to experience happiness, satisfaction, or loving feelings).

4. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidence by two (or more) of the following:

- Irritable behavior and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation) typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression toward people or objects.
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior.
- Hypervigilance.
- Exaggerated startle response.
- Problems with concentration.
- Sleep disturbance (e.g., difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep).

5. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

Scoring: If at least one box is checked in sections 1 & 2, AND two or more boxes are checked in sections 3& 4 AND section 5 is checked, the criteria for PTSD have been met according to DSM-5.

Mood Disorder Check List:

The difference between normal emotions and *mood disorders* lies in the severity and duration of the physical symptoms and the effect those symptoms have on quality of life.

Use the symptom inventory below to help you differentiate between “normal” moods and symptoms of a medical, chemical (brain) disorder such as anxiety, panic, seasonal affective disorder, depression or bipolar disorder. An accurate diagnosis requires that the brain be “clean and sober” of mood altering substances such as alcohol, marijuana and other illegal drugs. A minimum of 30 days of abstinence from alcohol and drugs provides the more accurate medical picture.

All symptoms that apply to you.

- Two or more weeks of disturbed appetite with increase or decrease in weight (*unrelated to dieting or another medical condition*).
- Two or more weeks of disturbed sleep: sleeping much less than is normal for you or sleeping much more than is normal for you (*unrelated to another medical condition, chronic pain, small children, barking dogs, snoring spouse or other environmental factors*).

Additional symptoms experienced consistently for a minimum of two weeks and not explained by another medical condition include:

1. Inability to make simple decisions, complete daily tasks or maintain your usual standards of daily living. *Life just gets harder for no reason.*
2. Anhedonia: loss of interest or joy in life, inability to experience pleasure.
3. Reduction in normal activities such as hobbies, interests or social events.
4. Decrease in concentration level: increase in errors at work, difficulty focusing on television shows or inability to concentrate on written material.
5. Excessive and unusual fatigue, lethargy (*with no other medical or environmental explanation*).
6. Loss of sex drive or inability to experience sexual pleasure.
7. Increased isolation: unwilling to leave the house, less interest in friendships canceling social engagements or difficulty feeling close to others.
8. Restlessness, panic or worry when no real or immediate danger is present.

9. Strong urges to escape or flee, increased anxiety in public places or crowds.
10. Feeling as though your thoughts or actions are not within your control.
11. Increase urge to abuse alcohol, prescription drugs, or illegal drugs.
12. Spending or gambling that results in relationship, financial or legal problems.
13. Unusual irritability, impatience, uncontrollable anger or violent outbursts.
14. Disturbing or reoccurring thoughts about harm coming to yourself or to others when no real threat or danger is present.
15. Threats or gestures of inflicting harm on self or others.
16. Extreme mood swings not caused by drugs, alcohol or other medical condition.

Life examples of the above symptoms:

- ✓ Preparing fewer meals or difficulty deciding what to cook or what to eat.
- ✓ Decrease in work/school attendance (tardiness and/or absenteeism).
- ✓ Reduction in performance, increased mistakes and /or lower productivity.
- ✓ Failure to open mail, pay bills, balance checkbook or handle finances.
- ✓ Reduction in personal hygiene, neglect of children or pet.
- ✓ Reduction in housekeeping responsibilities: clutter or garbage piling up, procrastination regarding cleaning or organization. Dishes, laundry or parenting becomes overwhelming.

**If you or someone you love are distressed by the symptoms above,
consult with a health care professional.**

A physician may order tests to investigate the possibility of other medical conditions causing your symptoms.

- ★ Inform your physician of all medications, herbal and dietary supplements and the amount of alcohol, caffeine or other drugs consumed. Your full disclosure will reduce potential problems with side effects or drug interactions.
- ★ Discuss the option of psychiatric medication for treatment of severe mood disorders.
- ★ Mild and moderate mood disorders respond well to healthy lifestyle changes, improved coping skills and cognitive-behavioral, solution-focused therapy. Begin improving your skills with the Mood Mindfulness Tool.

Mood Mindfulness Tool

Using the Mood Disorder Checklist on the previous page, begin noting your mood each day. Notice common patterns or themes in your reaction to pain, stress, hormones, hunger or fatigue. Consider the following questions to help determine if your mood is related to an external event such as: weather changes, work demands, relationship problems, bad news etc.. or if your mood is related to an internal physical event such as chronic pain, fatigue, low blood sugar, hunger or hormonal changes.

Mood Mindfulness:

When you notice an uncomfortable emotion, ask yourself the following questions:

1. Did something happen to cause this mood?

Yes: Examples:

“Yes, I was feeling fine until I received that phone call.”

“Yes, I am really tired and I know I get like this when I don’t sleep well.”

“Yes, I dreaded this situation and now I am feeling as bad as I predicted.”

No: Examples:

“No, not really. Today is exactly like yesterday and yesterday, I was fine.”

“No. I just woke up this way. I have no idea why.”

2. If you answered yes, something caused this mood, consider the following:

When have I felt like this before?

Is there a pattern? Examples: *“I get upset when I visit my family.”* *“Once a month this mood sets in.”* Or *“October is always rough.”*

Is there a lesson I can learn from this? Examples: *“Perhaps I should only visit family for a couple hours”* or *“I need to speak with my doctor about my hormones.”*

What is my intention? Do I want to problem solve? Or, is it my intention to use my mood as an excuse for a self-defeating behavior like complaining, nagging, blaming or something self-destructive such as yelling, smoking, binge eating or drinking?

How would I advise a friend to cope with similar emotions? Example: *“I would tell my friend to start exercising and taking better care of her health.”*

3. If you answered no, nothing caused this mood, consider the following:

When have I felt like this before? Example: *“Sometimes I just wake up in a bad mood. There is no pattern”* or *“I have always felt like this for as long as I can remember.”*

Do I have thoughts or beliefs that could create this emotional response? Example: *“I think I am weak and I feel guilty for my bad moods. I am ashamed of myself.”*

- What is my intention?** *Do I want to problem solve? Or is it my intention to use my mood as an excuse for a self-defeating behavior like complaining, nagging, blaming or something self-destructive such as yelling, smoking, binge eating or drinking?*
- How would I advise a friend to cope with these emotions?** Example: *“I would recommend seeing a doctor or therapist because no one should have to feel so awful.”*

Once you have answered the above questions, you are ready to use your coping strategies below.

Coping Strategies for Mood Related Problems

If depression is creeping up and must be faced, learn something about the nature of the beast: You may escape without a mauling.” Dr. R. W. Shepherd

- Check off each box below as you practice the strategy. Track your progress.**
- 1. Make a list** of the actions or resources that help you cope with moodiness, anxiety, depression, anger, restlessness, boredom or stagnation.
- 2. Anticipate** which times of the day, month or year cause you the greatest risk of emotional instability. Notice when nutrition, hormones and seasonal changes impair your mood.
- 3. Be proactive** in planning how you will either *prevent* or *cope* with mood swings. *Recognize your early warning signs of mood instability. Make a preventative action plan with your doctor, therapist, support group or trusted friend.*
- 4. Eliminate alcohol and marijuana.** Inform your health care professional of an inability to reduce, control or eliminate your substance abuse. Seek substance abuse treatment now. Resume this workbook once you are alcohol/drug free.
- 5. Express your feelings openly.** Express emotions through music, dance, art, spoken or written word. Practice mindfulness by listening to your thoughts.
- 6. Make plans to do something fun, relaxing, exciting or special.** Follow through with your plans even when you do not feel like it. (Caution: work within your budget!)
- 7. Practice positive thinking.** Speak lovingly to yourself. (See Chapter Five).
- 8. Reassure yourself:** *“I am not a failure, I am just depressed.” “I am not falling apart, I am just anxious.” “I can feel upset without becoming self-destructive.” “This feeling will pass. I will be okay.”*
- 9. Allow a good cry.** Accept your emotions. Tears carry no shame. Tears are your body’s natural way of releasing toxins created by stress hormones.

- **10. Make a list of reasons *why* your mood is disturbed, then problem solve.**
 - *Cross off all reasons that are not within your control.
 - *Create a plan to address the remaining reasons.
 - *Do a reality check. Talk with yourself exactly as you would speak to a friend in the same situation. Do you exaggerate the negative? Does your affect match the situation? What are your options for problem solving?

“A problem with no solution is not a problem.”

- **11. Create a positive environment.** Brighten up your living and workspace by de-cluttering, organizing and cleaning. Caution: work within your budget! If you are not able to improve your space, consider spending time in a comfortable, soothing and familiar place such as a public library, museum or state park.
- **12. Spend time with positive people.** Seek role models. Contact trusted people for intimate conversations. Read biographies about your heroes.
- **13. Avoid negative people.** Detach from people who bring you down. Explain why you are detaching. Sometimes providing feedback to negative people sparks them into positive action. Perhaps they had no idea they were so negative and would love to be more positive with you. If your feedback offends them, they will avoid you. (Win/Win result!).
- **14. Move.** Physical activity stimulates production of the brain’s “feel good” chemicals. Depressed and stressed people often complain that they cannot *EXERCISE* because they have no time, energy or willpower. Avoid that *E* word. Just move. Take the stairs. Park your car farther away from the building. Any movement trumps inertia.
 - ✓ Got 15 minutes? Stretch. Reach. Bend.
 - ✓ Wash your car, sweep the steps, walk the dog.
- **15. Consider joining something:** Sadness loves loneliness. Challenge emotional upset by connecting with others through volunteering, taking a class, joining a club or attending a church or support group. Any social activity directed toward overcoming loneliness is a step in the right direction. (Well, maybe not just anything. When your mood is disturbed, avoid shopping malls, casinos, bars and “all you can eat” buffets).
- **16. Eat healthy food. Eat in moderation and feel proud you did.** Reduce sugar, fat, salt and caffeine. Discuss nutrition with your health care provider. Make a rule not to engage in binge eating or emotional eating. Excessive eating leads to self-loathing and more binging.
- **17. Practice good hygiene.** Careful grooming provides an emotional lift. Take care of your body with the same attention and affection you give to loved ones.
 - ✓ Take a shower or bath daily.
 - ✓ Use deodorant or powder.
 - ✓ Brush and floss your teeth daily.
 - ✓ Apply lotion or sunscreen.



- ✓ Wear fresh underclothes and socks each day.
 - ✓ Comb or style your hair daily. Keep it clean.
 - ✓ Tidy up the nails on your hands and feet.
 - ✓ Take medication as recommended by your physician.
- 18. PLAY.** Use art, music, hobbies, crafts, sports, games, theater or recreation. Take time to discover your interests. What activities did you love as a child? What interests could you rekindle now? Do not let your age restrict your playfulness.
- 19. Expose yourself to natural sunlight.** Sunlight helps reduce depression. A brisk walk the first thing in the morning is a wonderful mood booster. (Use sunscreen!).
- 20. Use relaxation DVDs, CDs to practice meditation, deep breathing exercises or guided imagery.** Browse the internet or your local library for free and low cost community resources.
- 21. Consult your health care professional** if your mood problems last for more than two weeks and do not respond to the 20 previous coping tools.
- 22. Call for help immediately when you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others.** Keep a list of emergency numbers in or near your phone.

Write important information in the spaces below:

Physician/Psychiatrist/Therapist names and phone numbers: _____

Current prescription medications and dosages: _____

Area support groups: Meeting times, locations or internet web sites: _____

Crisis services: _____

When symptoms of depression or anxiety interfere with the quality of your life, a medical evaluation by a health care professional trained to diagnose and treat mood disorders is essential.



People unfamiliar with mood disorders may advise church attendance or tropical vacations to “heal” severe depression or anxiety. As if healing a brain disease is that simple. In response to their disclosure of symptoms, many people with mood disorders are trivialized, criticized and even blamed. Sufferers of severe mood disorder realize they cannot just “*snap out of it*”. They understand that standard coping skills alone will not fully address a severe or chronic medical condition. As the Mayo clinic photo illustrates, a PET scan can compare brain activity during periods of depression (left) with normal brain activity (right).

⇒ *“I don’t want to be on medication my whole life. Won’t this just go away?”*

⇒ *“I shouldn’t be depressed. I have nothing to feel sad about.”*

⇒ *“This can’t be happening to me, I’m not crazy.”*

⇒ *“Maybe this is my fault. Maybe if I just tried harder, I would feel better.”*

Mental Illness: FACTS AND NUMBERS

National Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov

- ☞ **25% of adults experience a mental health disorder in a given year.**
- ☞ **Anxiety disorders affect about 18.7% of adult population**
- ☞ **Major depressive disorder affects 6.7 % of adults.** (According to the 2004 World Health Report, this is the leading cause of disability in the United States and Canada in ages between 15-44).
- ☞ **Bipolar disorder affects 2.6% of the adult population per year.**
- ☞ **1% of children live with a serious mental or emotional disorder.**

A common strategy for treating adult mood disorders is a combination of nutrition, exercise, meditation and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT). If a mood disorder is severe, impairing quality of life, not improving significantly with CBT and a holistic approach, then medication is necessary. Psychiatric medication should be prescribed and monitored by a trained mental health professional. Many courageous people have stepped up to claim their right to bring mental health concerns into public awareness. New treatment success and scientific medical breakthroughs are occurring regularly.

You are not alone

People throughout history have heroically coped with mental illness:

Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, Ludwig van Beethoven, Charles Dickens, Abraham Lincoln, Florence Nightingale, Theodore Roosevelt, Mike Wallace, Ray Charles, Tipper Gore, Amy Tan, J.K. Rowling, Johnny Depp, Cameron Diaz and DMX are just a few.

Can you identify the famous author of each quote below?

Sources: NPR Fresh Air interview, www.depression.about.com/od/famous/Famous_People_With_Depression.htm www.naminh.org/action-famous-people.php www.disabled-world.com famous people with disorder

#1

"I'm a depressive. Ever since I was a small child I have had cyclical depression."

#2 "I have to force myself not to step on every chewing gum stain when walking along and fight urges to walk through a doorway several times, because I don't want this condition taking over my life."

#4 "'I didn't eat. I stayed in my room. I was in a really bad place in life, going through that lonely period: 'Who am I? Who are my friends?' My life changed."

#3 "A diagnosis is burden enough without being burdened by secrecy and shame."

#5

"I've got that OCD. I'll go into a hotel room. Before I can relax I have to move all the leaflets and all the books and put them in a drawer. Everything has to be perfect,"

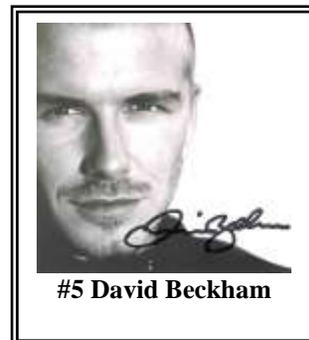
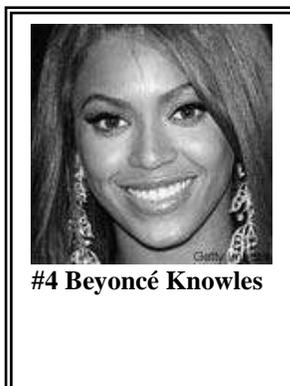
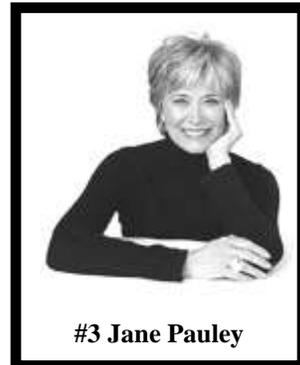
Find the authors of these quotes on the bottom of the next page.

Stage 3 Let Go & Grow

*“Anyone can slay a dragon, he told me.
But try waking up every morning & loving the world all over again.
That’s what takes a real hero.”
Brian Andreas*

- ❖ **Let go** of the out dated belief that mood disorders are not *real* chemical imbalances.
 - ❖ **Let go** of those old stereotypes about mental illness such as: mental illness is a weakness, character flaw or “just in your head.”
 - ❖ **Let go** of the belief that mood disorders are an embarrassment that casts a negative shadow of shame on individuals and their families.
- ❖ **Let go** of negative attitudes about psychiatric treatment, medication and therapy such as: “You *should* be able to handle this without treatment.” Or “Psychiatric medications are a cop-out, a crutch.”
- ❖ **Let go** of a belief in helplessness and hopelessness.
- ❖ **Let go** of the false belief that you are alone.

Authors of quotes on previous page:





Week #3 Understanding Moods Homework

Coping with depression and anxiety

- 1. Take this book with you to your next medical appointment.** Discuss the results of your mood chart or your symptom lists with a health care professional. *Failing to treat a medical mood disorder or an addiction will impair your personal progress throughout this workbook.*
- 2. Increase your physical activity.** Check with your physician prior to engaging in new or strenuous activity.
- 3. Continue working on your goals set forth in Weeks #1 & #2.** Practice your coping strategies daily. Practice deep breathing or meditation daily. Maintain an awareness of your moods.
- 4. Want resources?**

Elliott, Charles H., Smith, Laura L., and Beck, Aaron T., MD (2005). *Anxiety & Depression Workbook for Dummies*.

Gorman, Jack M. (2007). *The Essential Guide to Psychiatric Drugs, Revised and Updated*.

Grayson, J. (2004). *Freedom from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: A Personalized Recovery Program for Living with Uncertainty*.

Miklowitz, D. J. (2002). *The Bipolar Disorder Survival Guide: What You and Your Family Need to Know*.

Redfield, J.K. (1997). *An Unquiet Mind: Memoir of Moods and Madness*.

Schwartz, J, Gladding, R (2011). *You Are Not Your Brain: The Four Step Solution for Changing Bad Habits, Ending Unhealthy Thinking and Taking Control of Your life*.

Take Anxiety and Depression tests posted online by Psymed.com

www.psymed.info/default.aspx?m=Home&l=3

Watch inspirational and informative videos on www.TED

Jane McGonigal: The game that can give you 10 extra years of life

www.ted.com/talks/jane_mcgonigal_the_game_that_can_give_you_10_extra_years_of_life.html

Week #4 Healing Anger



A Native American tribal leader was describing his own inner struggles. He said, “There are two dogs inside me. One of the dogs is mean and evil. The other dog is good. The mean dog fights the good dog all the time.

Someone asked him which dog usually wins and after a moment’s reflection, he answered, “The one I feed the most.”

Native American tale as told by
author Harold Kushner in *Living a Life That Matters*

“I shall allow no man to belittle my soul
by making me hate him.”

Booker T. Washington

 Nail in the Fence 

There once was a little boy who had a bad temper. His father gave him a bag of nails and told him that every time he lost his temper, he must hammer a nail into the back of the fence.

The first day the boy had driven 37 nails into the fence. Over the next few weeks, as he learned to control his anger, the number of nails hammered daily gradually dwindled down. He discovered it was easier to control his temper than to drive those nails into the fence.

Finally the day came when the boy didn't lose his temper at all. He told his father about it and the father suggested that the boy now pull out one nail for each day that he was able to control his temper. The days passed and the young boy was finally able to tell his father that all of the nails had been pulled from the fence.

The father took his son by the hand and led him to the fence. He said. "You have done well, my son, but look at the holes in the fence. The fence will never be the same. When you say things in anger, they leave a scar just like this one. No matter how many times you say you are sorry, the hole is still there."

Author Unknown



Healing Anger Overview

In this week's material you will learn how to *work through* your anger.

Working through anger involves the ability to:

1. **Acknowledge** your anger by identifying the triggers and experiencing the emotions.
2. **Learn** to make healthier choices that allow you to cope with uncomfortable emotions.
3. **Let go** of the need to respond to anger in destructive ways.

Stage 1: Acknowledge. Rather than working *through* your anger, you may feel *stuck* in your anger. By repeatedly venting, experiencing and then justifying your anger, you remain angry. Complaining and blaming block your ability to problem-solve.

When you blame others, you are not able to recognize your role and your choices. Blame is a strong defense against personal responsibility. Blame blocks your ability to *choose* a healthier response.

Stage 2: Learn. If you choose, you may learn to break the blame habit, develop coping skills and search for the deeper issues hiding beneath anger and blame.

Tools in this section include:

- Anger Onion Tool
- Transforming anger into insight
- Stages for healing anger
- Anger mood chart
- Checklist for hidden anger
- Anger Prevention Test
- 10 solutions for healing anger problems
- Anger homework

Stage 3: Let Go. Once you transform anger into insight, you release the need for blame, revenge or resentment. Your new understanding sets you free.

“No one can be reasonable and angry at the same time.”

Author Unknown

What Makes You Mad?

Check all that apply

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other drivers/traffic | <input type="checkbox"/> High prices | <input type="checkbox"/> Personal failure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Stupid people | <input type="checkbox"/> Phone solicitation | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of help |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not doing it right | <input type="checkbox"/> Disrespect | <input type="checkbox"/> Misbehaved kids |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computer trouble | <input type="checkbox"/> Drinking | <input type="checkbox"/> Bad bosses |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Messes, clutter | <input type="checkbox"/> Tardiness | <input type="checkbox"/> Bad employees |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Incompetence | <input type="checkbox"/> Lies/liars | <input type="checkbox"/> Toilet seat left up |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Unfairness | <input type="checkbox"/> Being ignored | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsiderate people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Favoritism | <input type="checkbox"/> Being misunderstood | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud cell phone users |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Misplaced, lost items | <input type="checkbox"/> Being placed on hold | <input type="checkbox"/> Incorrectly loaded dishwasher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Long waiting lines | <input type="checkbox"/> Laziness | <input type="checkbox"/> Procrastination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smoking | <input type="checkbox"/> Rudeness | <input type="checkbox"/> Losing the game |

What else make you mad? _____

Why do you get soooo angry? Three Reasons Why

1. Physical Danger: You are a human. As a species, your anger response is designed to help you during threats of physical danger or vulnerability. Anger triggers a series of chemical reactions in the body that allow you to “fight, flight or freeze.” As a predator attempts to kill and eat you, your anger response helps you move faster, fight harder or play dead. This anger response helps you avoid becoming lunch.



2. Physical Vulnerability: Blood sugar and hormone levels, chronic pain and fatigue are just a few conditions that create physical challenges. When you become overly tired, uncomfortably hungry or suffer with chronic pain, your body chemistry signals aggression to protect this vulnerability. Just like a wounded animal, when your body is vulnerable your irritability and aggression serve as a protective device to distance others.

3. Emotional Vulnerability: In addition to physical protection, human anger also serves as an emotional protection. By focusing your attention outward, anger and blame create a defense against identifying and experiencing the more fragile and painful emotions such as fear, anxiety, shame, grief, depression and hopelessness. Emotional vulnerability includes **limited coping skills, unrealistic expectations, narcissistic entitlement, projection, displacement** and those emotionally painful **deeper core issues**.

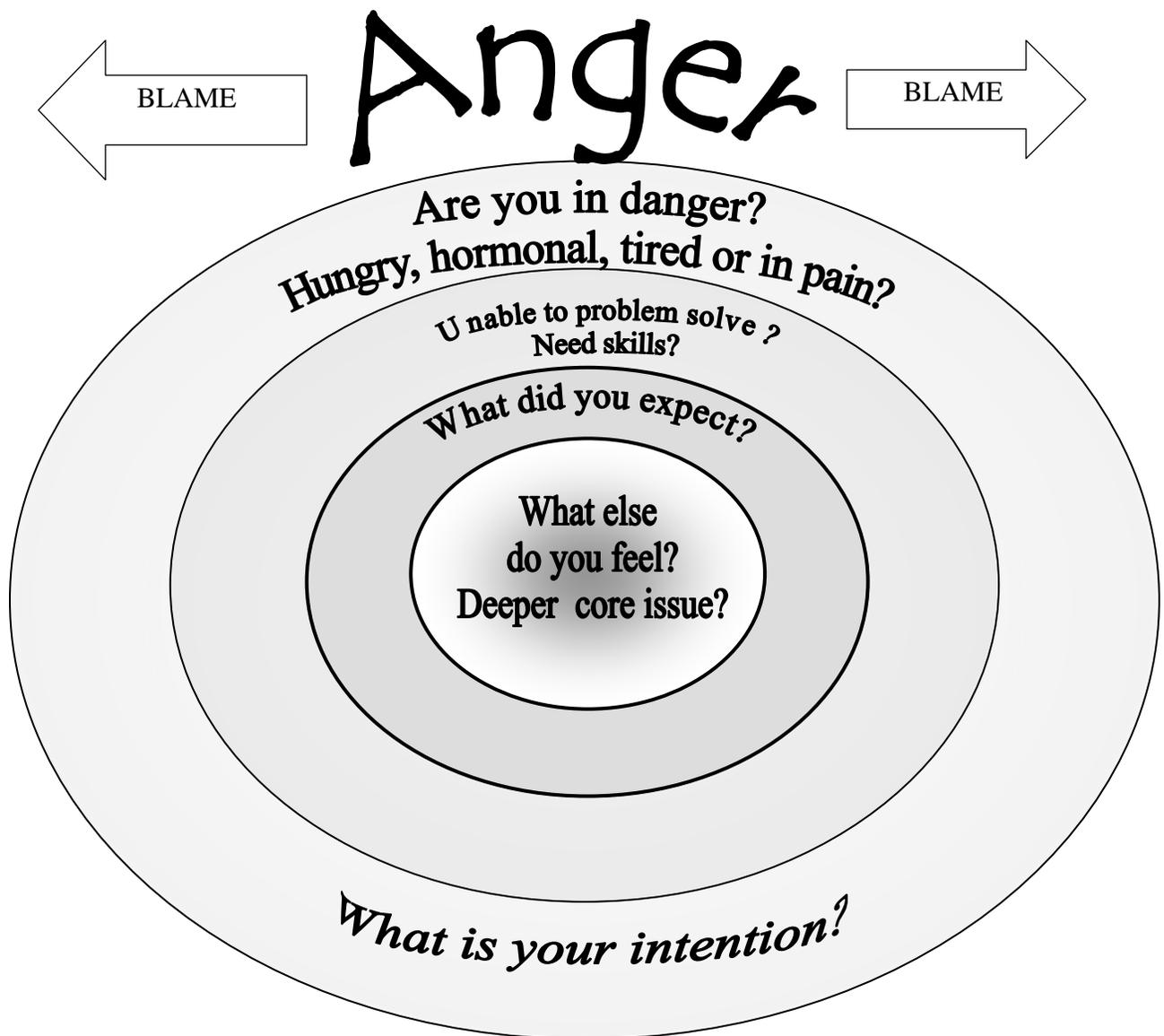
“The angry people are those who are most afraid.” Dr. Robert Anthony

Anger Onion

What is triggering your anger response? Transforming anger into insight requires you to think through your emotions.

1. Is your life threatened or in danger?
2. Are you physically vulnerable due to hunger, fatigue, pain or another medical condition?

If you answer no to the first two questions, let's look deeper. You may notice an urge to blame someone or something for your anger. **BLAME** focuses attention outward → away from insight. **BLAME** → creates a cycle of justifying, rationalizing and defending anger rather than working through it. **BLAME** → protects fragile underlying core emotions. What is your intention when angry? Would you rather blame others or use insight to problem solve? Peel the layers of the anger onion to transform anger into insight.



Understanding Anger: Transforming Anger into Insight

The *Anger Onion* tool guides you through a checklist of questions that transform anger and blame into insight. Each time you identify anger feelings check for:

1. **Physical danger:** Is your life threatened or in danger?
2. **Physical vulnerability:** Are you tired, hungry, or suffering low blood sugar, chronic pain, chemical or hormonal imbalance?
3. **Emotional vulnerability:** Are you using anger and blame to protect yourself from addressing something that is more difficult, uncomfortable or painful such as:
 - ✓ **Unrealistic expectations:** Anger is a common response to unrealistic expectations. **Examples:** Anger at: *the toddler wetting the bed, he is drunk AGAIN, a dishonest person told another lie, there is no “magic” solution.*
 - ✓ **Limited coping skills: Inability to problem-solve** (Tantruming rather than problem solving also known as Toddler moment). **Examples:** *Pouting, yelling, screaming, smashing or hitting when something does not go your way.*
 - ✓ **Narcissistic entitlement:** Anger at having to accommodate others, wait, share or take turns. **Examples:** *Intolerance, impatience and anger at delays, long lines, traffic, or simply being told “no.”*
 - ✓ **Projected anger:** Rather than admit that YOU feel anger towards someone, you instead believe that person is angry with you.
 - ✓ **Displaced anger:** Anger directed at someone or something that is safe or convenient, rather than the actual source of your anger. **Example:** *Directing anger toward your children because you are angry with your ex-spouse. Directing anger toward your partner because of anger with your parents.*
 - ✓ **Deeper Core Issues:** Anger protects you from feeling your fragile emotions. These fragile emotions may also be triggered by unrealistic expectations or limited coping skills. **Examples:** *Embarrassment, insecurity, jealousy, anxiety, fear, disappointment, grief, loss, guilt and shame.*

Emotions more painful than anger:

- ✓ **Fear of not having control:** *helplessness or vulnerability.*
- ✓ **Abandonment:** *rejection, isolation, loneliness, fear of being alone.*
- ✓ **Inadequacy and inferiority: “not--enough”:** *not good, smart, attractive, rich, thin, strong, popular, successful or perfect... enough.*
- ✓ **Deep shame:** *excessive guilt, unworthy of love, unlovable.*

Understanding Anger: Transforming Blame into Insight

As you attempt to work through your anger onion tool, you may notice that you become stuck in a pattern of blame. Attempting to search deeper into *why you are really sooo angry*, may result in a circular pattern like this: *“I want to work through my own anger, but I can’t because:*



“I am right! My anger is justified!”

“It’s not my fault, look at what I have to put up with!”

“They provoke me!”

“They push my buttons!”

“I wouldn’t get so angry, if they wouldn’t be so stupid!”

“They were asking for it!”

“It’s not fair!”

“No man can think clearly when his fists are clenched.”

George Jean Nathan

Blame cycle

1. Blame provides immediate physiological relief. This relief blocks you from insight regarding your own limitations. As long as you blame, you do not experience the pain of deeper, more uncomfortable emotions.
2. Blaming others for your frustration, irritability, impatience and temper feels better than taking responsibility for your actions and your emotional choices.
3. Blaming others allows you to feel superior and righteous.
4. Blaming others is quicker and easier than problem solving.

Blaming others provides a strong psychological defense against looking inward, taking your own personal inventory, problem-solving and moving forward.

- **Working through your anger requires that you stop blaming others.**
- **Rather than assigning blame or fault, take personal responsibility for your choices and your actions.**
- **Rather than focusing on “Am I right?” Ask yourself, “Do I have the right?”**
- **Working through your anger requires that you problem-solve.**

“What is missing in any situation is what you fail to bring to it.”

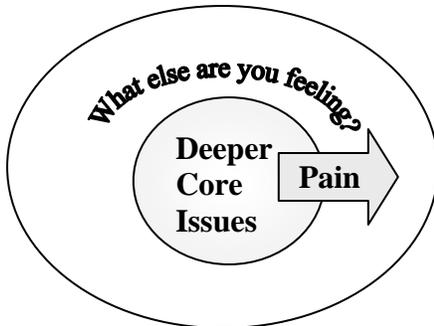
Course in Miracles

Still stuck in blame?

“I am mad at them for taking advantage of me. They never help me. They never consider my needs. They don’t listen. Sure I blow up—but wouldn’t anyone?”

“I am mad at the unfairness of it! How do I let go of the anger when it’s their fault or when nothing ever changes?”

Transform blame into insight using the Anger Onion Tool.



Let’s look at the layers hiding beneath your anger.

1. Is your life threatened or in danger? If not, dig deeper.
2. Are **you** prioritizing your physical and emotional needs?
3. Do you have realistic expectations?
4. Aside from anger, what else are you feeling?

“I feel like a victim. I feel helpless.”

“I feel unloved, disrespected and unappreciated.”

“I feel out of control because I can’t make them change. I have no control over what they do.”

What begins as anger at **THEM** slowly transforms into emotional pain **WITHIN**.

Now let’s replace anger, hurt and helplessness with coping skills and problem solving. Once you understand that anger and blame serve to protect your more fragile emotions, you may take action toward healing.

“As long as I was angry and blaming them, I failed to focus on what I could do. I guess I waited for them to change. I wanted them to fix the problem.”

Now I realize that I can’t wait for them to change. I won’t blame them for how I feel. I will not play victim or martyr anymore. I need to love, respect and appreciate myself. I don’t have control over them, but I do have choices about my behavior. I will stop feeling angry and helpless. I will learn better coping skills.”

You are no longer stuck in “blame and blow-up”.

You just transformed blame into insight. Spend a few minutes reflecting on how your anger protects your deeper, more painful feelings.

If **YOUR** anger protects **YOUR** pain, what does that tell you about your angry teenager?

Your angry neighbor, co-worker or supervisor?

Your angry parent or your partner?

Work through your anger in an emotionally healthy way

Identify anger 🍎*	Experience anger																
<p>Honestly identify your angry feelings</p> <p><i>I'm mad at...</i> <i>I'm impatient when...</i> <i>I am frustrated with...</i> <i>I'm irritated by...</i> <i>I'm annoyed with...</i> <i>I resent...</i></p> <p>Acknowledge all aggressive, harsh, antagonistic destructive, resentful, judgmental, intolerant and hostile emotions. You can only heal anger that you are aware of. Tune in.</p>	<p>Notice how your body feels when angry: <i>Fight, flight, freeze</i></p> <table><tr><td><i>Hot, flushed face</i></td><td><i>Heart pounding</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Adrenaline rush</i></td><td><i>Muscle tension</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Fight, flight or fear</i></td><td><i>Tears, crying</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Stomach upset</i></td><td><i>Headache</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Clenched jaw</i></td><td><i>Raised voice</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Yelling</i></td><td><i>Muscle twitching</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Hypertension</i></td><td><i>Agitation</i></td></tr><tr><td><i>Insomnia</i></td><td><i>Hypervigilance</i></td></tr></table>	<i>Hot, flushed face</i>	<i>Heart pounding</i>	<i>Adrenaline rush</i>	<i>Muscle tension</i>	<i>Fight, flight or fear</i>	<i>Tears, crying</i>	<i>Stomach upset</i>	<i>Headache</i>	<i>Clenched jaw</i>	<i>Raised voice</i>	<i>Yelling</i>	<i>Muscle twitching</i>	<i>Hypertension</i>	<i>Agitation</i>	<i>Insomnia</i>	<i>Hypervigilance</i>
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<i>Hypertension</i>	<i>Agitation</i>																
<i>Insomnia</i>	<i>Hypervigilance</i>																

Practice Your Anger Onion Tool

Use the anger onion as a coping tool for anger. Ask the following questions:

Physical danger: Was my life threatened or in danger? If yes, no need to go deeper, just get safe!

Physical vulnerability: Is my anger due to fatigue? Hunger? Pain? Mood disorder? Hormones? If yes, list what steps may help solve the problem: _____

Emotional vulnerability: What's really upsetting me? What other emotions am I feeling? **Circle all that apply:** embarrassed, impatient, disrespected, insecure, lonely, anxious, worried, guilty, afraid, ashamed, unworthy, humiliated, rejected, grief, despair, abandoned, helpless, vulnerable, unloved, other _____).

Coping skills: How do I want to role model coping with my emotions?
Rather than pushing people away with anger and blame, openly acknowledge, discuss and problem solve those painful emotions.

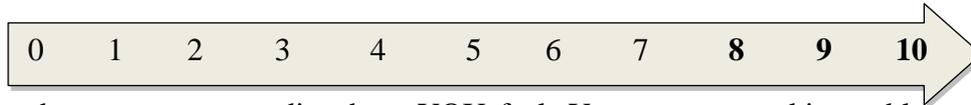
Examples: *"Instead of blowing up, I admitted my feelings of embarrassment."*
"Rather than yell, I told them I was worried and I needed their help."
"I realized I felt better when I did not personalize their inappropriate actions. How they behave is not a reflection on my self-worth. "

 Use the information on the following pages to transform anger to insight.

Anger Mood Chart is a tool to help identify patterns in your anger. Are you more irritable or angry during certain times of the day, week, month or year? Acknowledge your anger more effectively by using a rating scale to identify your anger patterns.



1. **Keep a daily record** of your mood. **Rate anger on a 0 to 10 scale.**



2 (Remember, you are recording how YOU feel. You are *not* tracking a blame chart. Even if you want to blame someone for your frustration or anger, you still record the anger YOU felt.

(0-1) = calm (2-4) = Impatient/Frustrated (5) = Irritable/annoyed (6-8) = Angry/mad
(9-10) = Rage/tantrum

3. **Analyze your data at the end of each day, week and month.** Notice patterns as they emerge. Once you have identified anger patterns, use the anger prevention and coping strategies in this chapter to create a plan to correct the problems.

For Women Only: Monthly patterns of anger, PMS, PMDD

The American Psychiatric Association characterizes premenstrual dysphoric disorder (PMDD) as a severe form of Premenstrual syndrome (PMS) in which anger, irritability, and anxiety or tension are especially prominent.

***DSM IV Symptom Inventory for PMDD:** Check the symptom below IF it is present the week prior to your period, resolves during your period and is absent after your period.

- (1) Mood swings (Suddenly sad, tearful or increased sensitivity to rejection.)
- (2) Irritability, anger or increased interpersonal conflicts.
- (3) Depressed mood, feelings of hopelessness, or self-deprecating thoughts.
- (4) Anxiety, tension, feelings of being "keyed up" or "on edge"
- (5) Decreased interest in usual activities (e.g., work, school, friends, hobbies).
- (6) Difficulty in concentration.
- (7) Lethargy, easy fatigability, or marked lack of energy.
- (8) Change in appetite, overeating, or specific food cravings.
- (9) Change in sleep, increase or decrease.
- (10) Feeling overwhelmed or out of control.
- (11) Additional physical symptoms such as breast tenderness or swelling, joint or muscle pain, a sensation of "bloating," weight gain.

Scoring: If you checked 5 symptoms with at least one of the symptoms being either (1), (2), (3), or (4) take this inventory to your doctor for further discussion and analysis.

*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th. Edition is published by the American Psychiatric Association and covers all mental health disorders for both children and adults.

CHECKLIST FOR HIDDEN ANGER

Not every family teaches healthy expressions of anger. Some families model the extreme dynamics of either “**shut up**” or “**blow up.**” Other families teach their children that feeling or expressing anger is **bad**. Below is a checklist to determine when you are hiding anger from yourself. **Check all that apply to you.**

1. *Selective* tardiness and procrastination.
2. An attraction to sadistic humor.
3. Interest in violent entertainment (books, movies, etc.).
4. Frequent disturbing or frightening dreams or nightmares.*
5. Thoughts or fantasies of a violent or homicidal nature.*
6. Sarcasm, cynicism or flippancy in conversation.
7. Over-politeness, forced cheerfulness, swallowing anger with a smile or gritted teeth.
8. Excessive smiling even when sharing upsetting or disturbing news.
9. Over-controlled monotone speaking voice.
10. Clenching jaw or grinding teeth-especially while sleeping.*
11. Unintentional facial tics, spasmodic foot movements or habitual muscle clenching.*
12. Chronically stiff and sore neck or shoulder muscles.
13. Chronic upset stomach, bowel or intestinal trouble.*
14. Tendency toward score keeping, gossip or competitive relationships.
15. Feeling depressed or tearful in response to abuse.*
16. Urge to use nicotine, alcohol, tranquilizers or sex to repress anger.*
17. Emotional eating: excessive or binge eating to “stuff” anger down or starving self in response to anger avoidance.*
18. Excessive spending, shopping or gambling to suppress anger.*
19. Projection: accusing other people of anger rather than addressing your own anger.
20. Excessive sleeping, napping or remaining in bed to avoid harsh emotions at home or at work.*

Scoring: *Checked items ending with an asterisk (*) should be discussed with a healthcare professional. Take this list with you to discuss the results.

Anger Prevention Test

How well do your thoughts and actions PREVENT anger blow-ups?

Check all items below which are currently part of your daily routine.
Each item helps prevent temper outbursts.

1. **I practice healthy eating habits.** I eat small amounts of healthy food every few hours to avoid low blood sugar, hunger pain, fatigue and headaches. *I understand that excessive hunger leads to irritability. Over-eating fuels self-loathing.*
2. **I maintain a healthy sleep schedule.** Just like little children, adults become cranky when sleep deprived. *To prevent anger, I prioritize time for rest and practice healthy sleep habits.*
3. **I avoid excessive alcohol, caffeine, fats and sugars.** *I understand excessive amounts of these items may disturb my ability to control my mood.*
4. **I take DAILY responsibility** for meeting my own emotional, spiritual and physical needs. *I understand that feelings of resentment, jealousy, blame, insecurity, martyrdom and codependency all become fuel for my anger.*
5. **I create time for relaxation daily.** *I understand that relaxed people rarely experience uncontrollable temper problems.*
6. **I plan something FUN each day.** *(All work and no play makes Jill a dull girl.)*
7. **I have REALISTIC expectations** of myself and others.
8. **I laugh wholeheartedly and often.** I search for the humor in everyday situations.
9. **I create loving relationships in my life.** *I understand that I do not “blow-up” when I feel loved, valued, appreciated and supported.*
10. **I pace myself and I schedule my time effectively.** *I understand that my schedule will either support or sabotage my coping skills.*
11. **I live in today.** *I release the past with all of its upsets, blame, regrets, emotional wounds and guilt.*
12. **I ask for help. I delegate.** *I understand that I am not alone. I do not have to do it all.*

_____ **Total the number of boxes checked.** This number reflects your use of coping skills.

Scoring: 10-12 GREAT JOB!! You are using coping skills to problem-solve and are pro-active in anger prevention.

Less than 10: Each unchecked item becomes an opportunity for self-improvement.

Keep practicing all 12 preventions solutions until you are able to check every item.

- ★ You may only choose *your* response.
- ★ You may not make choices for other people.
- ★ Even when those around you are NOT choosing to manage their own anger effectively, you may choose higher standards for yourself.
- ★ Acting as a role model is your most influential relationship tool.
- ★ Self-esteem increases as anger management improves.

“Get mad, then get over it.”

Colin Powell

Additional Help:

- **Severe changes in hormone levels may interfere with mood management.** People who suffer from hormone imbalance should discuss medical options with their physicians.
- **Use of medication as prescribed is an additional anger prevention solution.** The following conditions may benefit from a medication consultation with a health care professional:

*Anxiety, *Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder,
*Bipolar Disorder, *Borderline Personality Disorder,
*Depression, *Impulse Control Disorder, *PMS, *PMDD,
*Paranoid Personality Disorder and *Psychotic disorders.

Consider **professional evaluations** to address anger problems resulting from **insomnia, traumatic brain injury, dementia** and **withdrawal from addictive drugs.**

Chronic pain can weaken the effectiveness of anger prevention tools. People who suffer from chronic pain should discuss options for pain management with their physicians.



10 Solutions for Healing Anger Problems

“People who fly into a rage always make a bad landing.” Will Rogers

1. **Practice mindfulness. Become a witness to your anger emotions without judgement. Anger need not be harmful.** You may **identify** and **experience** anger *without* choosing destructive behavior.

YOU CHOOSE YOUR RESPONSE. Choose dignity.

 **Spend time each day mindful of your decision *not* to cause harm with your anger.** Learn from your success. You can control yourself. Continue to notice your improvements.

Example 1: *When I arrived home from work and found my apartment in a mess, instead of my usual blaming, shaming and yelling, I decided to take a shower, cool off and then think about why I was feeling so angry.*

Example 2: *Rather than becoming defensive or angry when my partner criticized me, I remembered to breathe and to listen without reacting emotionally. I took the time to calm myself down. Then I was able to address the criticism constructively by problem-solving. I treated my partner as I wish to be treated.*

2. **Create a safe house.** Establish rules prohibiting emotional, verbal and physical abuse in your home. Refuse to allow harm through words or actions. Discuss the safe house rules with all who frequent your home. Post these rules on your refrigerator as a daily reminder.

“Anger is one letter short of danger” Author Unknown

 **Compose your own safe house contract.** Ask members of your household to help. Include everyone’s signature in agreement with the safe house rules.

Example: Only loving hands, kind words and helpful actions are welcomed in this home. No yelling, cussing, name-calling or disrespect allowed. There will be no pushing, slapping, shoving or hitting. **We will treat others as we wish to be treated. We will speak only as we wish to be spoken to.** This home is a loving, nurturing, safe haven to all who live and visit here.



Signed: *Peter, Lois, Meg, Chris, Stewie, & Brian Griffin*

3. **Stop blaming.** If you were not busy blaming others, what “right action” would you be taking? *You may not choose everything that happens to you, but you may choose your response to what happens to you.*

Example: *I used to blame the traffic when I was late. Once I took responsibility for my time management, I stopped blaming my tardiness on traffic. I decided to problem-solve. Now that I factor in potential traffic delays, I’m rarely late.*

A helpful way to avoid the blame game. ⇨ Remember that anger triggers blame. ⇨ Blame creates outward focus. ⇨ Outward focus is the opposite of insight. ⇨ Insight means wisdom. ⇨ If blame is the opposite of wisdom, then blame is not wise. ⇨ Consider yourself *stupid* each time you blame others. It's best that you keep your thoughts to yourself when you are angry *so the stupid doesn't leak out*. (For more information, See "Zip it" rule, Solution #4).

"I don't have to attend every argument I'm invited to." Author Unknown

- 4. ZIP IT RULE: Do not speak in anger.** An angry tone of voice rarely leads to positive communication. Your anger causes others to respond with *fight, flight* or *freeze*. People become defensive, attack back, tune out, clam up, shut down or run. If the message you wish to convey when you are angry is truly brilliant, that message will remain brilliant when you no longer feel angry. *Save your dignity by holding your tongue.*
- 5. Remember to breathe.** Increasing the oxygen supply to your brain allows you to regain control of your emotions and make better choices. Breathing also helps you avoid blame and remember to "*Zip It.*" Continued practice of mindful breathing also helps you honor your safe house contract.
- 6. Prevent blow ups.** Practice your "12 Anger Prevention Solutions" listed previously in this chapter.
- 7. Search for the lessons beneath your anger using using your Anger Onion Tool.** (Pages 67-72). The presence of anger is a clue that you are not feeling peaceful. Something in your life is out of balance. Do you have unrealistic expectations? Poor coping skills? Is it time to take a nap or have a cookie?

Example: *"I felt angry when I came home to a messy apartment. Okay, honestly, the messy apartment was just the surface issue. I was really upset because I felt overwhelmed and frustrated about myself. The mess reminded me that I am not who I want to be. I throw tantrums. My life feels out of control. I feel like I'm a mess. My anger let me blame others and distracted me from making the changes I needed to make."*

Example: *"Most of my anger stemmed from unrealistic expectations and narcissistic entitlement.. I got angry if people didn't respond the way I thought they should. I expected others to read my mind or become a "mini-me". I now realize that people have the right to make their own choices. They also have the right to tell me "no." I should treat people how I wish to be treated. By practicing my new thinking, I am assertive instead of aggressive. I am proactive rather than reactive."*

8. Avoid alcohol and illegal drug use. Do not ingest anything that might trigger an “out of control” response. You need healthy brain cells to manage your anger effectively.

 A pattern of becoming angry, argumentative or irritable when you are buzzed, drunk, high or hungover should be discussed with an addiction specialist.

 Consider attending one of the free 12-step Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), Narcotics Anonymous (NA), Alanon, or Adult Child of Alcoholics (ACOA) meetings in your community to address a problem with your life or the life of a beloved becoming unmanagable because of drugs or alcohol.

9. Transform anger to insight. Spend time listening to your thoughts. Rather than reacting with strong emotions, practice placing information in your *good to know* file (page 40). From this nonjudgemental place you may notice when your expectations are aligned with reality. (Apple or Banana Page 40). You won’t feel so angry, afraid or uptight if you make peace with the thoughts bumping around in your head.

 Note the time set aside for daily self-reflection here: _____.

*“Holding on to anger is like grasping a hot coal
with the intent of throwing it at someone else;
you are the one who gets burned.”
Buddha*

10. Laugh. Have fun. A sense of humor is a great anger management tool.

 Create a list of fun events. Know what makes you laugh. Prioritize time for laughter and fun. Mark your calendar for events you enjoy each season of the year. Write your list below:



“Anger is a signal and one worth listening to.”

Harriet Lerner, *The Dance of Anger*, 1985

Week #4 Healing Anger Homework

- 1. Complete all of the tests and practice all of the strategies in this chapter.** Do not be *that person* who *reads* all of the self-help books, but never actually *applies* the self-help solutions.
- 2. Discuss unresolved anger problems with your health care professional.** Discuss irritability caused by blood sugar irregularities, chronic pain, diet, mood disorders, hormone cycles, insomnia, chemical imbalances, medication side effects, head injury, illness and drug or alcohol abuse.
- 3. Practice peeling the outer layers of your anger to explore the deeper underlying issues.** Search for tears trapped beneath the layers as you peel your anger onion. You now know that anger creeps in when you become too hungry, too tired and too stressed out. Anger also reflects poor coping skills or unrealistic expectations. Digging deeper still, anger may be a defense against exploring more fragile, vulnerable and painful emotions. Use your knowledge of psychology to transform anger into insight. Unless your life is in danger, never again let yourself believe that your anger response is “just anger.”
- 4. If you or someone you love has a problem with violent behavior, seek outside help immediately! Create a safety plan with a domestic violence expert.**

Domestic Violence Resources

✓ **www.WomensLaw.org** provides easy-to-understand legal information to women living with or escaping domestic violence.

✓ **Become familiar with options** in your community for police protection, alcohol and drug rehabilitation or intervention, domestic violence shelters, children’s protective services and victim’s advocacy and protection. Write your local emergency phone numbers below:

Police: _____ **Protective Services:** _____

Domestic Assault Services: _____

Emergency Counseling Services: _____

Safety Plan: _____

Week #5 Coping without BAD HABITS

WANTED!

**It's hard to fight an enemy
who has outposts
in your head"**

Sally Kempton

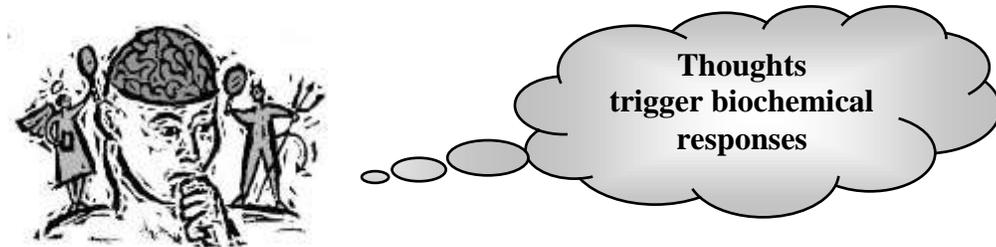
**Watch your thoughts; they become words,
Watch your words; they become actions.
Watch your actions; they become habits.
Watch your habits; they become your character.
Watch your character;
it becomes your destiny.**

Author unknown

**“There is a law in psychology
that if you form a picture in your mind
of what you would like to be,
and you keep and hold that picture there long enough,
you will soon become
exactly as you have been thinking.”**

William James (1842-1910)
American philosopher, psychologist and teacher

**What exactly is the relationship between your thoughts,
your physiological stress and your bad habits?**



Your thoughts trigger → chemical responses throughout your body. Each thought triggers → its own physiological response by releasing → corresponding hormones. 

A stress reaction results from an outpouring of adrenaline (a stimulant hormone), into the blood stream. → This, with other stress hormones, **produces a number of changes within your body.** 

These changes in your body affect mood and impulse control.

Addiction: The brains of addicted people have a higher release of dopamine (a happiness-inducing brain chemical) in a part of the brain called the mesolimbic system. 

This brain area is in charge of the reward reinforcement process, which is responsible for the pleasurable feelings we get from bad habits, keeping us coming back for more.

Coping without Bad Habits Overview

In this section, you will learn to eliminate your bad habits by using both self-awareness and positive thoughts to align your actions with your values.

Coping without bad habits requires taking responsibility for both your thoughts and your actions, then taking responsibility for changing them.

Over-eating, excessive shopping, cluttering, gambling, procrastination, gossiping, nagging, name-calling, yelling, co-dependent relationships, infidelity, smoking and drinking are all typical bad habits reported by people using this 11-week workbook. Self-defeating thoughts are the excuses, justifications and rationalizations used to fuel those bad habits. The chapter provides tools for coping without bad habits:

★ **Mindfulness:** Witness your thoughts.

“I am the awareness that is aware.” Eckhart Tolle

★ **Cognitive Reframing:** Transform negative thoughts into more helpful, useful and goal directed thoughts.

★ **Power of Intention:** Align your thoughts and actions with values.

*“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning,
but anyone can start today and make a new ending.”*

Maria Robinson

3 Stages of changing bad habits by using healthy coping skills

Acknowledge: Identify your self-defeating thoughts and bad habits. **Experience** your physiological and emotional response to each self-defeating thought and bad habit.

Learn: Challenge your thoughts with cognitive reframing.

- Just because you think it, doesn't mean it is true. Challenge your thoughts!
- Reframe (change) your negative thoughts into healing, helpful thoughts.
- Use your helpful thoughts and power of intention to eliminate your bad habits.
- Replace bad habits with healthy coping skills.

Let go: Release the need to let old thoughts and habits sabotage your life.

- You are not responsible for your childhood but you are responsible for the choices you make today *because* of your childhood.
- Just because it happened, doesn't mean it was right.
- Just because “they” said it or you felt it, doesn't mean it's true.

“When you change the way you look at things, the things you look at change.”

Wayne Dyer

What is a Bad Habit?

When does playing that video game, visiting Facebook, checking email or watching TV become a bad habit? How many working hours define a “workaholic”? Is an occasional glass of wine a bad habit? Where do you draw the line before electronics, hobbies, partying, gambling, shopping, clutter and even eating become bad habits? When does a relationship become an addiction?

Coping Skills versus Bad Habits

(Is your behavior aligned with your values?)

The *consequences* of an activity or relationship determine whether it is harmful. **Activities and relationships become bad habits when they are excessive, illegal, cause damage, create chaos in your life or have other harmful side effects.**

Determine if your Activity/Relationship (A/R) has crossed the line into a bad habit.

Answer each question by circling Yes or No



Yes No 1. Does your A/R negatively impact your ability to meet your basic financial responsibilities?

Yes No 2. Does your A/R cause you to feel embarrassed, remorseful or defensive?

Yes No 3. Are loved ones complaining about the amount of time or money you invest in your A/R?

Yes No 4. Has your A/R been the focus of arguments or fights with people who you respect?

Yes No 5. Does your A/R result in physical harm to your body or damage to your overall health and well-being?

Yes No 6. Do you find yourself hiding or minimizing the amount of time, energy or money spent on your A/R?

Yes No 7. Does your A/R interfere with your responsibilities at work?

Yes No 8. Does your A/R interfere with your responsibilities at home?

Yes No 9. Has your A/R negatively affected your self-esteem or self-respect?

Yes No 10. Does your A/R conflict with your life goals, professional standards, spiritual beliefs or personal values?

Scoring: Answering “yes” may indicate that your activity or relationship has crossed the line into a bad habit or addiction. Continue inventorying your bad habits on the next page.

Bad Habit Inventory



Bad habits begin with making the decision to do a bad behavior then continuing to repeat that bad behavior over and over until the behavior becomes habitual.

Bad habits require either a disconnection from mindfulness:

“I don’t know why I do that, I just do it.”

Or

Negative thoughts supporting the bad habit:

“I just don’t care.” “I can’t stop.”

Or *“Everyone’s doing it.”*

Observe and Listen: Place a check mark next to each sentence that is *currently* true for you. *Be honest with yourself. Your answers are private. Observe your physiological response as you answer each question.*

- 1. I eat to fill emotional emptiness, loneliness, boredom or anxiety. I blame my unhealthy weight on my genetics, my environment, my stress level or other factors out of my control.*
- 2. I use caffeine to stay awake. Lots of caffeine. I drink more than 250 mg a day.*
(8 oz of coffee = 65 to 110 mg of caffeine, soda = 34-70 mg of caffeine.)
- 3. I *abuse* alcohol, nicotine, cannabis, medications or other mood altering substances.*
- 4. My sexual behaviors or interests create moral, physical, or legal problems.*
- 5. I use my rage to let off steam. I tantrum, yell, throw things, swear, or threaten.*
- 6. I procrastinate. I avoid taking action on tasks that seem overwhelming or boring.*
- 7. I drive aggressively. I drive as if I own the road. I feel entitled to my anger and blame other drivers for my rage.
- 8. I don’t even want to know how much gambling has cost me. I’m out of control.
- 9. I am often shopping, spending or buying stuff to feel good. I spend too much.
- 10. I am never happy with what I have. I am always looking for something else “out there” to fix what feels empty “in me.”



- 11. I fuel my bad habits with thoughts of guilt, shame and poor body image. As long as I believe *I am not good enough*, I am able to justify and continue my bad habits.
- 12. I play the victim. I have an excuse for everything.
- 13. I surround myself with stress and chaos so that I never “have time” to relax, listen to my own thoughts or take responsibility for growth or change.
- 14. I give my power away to others then I blame them for taking it.
- 15. I avoid healing my fear of being alone by making sure that I am never alone.
- 16. I avoid conflict. When a conflict arises, I shut down, give in, blame, run or hide.
- 17. I live in the past. I have not accepted the present nor envisioned my future.
- 18. I am never satisfied with myself. I must always “do more.” I stay busy to outrun my self-loathing and my fear of not being good enough.
- 19. I must clean, wash, organize, order or count things to feel in control.*
- 20. I use denial regularly. I pretend I do not see it so maybe it will just go away. (*And I don't have any of the bad habits on this list. I don't need this stupid test!*).

_____ **Total number of items checked.**

Scoring: A perfect score is (0). Each checked item reflects an opportunity to improve.

* Discuss checked numbers 1 through 6, and #19 with your therapist or physician.



Thoughts for consideration:

Which self-defeating thoughts and bad habits are you interested in changing? List them here:

Are you ready to learn how to stop your bad habits?

Choosing the POWER of thoughts



Once you have identified your negative thoughts and bad habits, you have a choice to make.



**This choice reflects your intention.
Change is only possible for those who choose it.**

1. You may choose to remain unchanged. Whatever stagnation, discomfort or chaos is sabotaging your life will continue. Just like the people who splurge on the dessert now because the diet starts tomorrow, you may decide to read this now but change LATER.

OR

2. You may decide right NOW to begin making changes in your life. As you inhale your next deep breath, you inhale the possibility of change. Starting NOW.

The decision is yours. The choice may seem obvious. You may be asking, “Why would anyone choose to live with emotional pain and chaos by continuing to fuel bad habits with negative thoughts?” Good question. Why do you?

What is your intention?

Negative thoughts serve a purpose.

Negative thoughts provide excuses for bad habits.

As the bad habits escalate, the negative thoughts increase ⇨ toward more negative behavior and ⇨ more negative thoughts ⇨ and on ⇨ and on...

As long as you blame them, you don't have to take responsibility for your choices.

As long as you believe that you can't change, you don't have to.

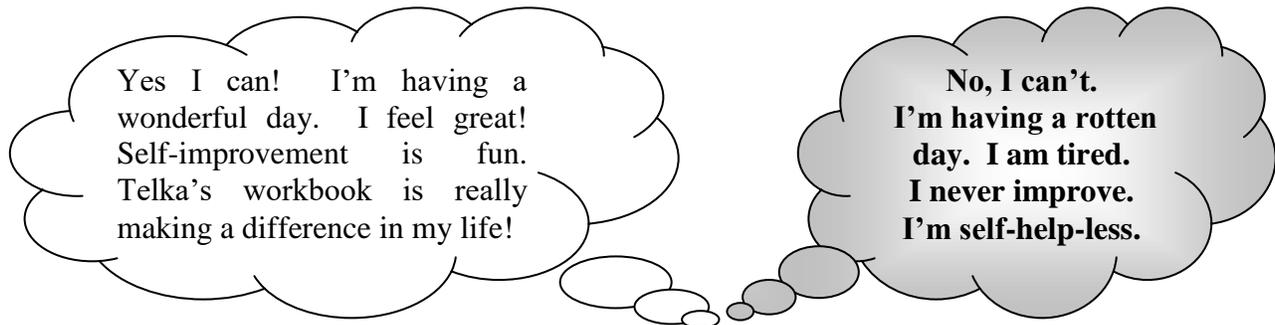
Self-observation

In Chapter One you learned that you choose your response to internal stimulus (your emotions) and external stimulus (everything around you). Practice acknowledging your responses by increasing self-awareness of your mind and body. Spend time each day reflecting on the choices you made.

Stimulus	→	Choice	→	Response
Awareness of your emotions and your environment.		Own your power to choose your response.		Choose your response to your emotions and environment.

“We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act, but a habit.” Aristotle

Your thoughts may be neutral, helpful or harmful.



 **Habitual positive thoughts lead to problem-solving**, creativity, feeling good, healthy relationships, positive role modeling and increased productivity at work and home.

 **Habitual negative thoughts fuel stress that lead to problems** including: relationship and family dysfunction, poor parenting, low self-esteem, health concerns, apathy, procrastination and poor job performance.

Observe and listen

 **Step back mentally. Become aware of your awareness by listening to and observing yourself.** Notice the tone of your voice. Observe your body language.



 **Tune in.** As you begin to really *listen* to yourself, you will become more aware of the impact of your thoughts on your body and your behavior. **You will also become more aware of your awareness.** Practice tuning in.

 **Identify patterns.** Pay attention to exaggerations or drama and “all or nothing” and “black or white” extremes such as “*They never listen to me!*” “*Nobody cares about me!*”

 **Notice what you focus on.** Do you ignore the positive while dwelling on the negative? Do you focus on problems or on solutions? Do you avoid inner focus by continually thinking about other people? Do you have difficulty directing or controlling your focus?

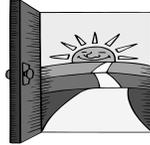
 **Observe the connection between thought and action.** Which thoughts allow you to gossip about your neighbor or gulp down that 40 ounce? What did you tell yourself before you lit that cigarette? What excuse helped you avoid paying your bills or balancing your checkbook? What are you telling yourself right now?

 **Negative thoughts lead to bad habits.** Self-observation is an important tool for eliminating bad habits. Use the columns on the next page to identify your range of positive and negative thoughts.

Observe Your Range of Thoughts

The dialog you hear in your head will range from negative to positive and back again depending on the situation, the people, your stress level, your mood and your body chemistry.

Check the boxes below that best represent your thoughts.
Practice observing your pattern of thoughts.



Passive Thoughts

- I never get my way*
- I'm not enough*
- I blame myself*
- I fear mistakes*
- I personalize everything*
- I hate myself*
- I am the problem*
- I feel guilty*
- I hate my imperfections*
- I'm stuck, I can't change*
- I'm a people pleaser*
- I can't...*

Assertive Thoughts

- I negotiate*
- We are all equal*
- I seek solutions*
- I learn from mistakes*
- I cope with emotions*
- I love myself and others*
- I problem-solve*
- I choose inner peace*
- I accept imperfections*
- I adapt to change*
- We can agree to disagree*
- I can!*

Aggressive Thoughts

- I always get MY way*
- I am superior*
- I blame "them"*
- I never make mistakes*
- "They" are too sensitive*
- I hate "them"*
- "They" are the problem*
- "They" are guilty*
- I insist on perfection*
- I expect "them" to change*
- "They" must listen to me*
- "They" can't...*

___ Total # passive thoughts

___ Total # assertive thoughts

___ Total # aggressive thoughts

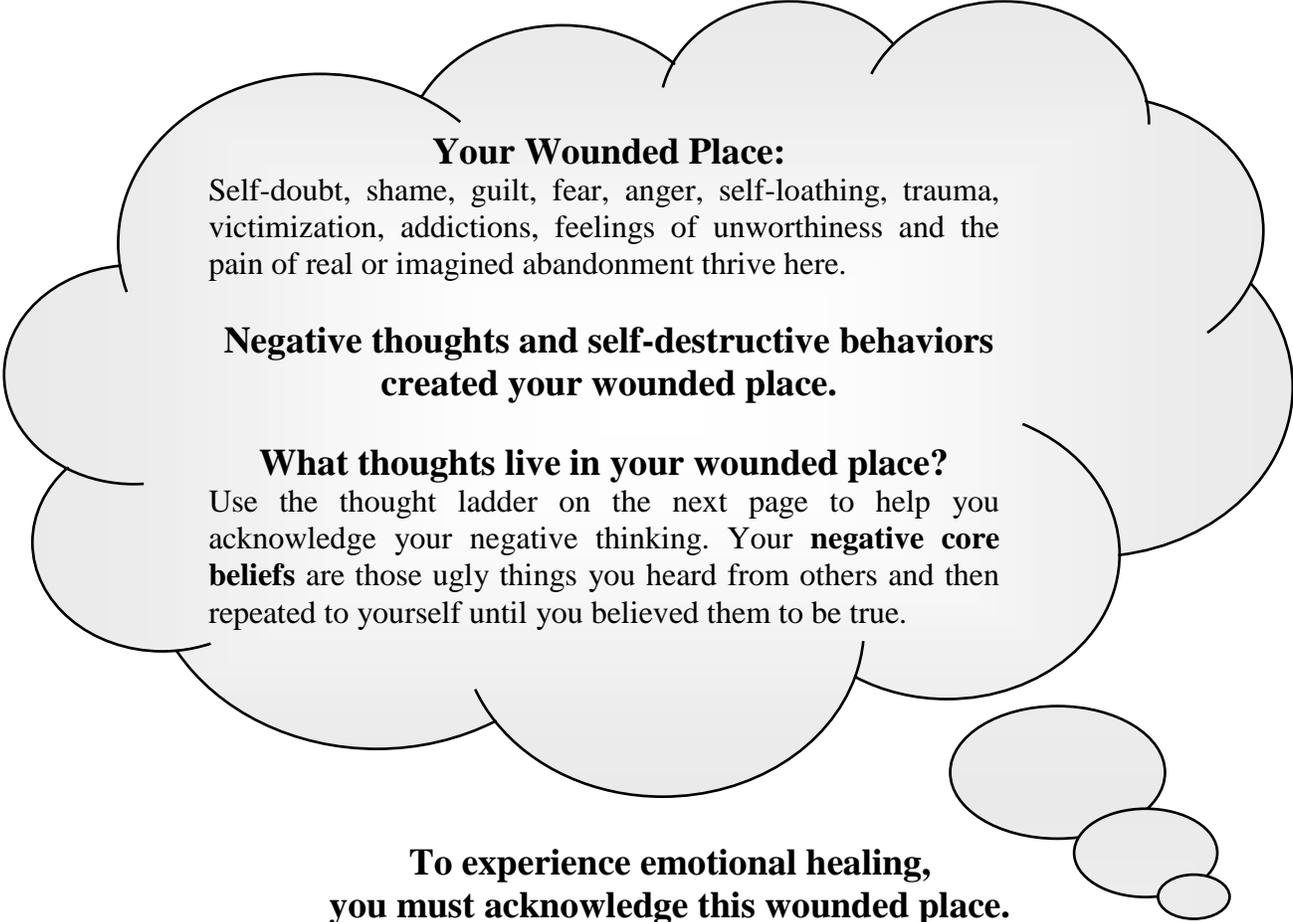
Cognitive Reframing: Challenge & Change Your Thoughts

Cognitive reframing means challenging those untrue, negative and exaggerated thoughts then *changing them* into more helpful and useful thoughts. Cognitive reframing skills allow you to align your thoughts with your values. Thoughts aligned with values = *habits* aligned with values = *healthy coping skills!*

Stage 1: Acknowledge

The first step toward cognitive reframing is to **identify** each negative thought. Then **experience** the corresponding physiological response. Your thoughts, emotions and physiology influence your behavior. Negative thoughts and negative behaviors create emotional wounds.

Stage 2: Learn to challenge those thoughts. Transform those wounds into wisdom. First, let us dig deeper into those negative inner thoughts.



Your Wounded Place:

Self-doubt, shame, guilt, fear, anger, self-loathing, trauma, victimization, addictions, feelings of unworthiness and the pain of real or imagined abandonment thrive here.

Negative thoughts and self-destructive behaviors created your wounded place.

What thoughts live in your wounded place?

Use the thought ladder on the next page to help you acknowledge your negative thinking. Your **negative core beliefs** are those ugly things you heard from others and then repeated to yourself until you believed them to be true.

**To experience emotional healing,
you must acknowledge this wounded place.**

Then you must **challenge the thoughts** that created it.

Just because you thought it, doesn't make it true.

Thought Ladder

Imagine each of your thoughts as a rung on a ladder. Negative, self-defeating thoughts move down the ladder. Become aware of each thought. Do any of the thoughts below sound familiar?

"No one will ever understand me."

"I'm fat, ugly and stupid."

"I'm too old and too tired."

"I'm not attractive enough."

"I will never be good enough."

"I'm afraid of being alone."

"I'm afraid they wouldn't like me."

"No matter what I do, it is never enough."

"I am always worried about what they think."

"I can't forgive myself."

"Mistakes are unacceptable, I must be perfect."

"I can't trust anyone."

"Why bother?"

"I am an imposter, a fake."

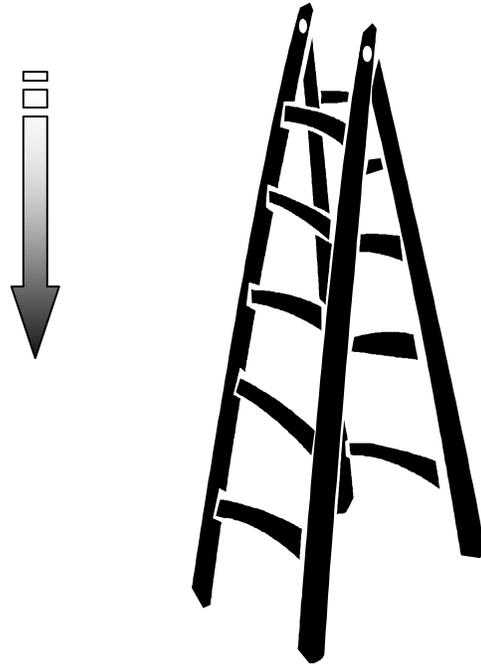
"I'm a failure."

"I just can't do it."

"I'm not worthy."

"I feel guilty."

"I hate myself."



Wounded place

Your negative thoughts pull you downward like the rungs on a ladder descending into your emotionally wounded place.

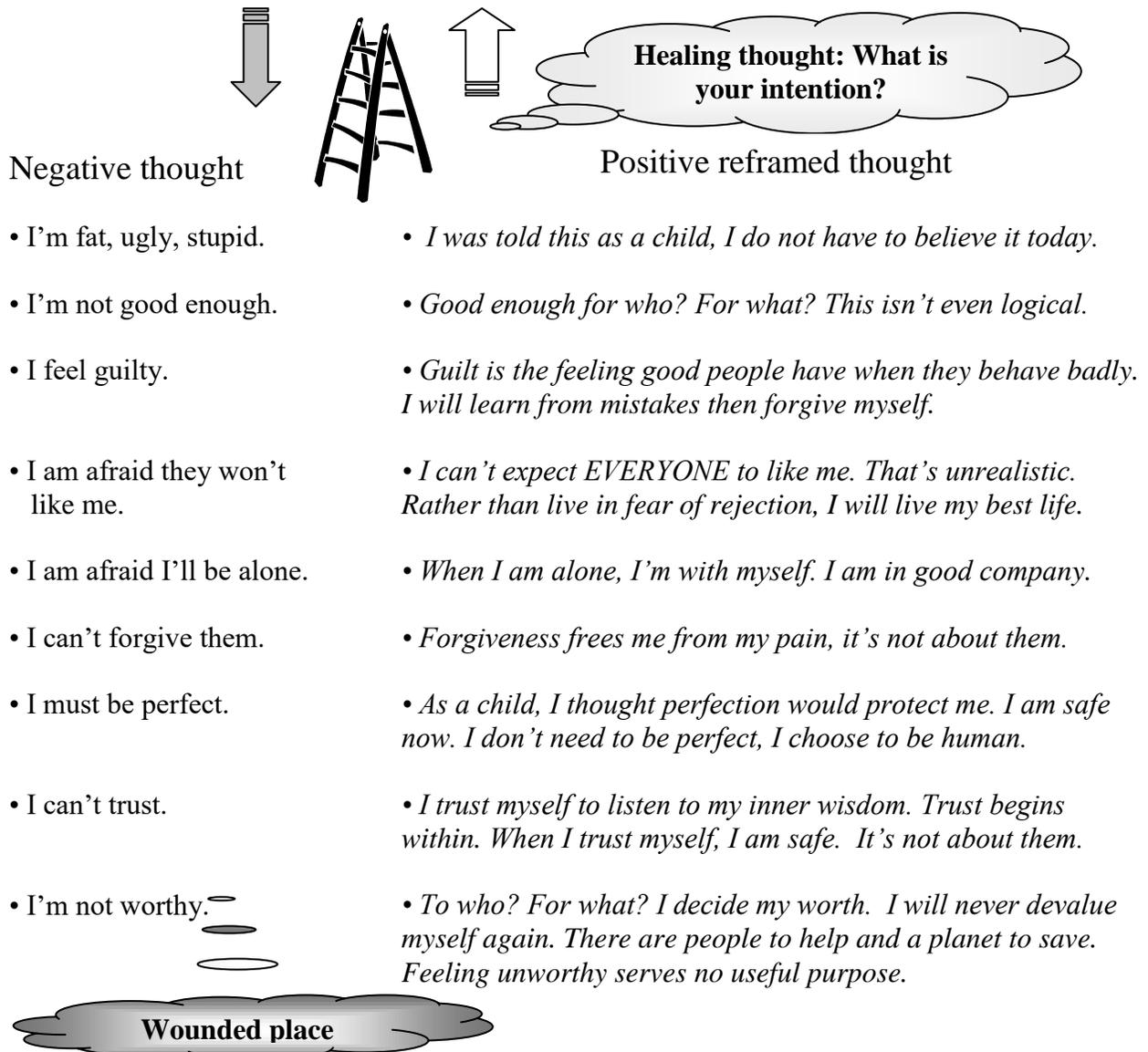
Transform your negative thoughts into healing thoughts

Thought ladder: Just because you thought it, doesn't make it true.

As you imagine your thoughts as rungs on a ladder, the positive thoughts lead up the ladder, away from your wounded place. Positive thoughts bring hope, optimism and healing. Positive thoughts have a helpful intention. They help you problem-solve and maintain your dignity.

Challenge and reframe negative thoughts:

- 1. Is it true?** Challenge the validity. This may be a lie you have been telling yourself.
- 2. What is your intention?** Does this thought have any positive function?
- 3. Reframe:** Respond to your negative thought as you would when comforting a friend or beloved. The success of your reframing will be evident in your improved mood, attitude and outlook. **Successfully reframed thoughts allow you to live the advice you give your loved ones. Healed, positive thoughts are the ones you want to role model.**



*It's late, I
have to go
now.*

Content and Intent Tool

*You don't love
me!*

As you practice awareness of your inner dialog, you will also notice that your negative thoughts and feelings may cause problems in relationships. When your thought ladder is full of negative and destructive thoughts about yourself, it's a short leap to project those thoughts into your conversations in your relationships.

The **content and intent tool** helps you become mindful of intention. Every conversation has two parts:

- 1). **Content:** Refers to the literal translation or transcript—what is specifically asked or stated.
- 2). **Intent:** Refers to the *intention* of each speaker, what each speaker *intends* or *means to communicate*.

Negative Intention Test: Check all that apply to you

In relationships and conversations, I realize that my *intention* is to

- avoid looking at my behavior by focusing on what I think other people should do.*
- prove I am unlovable, inferior or unworthy.*
- hold others responsible for my fears and insecurities.*
- blame, criticize, judge or condemn myself or others.*
- play victim or martyr by feeling hurt, wounded or offended.*
- induce guilt or shame on myself or others.*
- defend my inappropriate thoughts and actions.*
- compare, compete or control.*

Avoid combative, argumentative or painful conversations by *taking responsibility for your intention*. Also ask for *clarification of another's intention*.

*It's late and you know that I have to work in the morning. I don't mean to hurt you.
Do you really think I don't love you?
What's this about?*

Positive intention test: check all that apply to you

In relationships and conversations, I realize that my *intention* is to

- take responsibility for my own emotions and my own reaction.
- heal my inappropriate thoughts and actions.
- maintain boundaries. I do not control other people's emotions.
- seek clarification. I want to understand.
- choose dignity and self-respect by role modeling.
- problem solve and negotiate a win/win solution.
- accept myself and other's as human without comparison or competition.

Power of Intention

Reframe thoughts → choose healthier actions

I don't like it when you tell me how I feel. You can ask me how I feel about you, but please don't put words in my mouth. I love you more than I have ever loved anyone before. It hurts me when you accuse me of not loving you.

*I'm sorry. I should not have said you "don't love me."
I know that you do.
Sometimes I say things to push you away. I think I'm afraid.
I have to sort out why I do that.*

Question: "I understand the concept of "intention", but I have been thinking negatively and pessimistically my whole life. How do I change something I have been doing for as long as I can remember?"

Answer: Struggling with change is normal. It's easier to repeat automatic thoughts and behaviors. But just because something is easy or automatic, does not make it right. Reframing requires that you believe in the changes you are about to make.

If you want to achieve results that you have never achieved before, you must be willing to think thoughts that you have never thought before.

Try this: Focus on the word in the box below. What's wrong? What's missing?

BEFOR

If you answered, “*the word in the box is missing the letter e,*” you are correct. Now what if, in response to your correction, I say “*But that’s how I spell it! I have never added an e. It’s hard to start spelling it differently after all these years!*”

You might say, “*Well, I am sorry but the fact is that “before” really does end in “e.” Just because you have spelled it that way your whole life, does not change the fact that the correct spelling ends with an “e”.*”

Reframing your thoughts is like editing. If your whole life you thought it was okay to tell yourself you are “*stupid, fat, ugly, lazy, or not good enough*”....that does not mean your thoughts were correct or healthy. Just because you “*always did it*” does not mean it is true or the right thing to do.

***Before, when your thoughts were negative and pessimistic, you did not know better.
The truth is, today you know better.***

Today you have a choice to use your thought ladder to climb up and out of your wounded place. Today you understand that you have a right and a responsibility to edit or delete the thoughts and actions that are harmful to your goals, your dreams and your spirit.

Question: “My childhood was abusive. My family did major damage to my self-esteem. How do I heal the inner wounds from all those years of pain?”

Answer: Parents are supposed to protect children. When they don’t, children must protect themselves from their parents. Some people are resistant to healing childhood wounds because of thoughts like these:

“I can’t believe my parents were wrong for what they did because that means that I am no longer honoring my mother and father!”

Or

“If I heal the pain from my childhood, THEY get off the hook for what they did to me.”

- ★ Healing painful issues from childhood requires a core belief that you are worthy of this change you are seeking, worthy of love, deserving of a happy life.
- ★ You do not deny what happened to you or to the pain it caused. Instead use:

***“Positive Denial: I do not deny what happened.
I simply deny it’s power over me today.”*** Marianne Williamson

- ★ Healing the past does not mean “they get off the hook.” Healing means YOU reclaim your personal power. You choose your response to your past.
- ★ Healing, changing and growing into your best self is not disrespectful to your parents or to God.

Childhood Healing Tool: Acknowledge, Learn, Let Go

1. **Acknowledge:** Spend some time talking, thinking or journaling about your childhood. Be sure to **identify** the memories and emotions **experienced** throughout your youth. Use old photos, childhood diaries/scrapbooks or home movies to spark your memories.
 - ★ Include events that sparked negative thoughts or fueled bad habits.
 - ★ Include what you wish your parents had done or said to help, encourage and support you through your childhood.
2. **Learn:** Choose your response. **Now you decide your intention for those childhood memories and experiences.**
 - If you intend to use your childhood as fuel for low self-esteem, wounded thoughts and self-destructive behavior, no need to read any further.
 - If you intend to use your childhood as motivation to create a healthy and successful adulthood:
 1. Imagine yourself now, as an adult, visiting yourself as a small child or young teen. How would you like to comfort and heal your younger self?
 2. What does your younger version of yourself need from you now?
 3. Be the change you seek. Become that nurturing, loving adult who you so desperately longed for as a child.
 4. Spend time each day honoring your needs, caring for your body and advocating for your rights. Demonstrate your love for that younger version of yourself by replacing neglect and abandonment with attention and support.
 - ★ Create a safe, relaxing place to sleep
 - ★ Respect your needs and address them attentively
 - ★ Surround yourself with supportive, helpful people
 - ★ Speak lovingly to yourself
3. **Let Go:** You will know that you have released your childhood pain when you replace your bad habits and negative thoughts with dignity and self-respect.

Replace Bad Habits with Healthy Coping Skills

"A nail is driven out by another nail. Habit is overcome by habit."
- Desiderius Erasmus -

"When we are no longer able to change a situation— we are challenged to change ourselves." Viktor E. Frankl



Coping skills: healthy habits, behaviors, thoughts, resources or tools to assist you in the process of working through painful emotions.

Place a check in the box of each coping skill you currently practice. Circle the ones you intend to begin using.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Relax with herbal tea | <input type="checkbox"/> Draw, paint or create | <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a bath |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Play golf or tennis | <input type="checkbox"/> Join a cause, advocate | <input type="checkbox"/> Blog, tweet or post |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a "good" cry | <input type="checkbox"/> Create a budget, pay bills | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate or pray |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Educate yourself | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish a craft | <input type="checkbox"/> Sing, dance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tutor or mentor | <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer | <input type="checkbox"/> Play a game |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read | <input type="checkbox"/> Use relaxation CD | <input type="checkbox"/> Hike, walk, jog, run |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean out the car | <input type="checkbox"/> Do service work | <input type="checkbox"/> Bike, ski, canoe |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Do home improvements | <input type="checkbox"/> Rekindle a hobby | <input type="checkbox"/> Practice yoga, Pilates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Walk the dog | <input type="checkbox"/> Use the exercise equipment | <input type="checkbox"/> Talk about feelings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tend yard or garden | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish a project | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend a support group |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appreciate nature | <input type="checkbox"/> Polish your nails | <input type="checkbox"/> Keep a journal or diary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Work a "to-do" list | <input type="checkbox"/> De-clutter, organize | <input type="checkbox"/> Attend social event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Recycle trash | <input type="checkbox"/> View inspirational movie | <input type="checkbox"/> Plan your calendar |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Donate blood | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant something | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit a library or museum |

Meditation questions:

What motivates you to use the coping strategies you marked in the columns above? _____

What causes you to slip away from using your best coping skills? _____

Would you like to maintain your healthy coping skills? If yes, the next page describes how.

Maintain Your Changes with 3 Personal Motivation Tools

"It is easier to prevent bad habits than to break them."

Benjamin Franklin

Use these personal motivation tools to help stay focused on your healthy habits and positive thoughts. Here is how they work:

Tool #1 Reality Check and Intention Tool

Consider the 10 questions below when negative thoughts or memories threaten to sabotage your positive mood and healthy habits. Circle your intention/ fill in the blanks.

1. **What is my intention when I start to focus on the negative?** all that apply:
 "My negative thoughts are a bad habit that I use to sabotage my progress."
 "My negative thoughts create doubt so I can give up on myself."
 "My negative thoughts are easy and familiar. They let me avoid change."
 "I want to excuse my bad habits."
 "I want to cope better."
2. **My negative thoughts and emotions give me permission to:** all that apply:
 avoid blame spend/shop/gamble eat/drink rage smoke lie cheat
3. **Have I felt like this before?** No. *This a single incident.* Yes. *This is a pattern.*
What memories pop up when I feel like this? _____

4. **How have I avoided taking responsibility for my choices and my healing?** _____

5. **What are my healthy choices?** _____

7. **What advice would I give a beloved in a similar situation?** _____

8. **How do I need to change my thoughts or my actions to align with my values?** _____

9. **How could I live my best life?** _____

10. **What simple change could I make right now that would bring me closer to becoming my best self?** _____

*"You leave old habits behind by starting out with the thought,
I release the need for this in my life". Wayne Dyer*

Tool #2 Affirmation Tool

When you feel strong, confident and motivated about your changes spend a few minutes recording how good you feel: mark the calendar, write in a journal, a blog or use an audio or digital recording.

- ★ **Record WHY** you are inspired to make these changes.
- ★ **Track your progress.** Add as many details and personal touches as possible.
- ★ **Begin each day with these personal affirmations.** When you notice your old negative thinking creeping back in, use your own words to combat the urge to return to your former bad habit. This tool allows the weaker, more vulnerable side of you to gain strength from the strong and motivated part of you.

Tool #3 Future-Self Meditation Tool

A second tool for motivating yourself is a “future-self” meditation. Your “future self” is the person you wish to become. **This positive, healthy version of yourself is the result of changes you make today.** Consider creating Photoshop versions of future-you at your goal weight, sober self, or healed emotions. **Create a positive relationship with your “future self.”**



- ★ You may feel tired and hopeless now, but “future self” believes in you. Use your future-self as a coach to help you overcome your fears. Listen to this confident voice during stressful times.
- ★ Let future-self motivate you to remain true to your nutrition, exercise, study or budget promises. Remember, you may not have a “future-self” tomorrow if you return to dangerous, risk-taking or other unhealthy habits today.
- ★ “Do-the-math” with future-self in mind as you create your budget and save for retirement and beyond.
- ★ Take future-self to work or school today. Do not wait for that “dream job” to begin your best work habits. Your future success will result from a positive attitude and best effort demonstrated today.
- ★ Let your future-self lead by example. Show others who you wish to be, not who hate to be or who you used to be.

*Photo Art: Notes to Future Self is a kindle book by Lucy Caldwell (Born 1981). Her 2011 book, published by Faber and Faber is also a Birmingham Repertory Theatre Company production and is available on Amazon.com.

How Might Your Life Be Different.....

How might your life be different if,
as a very small child, you heard a soft whisper every night,
“You are lovable and smart. You are beautiful and strong.”
And when you felt sad the whisper said to you,
“Tears are okay honey, let them all out.”

And how might your life be different if,
as a teen, you heard that whisper each and every day:
“You can do anything!”
“I am always here for you.”
And when you felt doubtful, the whisper said,
“Your answers lie within. You will be okay. Believe in yourself.”

And how might your life be different if,
as an adult, you continue to hear those loving, encouraging whispers.
The whispers begin in your heart and sings love songs in your head.
“You are loved.”
“You are enough.”
“There is nothing to fear.”
“You are never alone.”

And what if those loving, encouraging whispers
originated from within you?

How might your life be different?



Adapted from ideas inspired by Judith Duerk, *Circle of Stones: Woman's Journey to Herself*, Innisfree Press: 1989.

Week #5 Coping Without Bad Habits Homework

1. **Observe yourself.** Listen to your thoughts. Watch your actions. **Self-awareness requires the ability to see yourself as others see you.**



2. **Practice reframing** with your thought ladder. Focus on what you wish to achieve.
3. **Create a vision board** with pictures and words that reflect the thoughts and actions you wish to hold true for your future self. Review this collage daily to help focus your intention.
4. **Record your progress daily** on a calendar, a journal or blog. If you relapse, record what happened. Learn from it. Make a plan to recover in both thought and action.
5. **Seek support.** Ask for help or find a sponsor. (A sponsor is a mentor who has successfully healed the same bad habits you struggle with.)

Recommended Resources:

Wayne W. Dyer, *Power of Intention*.

Barbara Fredrickson, *Positivity*.

Jeffery Freed and Joan Shapiro, *4 Weeks To An Organized Life With AD/HD*.

David Kessler MD, *The End of Overeating: Taking Control of the Insatiable American Appetite*.

Frances Kuffel, *Passing for Thin*.

Jeffery Schwartz M.D. & Rebecca Gladding, *You Are Not Your Brain. The 4-Step Solution for Changing Bad Habits, Ending Unhealthy Thinking, and Taking Control of Your Life*.

Peter Walsh, P. *Does This Clutter Make My Butt Look Fat? An Easy Plan for Losing Weight and Living More*.

Watch these motivational video links:

Daniel Goldstein: The battle between your present and future self:

www.ted.com/talks/daniel_goldstein_the_battle_between_your_present_and_future_self.html

Neil Pasricha uses the power of blogging to spread a little optimism each day about the awesome things that make life worth living:

www.ted.com/talks/neil_pasricha_the_3_a_s_of_awesome.html

Consider the following movie as a resource: *What The Bleep Do We Know?™* Available on DVD (2004).

Week #6 Healthy Relationships

“Ask yourself, “In this relationship, am I a fault finder, or a love seeker?”

Gary Chapman

“It’s surprising how many people go through life without ever recognizing that their feelings toward other people are largely determined by their feelings toward themselves and if you are not comfortable within yourself, you can’t be comfortable with others.”

Sidney J. Harris



Healthy Relationships Overview

Use the stages of emotional healing as applied to relationships:

1. Acknowledge 2. Learn 3. Let Go

This section identifies common relationship problems and provides practical solutions creating healthy relationships. Tools in this chapter:

- Healthy Relationship Inventory #1 Couple Therapy Pre-test
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #2 Healthy Relationship Skills
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #3 Personal History
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #4 Compatibility Scale
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #5 Relationship Pyramid
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #6 Healthy Dating Pre-requisites
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #7 Healthy Dating Rules
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #8 Strategies for finding the Ideal Partner
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #9 Ten Healthy Trust Guidelines
- Healthy Relationship Inventory #10 Balancing Relationship Accounts
- Chapman's Five Love Languages
- Ten Healthy Family Relationships Guidelines
- Healthy Relationships Frequently Asked Questions
- "When to stay, when to walk away and when to run!" Relationships with dysfunctional or addicted partners

"In every relationship, in every moment, we either teach* love or fear"

*To teach is to demonstrate

"As we demonstrate love towards others, we learn that we are loveable and we learn how to love more deeply. As we demonstrate fear or negativity, we learn self- condemnation and we learn to feel more frightened of life. We will always learn what we have chosen to teach. Ideas never leave their source. If I choose to love another person, I will always end up feeling more loved. If I project guilt onto another person, I will always end up feeling more guilty."

Marianne Williamson Author of *Return to Love, Reflections on the Course in Miracles*

Ten Healthy Relationship Inventories

"I wish there were a rulebook for intimacy. Some kind of guide to tell you when you've crossed the line. ... Maybe the rules of intimacy are something you have to define for yourself."

Meredith Grey, Grey's Anatomy

Healthy Relationship Inventory #1: Couple/family Therapy Pre-test

Couples and families often ask to attend therapy together. My response is cautious. Boundary problems, unresolved anger, individual wounds or addiction problems will interfere with the success of relationship counseling. Before you seek counseling with a loved one, answer the following questions:

Yes No

- 1. Are you distressed, upset, angry or frustrated with your own, or a family members' alcohol or drug use? (Do you argue about alcohol/drug use? Do problems occur while someone is impaired or intoxicated?)
- 2. Do either of you fear emotional or physical abuse in this relationship? (Any history of violence, threats of violence, anger outbursts, tantrums, name-calling, rage, screaming?)
- 3. Is there an unwanted third party involved in this relationship? (Overly involved family members, an unresolved former relationship, inappropriate texting/internet use or a current affair?)
- 4. Is anyone interested in using therapy as a forum to blame, complain or tattle about each other? (Desire to use therapy to referee a fight?)
- 5. Is anyone violating trust with secretive or self-destructive activities? (Excessive lying, gossiping, spending, shopping or gambling problems, porn addiction or illegal activity?)
- 6. Has anyone decided to end the relationship rather than repair it? (ie; Is the goal of therapy to ease guilt before severing the relationship? Is a separation or divorce pending?)



Scoring: Answering "Yes" to any of the above questions indicates a need to address individual issues prior to couple or family work.

Answering "No" to each question indicates that a couple or family therapy is appropriate.

Cartoon reprinted with permission by Bryant Arnold www.bryantarnold.com

Healthy Relationship Inventory #2: Healthy Relationship Skills Inventory

“Lots of people want to ride with you in the limo, but what you want is someone who will take the bus with you when the limo breaks down.” ~Oprah Winfrey

Consider your relationship with yourself, a significant other, family members, friends or co-worker as you read the statements below, then circle either True or False.

- | | | |
|--|------|-------|
| 1. I am competitive and tend to keep score. | True | False |
| 2. I withhold love/affection/attention as a punishment. | True | False |
| 3. I am a “nag”, “fault finder,” “blamer” or “complainer”. | True | False |
| 4. I am waiting for my relationship to change. | True | False |
| 5. I stay in this “B.T.N” (better than nothing) relationship because I don’t want to be alone. | True | False |

Scoring: Marking any of these 5 statements as True indicates a need to improve your relationships skills.

Healthy Relationship Inventory #3: Personal History

Reflect on your relationship history while considering the following questions.

- 1) What lessons have you learned from your relationship role models? _____

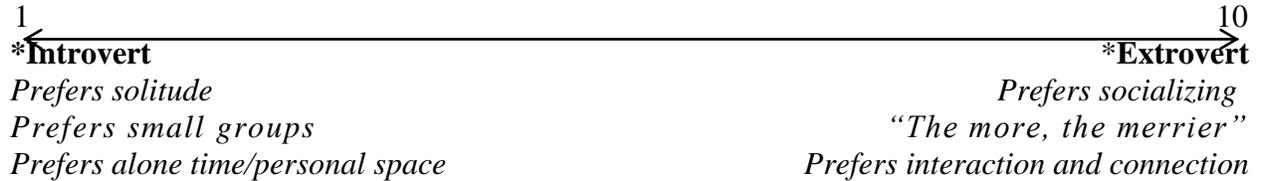
- 2) What types of people do you build relationships with? Check all that apply:
- People you respect.
 - Positive role models.
 - People who encourage, support and inspire you to become your best self.
 - People who need your “help.”
 - People you want to rescue, fix, change or mold into who you think they should be.
 - People who tolerate, share or encourage your bad habits.
 - Emotionally unavailable people who neglect, abuse or abandon you.
 - Manipulative, controlling or domineering people.

Healthy Relationship Inventory #4: Relationship Compatibility Scale

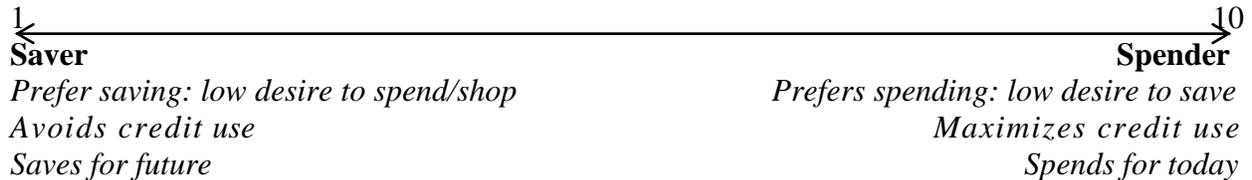
Relationship compatibility = coexisting peacefully.
Relationship Incompatibility = inability to coexist peacefully.

Directions: In each personality range below, place an (X) on the range between 1-10 to represent your personality. Place an (✓) on the range between 1-10 to represent your partner's personality.

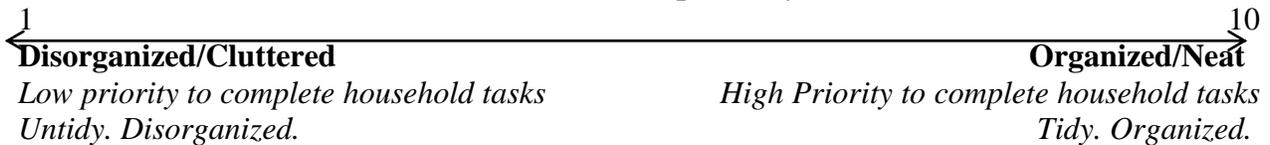
Social and Communication Needs



Financial Values



Domestic Compatibility



Energy level



Application: Compare how you view yourselves and how you view each other. Discuss the following:

★ Do you have an underlying belief that you or your partner will change in the future? If so, what changes are you hoping for? Discuss these expectations openly.

★ Do you respect yourself and your partner in this relationship as it is now?

* For additional information about introvert and extrovert check out page 125

Healthy Relationship Inventory #5: Relationship Pyramid Which level are you?

Dependent: Level #1 *“I can’t live, if living is without you”*

Dependent people believe they are *incapable* of taking care of themselves. Dependency may be emotional, physical or financial. Some people trade dependency on parents for dependency on a partner. Others create a “role reversal” by becoming dependent on their children.

Emotional dependence: *“My self-esteem depends on your approval.”*
“I’ll do anything to please you. I’m nothing without you.”

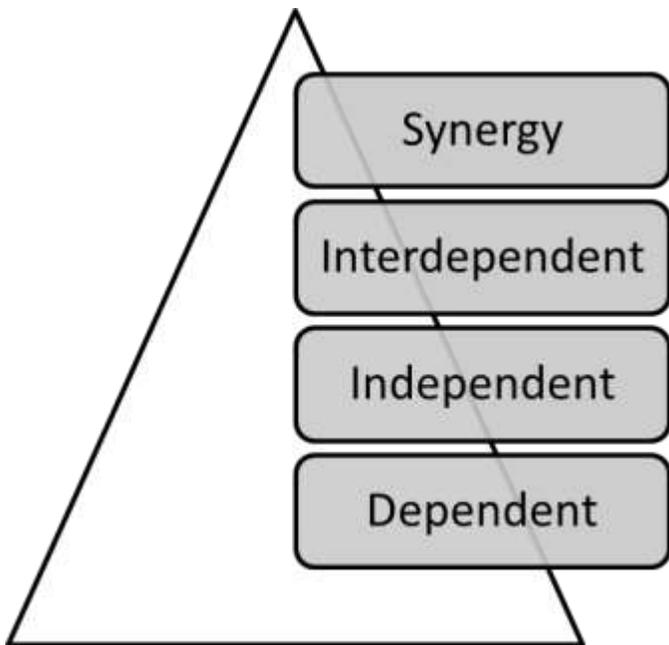
Physical dependence: *“I can’t make it on my own, I need someone to take care of me.”*
“Don’t leave me! I am afraid to be alone.”

Financial dependence: *“I have no way to support myself.”*
“I don’t trust my ability to make financial decisions.”

Independent: Level #2. *“I Did It MY Way”*

Independent people believe in their own value and ability. Secure in the knowledge that they are able to care for themselves emotionally, physically and financially, they are comfortable taking responsibility for fulfilling their own needs. They are not afraid to make mistakes, learn and grow.

“I am true to myself. I trust myself to create my own way.”
“We can agree to disagree. I respect your right to view things differently than I do.”



Interdependent: Level #3

“You Light Up My Life”

Independent people do not *NEED* others, so when they *CHOOSE* others, they create **Interdependent** relationships. They *choose* compatible people interested in achieving common goals and sharing mutual support.

“I surround myself with people who reflect the positive plans I have for my life.”

Synergy: Level #4

“You make me want to be a better person”

Synergistic relationships occur when interdependent individuals choose to be in relationships with those who inspire them to grow, improve and excel. This relationship becomes a catalyst for extraordinary trust, intimacy and success.

Healthy Relationship Inventory #6: Healthy Dating Inventory Common Sense Rules for Adult Dating*

“My boyfriend used to ask his mother, 'How can I find the right woman for me?' and she would answer, 'Don't worry about finding the right woman-concentrate on becoming the right man.’”

Think exist.com

Determine *compatibility* BEFORE making a sexual or long-term *commitment*.
*Dating is defined as the information gathering stage of an adult relationship designed to determine the overall compatibility of a potential life partner.



Healthy Adult Dating Prerequisites

Ideally, prior to dating, you should be able to answer yes to each question:

I. Independence.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Are you confident being alone? | Yes | No |
| 2. Have you developed a personal life plan?
(Plan should be more detailed than
“wait for Mr. or Ms. Right to ride in on a white horse”). | Yes | No |

II. Emotional and financial stability.

Healthy dating requires each person to have his/her personal and financial business in order. **Emotionally needy or financially dependent dating creates parent/child relationships.**

- | | | |
|---|-----|----|
| 1. Are you emotionally and financially *stable? | Yes | No |
|---|-----|----|

*Examples of instability: *Excessive spending or gambling, unemployed, laid off or severe debt problems, recently experienced severe loss, trauma or crisis, addictions with less than one full year of recovery, recent or recurrent psychiatric hospitalizations, legal problems such as on a tether, probation or incarcerated.*

III. *Completely single—with no strings attached.

If you or your potential date are entangled in another seriously committed relationship, whether you admit it or not, you are in a threesome.

- | | | |
|--|-----|----|
| 1. Are you and your potential date both single and available for dating? | Yes | No |
| 2. Rebounding: has the divorce finalized or the roommate completely moved out? | Yes | No |

*Remember, the word “*separated*” means “*still legally married!*”

Once you have answered “Yes” to each question above, you may move on to the common sense rules for dating listed on the next page.

Healthy Relationship Inventory # 7: Common Sense Rules for Healthy Dating

Let the dating begin!

- 1. Avoid alcohol and substance abuse.** Getting drunk or high on a date is like attending a job interview intoxicated. If you or your date consumes more than one drink per hour, consider reviewing the DSM-IV-TR substance abuse criteria in Chapter 1 or attend a 12-step meeting. **Alcohol abuse and illegal drug use sabotage healthy relationships.**
- 2. Use dating as a fact-finding mission.** Follow the same advice you would give a friend. Go slowly and proceed with caution. Get to know your date based on his or her actions, values and character. Do not let appearance, sex appeal or sweet talk distract you from seeking the truth. *Words can promise anything, behavior tells the truth.*
- 3. “Keep it real” as you date.** Speak your mind, be yourself. The only way to discover if your date really likes YOU, is to be yourself.
- 4. Establish compatibility BEFORE commitment.** Determine if lifestyles, character, goals, values, hobbies and interests are compatible *before* committing to a sexual relationship. Read Steve Harvey’s “90 day rule” described in his 2009 book “*Act like a Lady, Think Like a Man.*”
- 5. Expect respect.** No name-calling, threats or violence of any kind. **Jealousy is not love.** Hot tempers and jealousy are issues of insecurity, immaturity and control. If your date’s temper frightens you or s/he treats you disrespectfully, stop dating!
- 6. Understand that dating is an “as-is” agreement.** Do not try to rescue, fix or improve your date. Hoping for change indicates current incompatibility and unrealistic expectations. Familiarize yourself with Alanon if you are hoping your date will clean up, sober up or grow up.
- 7. Discontinue dating if you discover that either you or your date is seriously pining after someone else.** No one deserves to be the “rebound” the “substitute,” or “better than nothing.”
- 8. Maintain independence.** Do not abandon your hobbies, family or social life simply because you are dating someone new. Do not co-mingle funds, cohabit for financial reasons or serve as your date’s bank or lending institution. Financial “help” creates a dependent relationship.
- 9. Caution! “Love is blind” but your valued friends and family have their eyes wide open.** If the people who you respect most in the world criticize your choice of partner, pay close attention! Ask yourself, “Would I approve of my son, daughter, sibling or best friend dating someone exactly like the person I am dating?”
- 10. Consider the “one year” rule.** Date for a minimal of one full year before deciding on engagement or cohabitation. Infatuation fades with time. Winter personalities may differ slightly from summer personalities. Minimally, see your relationship through all four seasons before deciding to build a future together. What’s the rush? Use your full year of dating to practice the relationship tools outlined in this chapter.

Healthy Relationship Inventory #8: Strategies for Identifying your Ideal Partner

**What are your criteria for an *IDEAL PARTNER*?
Are you an ideal partner?**

“When we're incomplete, we're always searching for somebody to complete us. This can go on and on---until we admit that while a partner can add sweet dimensions to our lives, we, each of us, are responsible for our own fulfillment. Nobody else can provide it for us, and to believe otherwise is to delude ourselves dangerously and to program for eventual failure in every relationship we enter.”
Tony Robbins

Ideal partner does not mean this partner will fix, rescue or complete you. **“Ideal” partner refers to the most compatible person to share your life with.** In the space below, make a list of criteria (personality, character traits and most important qualities) that you believe create your *IDEAL PARTNER*. Do not limit yourself to the characteristics of any one person whom you already know. (You may also apply this tool to choose other healthy relationships by substituting the words “ideal friend”).

1. Ideal values/beliefs/goals: _____

2. Ideal interests/hobbies/abilities: _____

3. Ideal habits/characteristics/traits: _____

4. Ideal background/history/accomplishments: _____

Other important criteria? _____

Application #1 (For everyone). Are YOU an ideal partner/friend?

Review your answers to the criteria on the previous page. Rate YOURSELF according to your ideal partner list. Circle each “ideal” trait that is a true statement about you. Consider YOUR strengths and weaknesses.

Example: Rather than waiting for the right partner, become the “right” person.

- ❖ Develop your OWN interests. Prioritize personal goals. Increase skills and abilities.
- ❖ Create and maintain the life YOU desire to share.
- ❖ Become comfortable with YOUR beauty, YOUR body and YOUR sexuality.

Application #2 (For folks in committed relationships). As in lesson 1, rate YOURSELF according to your “ideal” list. Circle each “ideal” trait that YOU currently possess. Ask yourself:

- ❖ Am I the best partner/friend/person that I can be in this relationship?
- ❖ What positive contributions do I make in this relationship?
- ❖ How am I negotiating my needs and advocating for myself in this relationship?
- ❖ How am I advocating for my partner’s needs?

Application #3 (For the single folks.) Circle the five most important criteria from your “ideal” list. These five criteria must be ABSOLUTE REQUIREMENTS. These criteria define your strongest values. *Use this list of absolutes to guide you on your quest for a healthy partnership.

Over the years, I have used this lesson with hundreds of men and women. The most common ABSOLUTE criteria include:



- 1. Compatible life plan:** Independent, addiction free, employed, financially stable, compatible interests & future goals.
- 2. Compatible personality:** Good sense of humor, attentive companion and open communicator.
- 3. Romantic compatibility:** Love, honesty, trust, respect, loyalty, passion & sexual compatibility.
- 4. Compatible beliefs:** Shared beliefs regarding values, priorities, finances and childrearing.
- 5. Compatible domestic partners:** Cooperative and harmonious partnership regarding standards of cleanliness, division of household labor, spending habits and money management.

*Once you have compiled your list of ABSOLUTE requirements for an ideal partner, follow the healthy trust guidelines on the next page to practice **becoming** an ideal partner.

The Ideal Partner exercise was adapted from ideas discussed in Susan Page’s book *If I Am So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single.* Three Rivers Press; Revised edition (2002).

Healthy Relationship Inventory #9: Establishing Healthy Trust

“I’m not upset that you lied to me, I’m upset that from now on I can’t believe you.”

*Friedrich Nietzsche

*Derivation of a quote from *Beyond Good and Evil*. “Not that you lied to me but that I no longer believe you has shaken me.”

Trust is a requirement of healthy relationships. “How do I know if someone is trustworthy?” “How can I become trustworthy?” or “How can I ever trust again?” Good questions! Wounded families do not role-model healthy trust. Betrayal, neglect, abuse, addiction and abandonment damage healthy trust. It’s never too late to learn how to create healthy trust.

Healthy trust is hard work. Healthy trust means trusting yourself to do what is *right*, even when it’s not easy. The easy route avoids conflict, ignores problems, and denies responsibility.

- **Trusting "too much" means giving your power away.** *Too much* trust results in feelings of guilt, shame, resentment, regret, remorse, self-doubt and victimization.
- **Trusting “too little” means you withhold trust without cause.** *Too little* trust results in feelings of separation, isolation, loneliness, hopelessness, depression, suspicion, paranoia or aggression.
- **Healthy trust means that you trust YOURSELF.** (Intimacy = into me see) **You trust yourself to make decisions based on your values, not based on your emotions.**
 - ✧ Listen to your inner voice of wisdom.
 - ✧ Own your choices.
 - ✧ Validate yourself.
 - ✧ Express assertive thoughts (Refer to page 38 “Assertive Thoughts”).

Ten Healthy Trust Guidelines

“Part of working on ourselves is learning how to support another person being the best they can be. Partners are meant to help each other access the highest parts within themselves.”

Marianne Williamson

- 1.) **Listen to yourself even when it is easier not to.** Trust yourself to live by your values. People feel violated or violate others because they failed to listen to their own better judgment.
- 2.) **Build friendships, relationships, intimacy and love gradually over time.** Immediate, intense, impulsive connections represent immaturity, dependency and a fear of being alone. Although this fast pace is romantic and makes great *Lifetime movies*, in *real life* “Easy In” is often followed by “Easy Out.”

- 3) **Listen to how others speak of their friends and family.** *Be loyal to those who are not present. (**Loyalty to those not present is a Stephen Covey term referring to speaking about people in the same manner when they are absent as you would when they are present*).
- 4) **Behavior speaks louder than words.** Observe behavior. Alignment of words and actions creates healthy trust. Trust is damaged when words and actions conflict.
- 5) **Honor personal privacy.** Respect your own privacy as well as the privacy of others. Keep some feelings and information private. Never share information you cannot afford to disclose.
- 6) **Set limits, enforce limits and honor others' limits.** Trust requires that "no" means "no." Say "no" without feeling guilty. Respect another's right to tell you "no."
- 7) **Teach people how to treat you.** Do not tolerate or reward another's inappropriate behavior. Take responsibility for negotiating your needs in every relationship. Notice when your anger creates difficulty with people relating openly with you.
- 8) **Be honorable.** Honor your word. Be trustworthy. Maintain your dignity.
- 9) **You will repeat your childhood trust issues until you heal them.** Learn from past lessons to make healthier choices today. Children who feel betrayed by angry, abusive, immature, neglectful or addicted parents learn to choose angry, abusive, immature, neglectful or addicted people to betray trust in adulthood. Relationships are a reflection of how you view your role in the world. Heal what you prefer not to repeat. "Be the change you seek," Gandhi.
- 10) **Apply psychology: Understand issues related to child development, addiction and cognitive or mood impairment.**
 - **Become familiar with the stages of childhood cognitive development.** Children demonstrate trust-worthiness in developmental stages. A two-year old cannot "be trusted" to stay out of the street. A child with attention deficit disorder cannot "be trusted" to complete multiple tasks without supervision. Learn how to determine age appropriate "trust" by taking a parenting class or reading a developmental child psychology book.
 - **Understand that addictive, mood-altering substances interfere with trust-worthiness.** Do not expect an addicted person to be trustworthy. Addiction loosens inhibitions, impairs judgment and causes brain damage. Attend Alanon to learn more about maintaining relationships with people who struggle with addictions.
 - **Mental illness, cognitive impairment and dementia may also interfere with trust-worthiness.** People who suffer from brain diseases, head injury, chemical imbalances, dementia and other neurological disorders often demonstrate difficulties with impulse control, judgment, reasoning, concentration, memory and decision-making. A psychological or neurological evaluation will help establish a plan to address these deficits.

Healthy Relationship Inventory # 10: Relationship Accounts

Healthy trust also requires that you learn to negotiate and balance your relationship accounts.

“Relationships” refer to *all* relationships: co-workers, neighbors, friends, family and lovers. In his book, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey suggested that we think about relationships like bank accounts. Relationship “accounts” include deposits (acts of kindness and intimacy) and withdrawals (unkind acts, withholding love). **Every thought, word and action either increases, decreases or neutralizes the intimacy level in a relationship.** The relationship “account” balance can change frequently based on deposits and withdrawals. Take a moment to consider your relationship accounts.

Be mindful of the intention when determining if an interaction is a deposit or a withdrawal.

How do you balance your relationship accounts?

How do you demonstrate love?

Deposits are acts of kindness

Examples:

Courtesy, manners

Respect, praise

Time, attention, energy

Open communication

Affection

Compromise, negotiation

Trust, loyalty

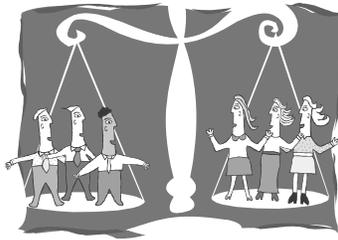
Compassion, empathy

Honesty, thoughtfulness

Fun, generosity

Commitment

Love



How do you withhold love?

Withdrawals are unkind acts

Examples:

Rudeness, impoliteness

Disrespect, criticism

Ignoring or avoiding

Name-calling

Emotional abuse

Distrust, suspicion

Accusations, jealousy

Judgment, blame

Bullying, violence

Temper outbursts

Betrayal, adultery

Hate/anger/fear

Relationships Accounts Worksheet

Using the definitions on the previous page, complete your relationship account.

How do you prefer to be loved? What turns you off?

Deposits: Acts of kindness

Defining your own account:

List what helps you feel loved, valued and appreciated by other people.

(Example: says nice things, prepares food, listens, pays bills, great sex, cleans up, plays with kids, smells good, supports your interests.)

Withdrawals: Unkind acts

Defining your own account:

List what causes you to feel unloved, devalued and unappreciated by other people.

(Example: messy, lies, always late, overspends or is stingy, bossy, temper tantrums, jealous, lazy, body odor, drunk, flirts too much, leaves toilet seat up.)

Discuss your deposit and withdrawal information with your loved ones. Open discussion of accounts is a great way to engage teens in communication or to begin problem solving within a deteriorating relationship.

***Tip:** Sharing accounts creates intimacy by gaining insight and understanding. When people list their withdrawals, they are sharing opinions. Do not argue. Everyone has a right to his or her own opinion even when you disagree with it. Practice responses such as: *“I didn’t realize you felt that way”* or *“Thanks for sharing”* rather than *“That’s not true!”* *“You liar!”* or *“What’s wrong with you!”* Improve intimacy and resolve conflict by communicating without arguments, defensiveness or judgment.

Five Love Languages by Gary Chapman

In addition to relationship deposits and withdrawals, another method of determining how you express love is “love language,” a term coined by author Gary Chapman PhD in his 1992 best seller, *The Five Love Languages, how to express heartfelt commitment to your mate*. He identified the 5 specific love languages: words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of services and personal touch.

Determining your own love language. You can discover your own love language by asking yourself these questions:

✓ *What do I complain about?*

✓ *What do I ask for?*

✓ *How do I express love?*

Rank each language below from 1 to 5 in order of importance to you. Compare information with your loved ones.

Words of Affirmation

People who prefer this love language want to hear the words. They enjoy unsolicited compliments and other declarations of love and affection such as “I love you,” “You are important to me” and “I appreciate you”.

Quality Time

The “quality time” love language requires full, undivided attention. People who speak this love language want the cell phones, computers and televisions turned off. No distractions. They enjoy feeling like a priority.



Receiving Gifts



This love language refers to the thoughtfulness and effort behind gift giving (visual symbols of affection). People who prefer this love language feel special when their partner gives them a handmade object, remembers to bring home their favorite snack or finds them just the right gift.

Acts of Service

“Acts of Service” refers to offering help and assistance as a means of communicating love. The person who enjoys this love language appreciates unsolicited help with domestic chores and childcare. The words “Let me do that for you” and “I’d like to help” become golden tickets to the heart.



Physical Touch

This love language isn’t just about sex. A person who prefers this love language enjoys affection through physical presence and closeness. They love to hold hands, sit closely, give hugs and snuggle....and yes, sex is right up there on the list too.



10 Healthy Family Relationships Guidelines

“To enjoy good health, to bring true happiness to one's family, to bring peace to all, one must first discipline and control one's own mind. If a man can control his mind he can find the way to Enlightenment, and all wisdom and virtue will naturally come to him.”

Buddha



How Healthy is Your Family?

Check the box for each factor currently practiced in your family.

- 1. Adults remain clean and sober to create a safe, healthy and smoke free environment.
- 2. Adults take responsibility for providing for the physical, financial and emotional needs of their growing children.
- 3. The adults' role model healthy eating habits, consistent sleep schedules and organized time management skills.
- 4. The family regularly makes time to talk, relax, recreate and enjoy each other.
- 5. Family members express anger without yelling, verbal abuse, threats or violence of any kind.
- 6. Healthy families consistently use discipline for the purpose of:
 - * **L**earning age appropriate rules and social interaction.
 - * **O**verseeing safety. (Adults supervise closely to prohibit underage substance abuse and crime.)
 - * **V**alidating consistent, logical consequences.
 - * **E**nforcing intelligent decision-making, self-discipline and responsibility.
- 7. Family members share information in an age appropriate manner.
- 8. Parents demonstrate a spirit of cooperation as a team.
- 9. Family members treat each other with dignity and respect.
- 10. Adults mentor youth into becoming capable, responsible and independent.



Scoring: Each unchecked box represents areas for improvement. Discuss options at your next family meeting. Establish new house rules to promote a healthy family culture. Post this list on the fridge as a reminder. Refer to it often.

* Local communities offer resources to help build healthier family cultures. Use the internet, your local library, community center or educational office to obtain additional help with recreational facilities, parenting classes, childcare resources, financial assistance, stress management classes, support groups, substance abuse programs and domestic violence shelters.

Guidelines for a Healthy Adult Sex Life

How healthy are your views about sexual intimacy?

Check the box for each factor currently practiced.

- 1. I attend yearly medical check-ups to maintain my sexual health.
- 2. I view masturbation as healthy and normal when practiced privately and safely.
- 3. I take responsibility for enjoying my sexuality and feeling comfortable with my body.
- 4. I only participate in consensual adult sex.
- 5. I never manipulate, intimidate or threaten others with my sexual behavior.
- 6. I never use sex to avoid intimacy. (Sharing sex without establishing trust, honesty, loyalty or respect.)
- 7. I openly communicate my desires, preferences and concerns with my sexual partner.
- 8. I demonstrate open communication, trust and respect in my sexual relationship.
- 9. I understand that foreplay begins with how I treat my partner all day long, all week long and all life-long....it is a reflection of the trust, intimacy and security of our relationship.
- 10. I demonstrate a range of emotional and verbal support, encouragement and affection toward my partner.
- 11. My sexual behavior never puts me at risk legally, medically, financially or socially.
- 12. I understand that couples may need to negotiate sex drive incompatibility.

Scoring: All 12 items checked indicate healthy sexual intimacy.

Resources:

Healthy Sex Drive, Healthy You: What Your Libido Reveals About Your Life. Dr. Diana Hoppe

Women's Bodies, Women's Wisdom Creating Physical and Emotional Health and Healing (Revised Edition): Christiane Northrup

www.pureromance.com Pure Romance is one of the nation's leading and fastest-growing woman-to-woman direct sellers of relationship and intimacy aids.

www.kinseyinstitute.org The Kinsey Institute at Indiana University works towards advancing sexual health and knowledge worldwide. For over 60 years, the institute has been a trusted source for investigating and informing the world about critical issues in sex, gender and reproduction.

Healthy Relationships: Five Frequently Asked Questions

Question#1 “How can I stop people from using, manipulating and controlling me?”

Deb, age 54

Answer: You have no power to change other people. Remember that your power lies in your response. Being “used” or “manipulated” is a choice *you* make. No one uses or manipulates you *without your consent*. Review the “Assertive Thoughts” on pages 38-39. To avoid participating in further victimization, consider this:

Never betray yourself to gain the approval of others. Speak YOUR truth. Overcome your fear of conflict by speaking to others, as you would wish to be spoken to. When you don’t speak up because it *might cause a conflict*, understand that you are being dishonest. Don’t confuse your dishonesty with being “nice”. There is nothing “nice” about lying to people simply to avoid conflict.

“You want me to be honest with you. Unfortunately, you may not like what I have to say.”

“I understand your point, but I respectfully disagree.”

“I am sorry to disappoint you but I have to do what I think is right.”

Understand that you are responsible for your own emotions. Remember this simple fact:

You are Response Able. Able to *choose* your response.

Stimulus (Other person)	→	Choice (You decide)	→	Response (Your thoughts, feelings and actions)
-----------------------------------	---	-------------------------------	---	--

When you feel manipulated controlled or used, consider this question: Do you truly believe that people *intentionally* manipulate, control or use you? If not, why project that intention onto them? If yes, why are you in this relationship? Remember, you have a choice.

Question#2 “How do I improve relationships when other people won’t cooperate?”

Katrina, age 27

Answer: Judging others as uncooperative may mean you are “*writing their script*”. *Writing someone’s script* refers to when you decide how you want others to think, feel, speak or behave. When they do not *follow your script*, you label *them* as uncooperative.

- ★ Accept that others have the right to an opposing view, emotion or action.
- ★ Acknowledge opposition, conflicts and incompatibilities without judgment or fear.
- ★ Focus communication on problem solving rather than blaming or complaining.
- ★ **“Seek first to understand, then to be understood.”*

* “Seek first to understand, then to be understood” habit 5 of Stephen Covey’s *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, refers to using empathetic listening which creates an atmosphere of caring, respect and positive problem solving.

Question #3 “What is the best way to *teach someone how to treat you?*” Zack, age 33

Answer: You are already teaching people how to treat you. Your every word and interaction is a lesson. When you say, “*It’s okay, I don’t care.*”....but you REALLY DO CARE, you have taught people that you are not honest about your feelings and that you avoid conflict. This pattern may lead them to believe that they could take advantage of you in the future. Of course, when they do take advantage, you will blame them for it rather than owning your role in giving your power away. When you say, “*I didn’t tell you how I felt because I didn’t want to hurt your feelings, or because I didn’t want you to be mad at me,*” you demonstrate a need to control others’ feelings. You also blame others for your dishonesty by using their anticipated response as rational for not being truthful.

Question #4 “How do I know if I am “too sensitive?” Isabella age 22

Answer: If you are “too sensitive” you may assume remarks or statements are personal attacks. Being “too sensitive” usually refers to feeling disrespected, criticized, unappreciated, undervalued, fearful, unloved, rejected or even abandoned. **Avoid the label of being “too sensitive” by taking responsibility for your emotions.**

1. Never blame other people for how you feel. Never take responsibility for other people’s emotions. Maintain boundaries. Ask, who owns this problem? Remember, no one ever “makes” anyone feel an emotion. Every person chooses a response.

2. Use your mindfulness tool. Observe your emotional response to other people’s words and actions. Once aware, you may **choose** your response.

3. Own your intention. (Blame/complain or insight/problem solve?)

4. Do an insight reality check: Do you honestly believe the issue at hand is intended as a personal attack? Do you honestly believe someone intended to criticize, shame or upset you? If yes, why are you in the relationship? If not, why are you misrepresenting the intention?

5. Not sure of someone’s intention? Ask for clarification. Problem Solve.

“I am not sure how to take your comment, help me understand.”

“Are you upset with me or are you stressed about something else?”

“I feel like I am in a no win situation right now, what is your intention?”

“I am not sure how to take your comments. Is this about my job performance or do you have a problem with me personally?”

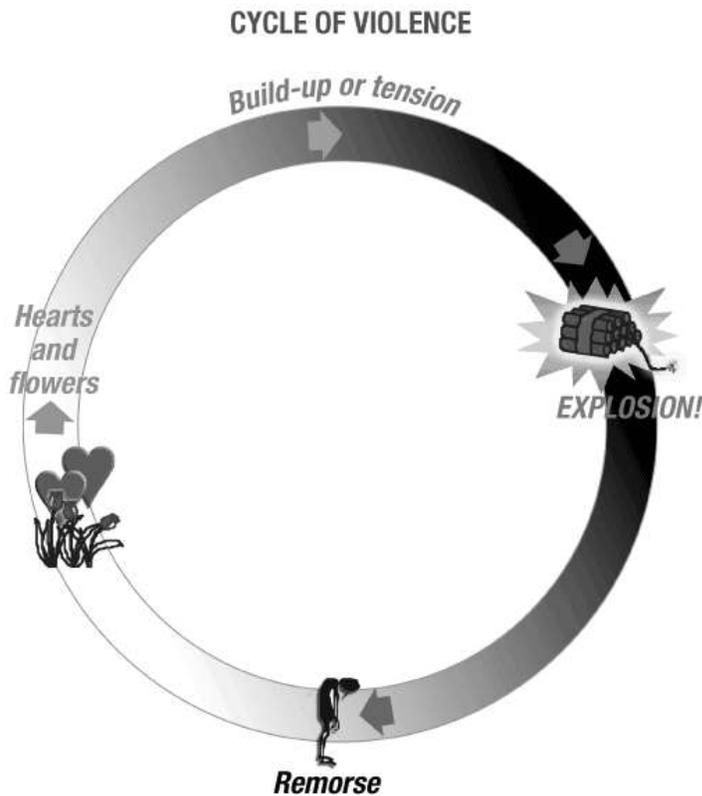
“This conversation is heading in the wrong direction; I need a few minutes to gather my thoughts.”

6. Advocate for your own safety and security if you believe someone intends to harm you verbally, physically or professionally. You are not being “too sensitive” if you confront a true villain. The following page describes additional help.

Question. #5 “Everyone tells me to end my relationship because of the lying, cheating, abuse and betrayal. But I am in love, what should I do?”
Pat, age 42

Answer. People often shop for cars with more logic than choosing relationships. If a car ran efficiently and effectively for 50% of the time but the other 50% it broke down, rolled into a ditch or burst into flames, would you place your children in that car? Would you keep driving, seek a repair shop or look for a new ride?

Relationships built on a pattern of conflict, deception or violence create emotional wounds and broken trust. The relationship described in this question is referred to as “*Cycle of Violence*”



developed in the 1970s by Lenore Walker to explain patterns of behavior in abusive relationships.

Each person in this relationship participates in the cycle. Each has a role. Here are typical examples:

“I know she loves me. It’s not her fault when she gets violent. I always say or do something to set her off.”

“He says he won’t cheat on me again. He only lied to protect me.”

“We only hit each other when we drink too much, so I wouldn’t call that violence.”

“He is so sorry afterwards. Each time he promises to change. He cries and begs me to stay. I don’t want to make him mad by leaving.”

Continuing to tolerate the cycle reinforces the behavior. Upon further inspection, you may begin to understand that “lying, cheating, betrayal and abuse” are not compatible with “respect, trust, loyalty and love”. Rather than asking “Do you love your partner?” ask yourself the following questions:

1. *Do I respect my partner? Do I feel respected?*
2. *Do I trust my partner? Do I feel trusted?*
3. *Do I have confidence in my partner? Do I feel confident?*
4. *Am I confident with myself as a relationship role model?*
5. *Would I want my son, daughter, sibling or best friend to be in a relationship exactly like mine?*

Breaking the cycle of violence requires learning healthier responses to stress, conflict and anger. Review chapter 2 for additional insight into the patterns of aggressive and passive personality styles. Chapter 10 will also offer more insights in “Dealing with difficult people.”

Relationships: When to stay, when to walk away, and when to run!

“In my last relationship I realized that my partner was self-centered, self-serving, arrogant, ignorant, unfaithful, hypercritical, abusive, an under-achiever and an alcoholic. I was devastated when he broke up with me.”

Tigress Luv
www.TigressLuv.com

How do you know when it's time to end a relationship?

Never betray your own better judgment or your values. End a relationship before you compromise your self-respect or physical safety. There are four conditions when most psychologists and clergy agree that ending a relationship may be the right action. The four conditions are known as the “Four A’s”:

1. Abandonment (The partner left and is not coming back).
2. Addiction (Especially if children need protection).
3. Abuse (Especially physical abuse or if children need protection).
4. Adultery (Ending the relationship is an option, not a requirement).

Relationship problems unrelated to the “4 A’s” require deeper investigation. Ending committed relationships simply because one or both partners’ “fell out of love,” “got bored” or “grew apart” leaves each partner at risk of repeating the same mistakes in future relationships.

Before you walk away, answer the following 8 questions:

- *Yes No** 1. Is this relationship harmful or dangerous to me or to my children?
- Yes No.** 2. If I had a son or daughter in a relationship exactly like mine, would I advise ending the relationship?
- Yes No.** 3. Have I treated my partner as I wish to be treated?
- Yes No.** 4. Have I maintained my sense of independence and encouraged my partner to do the same?
- Yes No.** 5. Have I continued to live true to my values and beliefs during this relationship?
- Yes No.** 6. Have I exhausted all options to communicate openly in this relationship?
- Yes No.** 7. Have I exhausted all options to negotiate conflict?
- Yes No.** 8. Could I respect myself for walking away from this commitment?

***Scoring: Answering “Yes” to question #1 indicates the need for immediate legal action and professional intervention.**

“Yes” to questions #2 through #8 indicates that your values are aligned with ending the relationship.

“No” to questions #3 through #8 indicates a need to seek additional resources or professional help to improve problem solving and communication skills.

Relationships with difficult or addicted people.

You thought things would get better. You never intended to be in a dysfunctional relationship. You hoped for change. And waited. And waited. **Now you realize it is time for you to choose a healthier response** to your beloved’s addictive, abusive, impulsive, inappropriate or intolerable behavior. Even though you use the tools throughout this book to improve your communication skills, demonstrate assertiveness and enforce limits, **practicing right action does not guarantee that others will respond positively to you.**

- ❖ Dysfunctional and addicted people often refuse to engage in healthier relationship rules.
- ❖ Some will ignore or even sabotage your attempt to negotiate changes.
- ❖ Some will consider your self-improvement and assertiveness as “selfish.”
- ❖ Others will react with increased hostility and may even threaten violence.



Abusers and addicts: People who are abusing mood-altering substances are not capable of consistently participating in trustworthy relationships. Their relationship with their drug of choice creates a problem much like an affair. *Refer to Week 10: Dealing with difficult people. Consider attending Alanon.*

Raging, angry people: Whether their anger is limited to intimidation and verbal threats or their rage has escalated to physical acts of assault, these personality types rarely respond positively to their beloved’s assertiveness or independence. *Police protection, legal action and/or relocation may be necessary. Seek help immediately.*

Con artists and others who repetitively engage in deception or criminal activity: As with angry people, deceptive people will not “improve” as

loved ones set limits or attempt to negotiate healthier relationship rules. Because conning, dishonesty and deception are main coping mechanisms for these people, *professional guidance, legal action, protection and even prosecution may be necessary.*



Personality disorders and severe mood disorders: People who suffer from severe mood disorders or personality disorders represent approximately 10% of the population*. These disorders challenge abilities to maintain loving relationships. General signs and symptoms of these disorders may include: frequent mood swings, social isolation, angry outbursts, difficulty making friends, stormy relationships, need for instant gratification or poor impulse control.

*Approximately 9.1% of adults are diagnosed with at least one personality disorder. 9.5% of adults are diagnosed with a mood disorder, 4.3% with a severe mood disorder according to July 1, 2010 statistics for The National Institute of Mental Health. (NIMH) is part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), a component of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/the-numbers-count-mental-disorders-in-america/index.sht>

Week #6 Healthy Relationships Homework

1. **Discuss this week's material with your loved ones.** Teach the information to others.
2. **Make a plan to improve or complete your journey toward emotional, physical and financial independence.**
 - Establish healthy eating, sleeping, hobbies and recreational habits.
 - Improve your awareness and understanding of your budget and finances.
 - Practice taking full responsibility for your emotions without placing blame on others.

Additional recommended resources:



Chapman, G. (1996). *The Five Love Languages: How to Express Heartfelt Commitment to Your Mate*.

Cline, F W. & Fay, J. (2006). *Parenting With Love And Logic* (Updated and Expanded Edition).

Covey, S. (1999). *7 Habits of Highly Effective Families*. New York: Golden Books. (Audio recommended).

Harvey, S. (2009). *Act Like a Lady, Think Like a Man: What Men Really Think About Love, Relationships, Intimacy and Commitment*.

Karp, H (2008) *The Happiest Toddler on the Block: How to Eliminate Tantrums and Raise a Patient, Respectful, and Cooperative One- to Four-Year-Old*. Revised Edition

Mason, P. & Kreger, R. (1998). *Stop walking on eggshells, taking your life back when someone you care about has borderline personality disorder*.

Page, S. (2002). *If I Am So Wonderful, Why Am I Still Single?*

Silverstein, S. (1981). *The Missing Piece Meets The Big-O*.

Williamson, M. (1996). *A Return to Love, Reflections on the Principles of A Course in Miracles*.

Wolf, A. (2002). *Get Out of My Life, But First Could You Drive Me & Cheryl to the Mall: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager, Revised and Updated*.

Watch this videolink: Ric Elias *Three things I learned* www.ted.com/talks/ric_elias.html

*FYI It's a brain thing: Introvert Verses Extrovert (page 107)

“One study found that introverts have more blood flow in the frontal lobes of their brain and the anterior or frontal thalamus, which are areas dealing with internal processing, such as planning and problem solving. Extraverts have more blood flow in the anterior cingulate gyrus, temporal lobes, and posterior thalamus, which are involved in sensory and emotional experience. This study and other research indicates that introversion-extraversion is related to individual differences in brain function.” Johnson, D. L., Wiebe, J. S., Gold, S. M., Andreasen, N. C. (1999). Cerebral blood flow and personality: A positron emission tomography study. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 156, 252–25.

Week # 7

Healing Worry and Fear

Fear of change and other “what if” worries



**Make decisions
based on your values
-not based
on your emotions.**



**"There is a great difference between worry and concern.
A worried person sees a problem,
and a concerned person solves a problem."**

Harold Stephens

The Optimist

“There is a story of identical twins. One was a hope-filled optimist. The other was a sad and hopeless pessimist.

The worried parents of the boys brought them to the local psychologist. He suggested to the parents a plan to balance the twins’ personalities. “On their next birthday, put them in separate rooms to open their gifts. Give the pessimist the best toys you can afford, and give the optimist a box of manure.” The parents followed these instructions and carefully observed the results.

When they peeked in on the pessimist, they heard him audibly complaining, “I don’t like the color of this computer....I bet the calculator will break...I don’t like this game....I know someone who’s got a bigger toy car than this...”

Tiptoeing across the corridor, the parents peeked in and saw their little optimist gleefully throwing the manure up in the air. He was giggling. “You can’t fool me! Where there is this much manure, there’s gotta be a pony!”

Author Unknown

From More Sower’s Seeds by Brian Cavanaugh

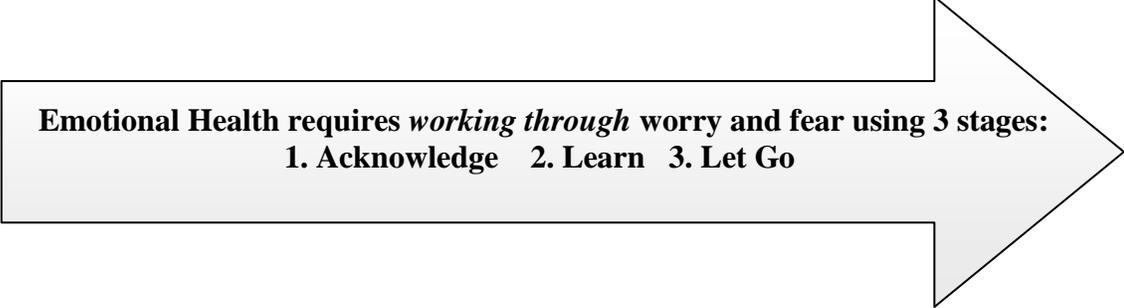
Week #7 Healing Worry and Fear Overview

Fear is that little darkroom where negatives are developed.

Michael Pritchard

In Week #3, you learned there are three types of anxiety:

- ❖ **Healthy anxiety** serves as a warning device.
- ❖ Unhealthy anxiety (**Worry**) serves no useful purpose.
- ❖ **Anxiety disease** is a biochemical “false” alarm.



**Emotional Health requires *working through* worry and fear using 3 stages:
1. Acknowledge 2. Learn 3. Let Go**

1. Acknowledge unhealthy worries and fears.

- ❖ Identify the thoughts creating worry and fear.
- ❖ Experience the physiological effects of worry and fear on your body.
- ❖ Complete the Ten Question Inventory: Feeling Stuck in Worry and Fear?

2. Learn how to break the worry habit using:

- ❖ Ten Things You Need to Know about Procrastination, Worry and Fear.
- ❖ Seven Solutions for Healing Worry and Fear.
- ❖ *Wisdom-Focused Thinking*: Transform worry into wisdom.
- ❖ Cognitive Reframing Tool: “Should” into “Could.”
- ❖ FAQ

3. Let go of old thought patterns that cause chronic worry and upset:

- ❖ Shirley’s Story: Releasing worry about adult children.
- ❖ Healing worry and fear homework.

Some people are born with relaxed, calm personalities. Some are risk takers. Others are destined to

Worry

Worried about growing older, being alone.
Worried about relationships. Never finding happiness.
Worried about crime, burglars, break-ins-lock the doors!
Worried about getting lost, bad weather-vacation's ruined!
Worried about cancer. Contagious diseases. Illness. Doctors.
Worried about loved ones getting hurt. Car & bike accidents.
Worried about appearance, height, weight, teeth, hair, acne.
Worried about money. Over spending. Poor credit. Bad debts.
Worried about what someone else says, thinks, feels or does.
Worried about rejection & abandonment. What if they leave?
Worried about unknown future. What will happen tomorrow?
Worried about not being good enough or intelligent enough.
Worried about dying. Death. Funerals. Losing loved ones.
Worried you'll never find it. Can't have it. Never do it.
Worried it won't last. Something bad will happen!
Worried about getting everything done in time!
Worried you'll make a mistake-you'll fail.
Worried you'll never change.
Worry about worry.

Acknowledge worry and fear.
What do you worry about?

Stages of Emotional Health

**EMOTIONAL HEALTH =
Working through worries and fears**

Stage 1: ACKNOWLEDGE Your Worries and Fears

Identify what worries you: Write your worry list below using the previous page as an example.

Label the emotions contributing to your worries and fears:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> anxiety | <input type="checkbox"/> nervousness | <input type="checkbox"/> insecurity | <input type="checkbox"/> inferiority | <input type="checkbox"/> embarrassment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> shame | <input type="checkbox"/> hopelessness | <input type="checkbox"/> vulnerability | <input type="checkbox"/> frustration | <input type="checkbox"/> helplessness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> jealousy | <input type="checkbox"/> guilt | <input type="checkbox"/> mistrust | <input type="checkbox"/> competition | <input type="checkbox"/> obsession |
| <input type="checkbox"/> paranoia | <input type="checkbox"/> resistance | <input type="checkbox"/> resentment | <input type="checkbox"/> grief | <input type="checkbox"/> need for control |

Other: _____

Experience your emotions: What happens physically when you feel worried or afraid?

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sleep disturbance | <input type="checkbox"/> appetite and weight changes | <input type="checkbox"/> muscle tension | <input type="checkbox"/> fatigue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> poor concentration | <input type="checkbox"/> bowel/bladder problems | <input type="checkbox"/> stomach upset | <input type="checkbox"/> lethargy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> restlessness | <input type="checkbox"/> mental confusion | <input type="checkbox"/> irritability | <input type="checkbox"/> rumination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> crying spells | <input type="checkbox"/> headaches | <input type="checkbox"/> chronic pain or stress related illness | |

Other: _____

7 Solutions for Healing Worry and Fear

Solution #1 Schedule a Complete Physical.

Undiagnosed medical problems may cause anxiety, ruminating and difficulty making decisions or problem solving. Discuss uncontrollable, disturbing, intrusive or recurrent thoughts with your doctor. Inform your doctor if symptoms do not improve. For more information visit: [www.http://psychcentral.com/ocdquiz.htm](http://psychcentral.com/ocdquiz.htm).

Solution #2 Practice Perspective and Reality Checks.

Remember the children's story about Chicken Little who warned "*the sky is falling, the sky is falling?!!*" Perspective and reality checks help transform exaggerated distorted and pessimistic worries into more realistic manageable issues.

Take a moment to reflect on your most common worries. Consider the following questions as you reflect on each worry.

Reality Check

Are your worries in the present, factual and measurable? (*Divorce papers served, medical results conclusive, layoff notice received, fire alarm sounding*).

- If your worries are real and present, formulate a plan for dealing with the problem. Seek resources and support. Use the tools in this chapter to problem-solve.
- If your worries are exaggerated, distorted, pessimistic or unsubstantiated, use the tools in this chapter to help heal your habit of jumping to conclusions and frightening yourself with unnecessary worry.

Global Perspective

Global perspective: Place your worries on a global scale compared to people all over the world.

Examples: *Will you have access to food and water today?*

Do you have a place to sleep tonight?

Do you have access in information and resources?

Do you have the freedom to express your opinion or ask for help?

Are you safe right now?

Time-line Perspective Check

Some worries fade with time. Use the time-line perspective check to identify worries that are short lived, do not affect your future or might become less worrisome over time.

To create a time-line perspective, ask yourself:

Will this worry still be an issue tomorrow?

Next week?

How about after one month?

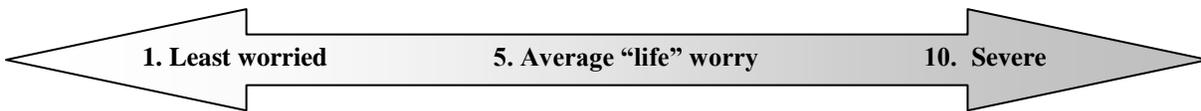
2- 6 months?

Will you remember feeling worried about this next year?

In 5 years?

10 years or more?

Life Worries Perspective
Considering your emotional range,
rate each worry on a scale from 1 to 10.



Worry Free: Consider your most worry-free state of mind. When do you feel calm, peaceful and worry-free? Describe those times:

Rating 1-4 Mild: Consider worries rated 1-4 as mild. These are the daily worries everyone has due to functioning as an adult in the world. These worries do not dramatically alter your life. These are the products of being alive. These are worries related to daily choices, plans and events. Describe your “mild” worries here:

Rating 5-8 Average: Consider worries rated between 5-8 as average. These are the worries related to increased pressure and demands. (Examples: *deadlines, change, performance, finances, conflict, illness*). Describe your “average” worries here:

Severe: Reserve 9-10 ratings for the worst events in your life such as job loss, bankruptcy, divorce, tragic accidents or crime, severe illness, natural disasters, war and death. List your “disaster” worries here:

Solution # 3 Differentiate between **healthy worry and **unhealthy** worry and fear.**

Consider all of your worries from your worry lists. Now separate **healthy worries and fears** from **unhealthy worries and fears**.

Healthy worry and fear is **WITHIN** your control.

This is worry or fear that helps you prepare, plan and problem-solve. Smart people have this kind of worry. You need it to remember details, rules, deadlines and stay on task.

Examples: *Worried about getting lost during travel.*

Afraid you will forget to pay a bill on time or meet deadlines for taxes.

Worried about fire danger.

Afraid you will make a fool of yourself if you drink too much.

Unhealthy worry and fear is **NOT WITHIN** your control.

This worry or fear serves no useful purpose. If you are not sure what unhealthy worry looks like, watch one of the so called “reality TV” shows.

Examples: *Worried that someone will not like you.*

Afraid that someone will never change.

Excessive worry about events that are not happening or are none of your business.

Worried about everything!

Continuing to consider the worries from your worry lists:

☒ **Cross off** any worries and fears NOT within your control.

✓ **Make a plan** of action to address worries and fears WITHIN your control.

Example: *Use GPS or MapQuest to ease worries related to directions.*

Create electronic payment plan to address fear of late charges.

Install and maintain smoke detectors, blow out candles and smother campfires.

Limit your social drinking and always have a designated driver.

Solution #4 Remember to breathe.

Remember playing “hide and seek” as a kid? The goal of the game was to avoid getting exposed...so you cautiously held your breath, not making a sound....fearful of being discovered at any moment.....

Holding your breath is the body’s automatic “fear” response.

Deep breathing increases the oxygen supply to the brain and relaxes muscles. Take a deep breath now to feel the benefit immediately. Begin paying attention to your breathing.

✓ Practice using focused, deep cleansing breaths to relax yourself whenever you feel tense, worried or afraid.

Solution #5 Transform Worry into Wisdom

“It is not our abilities that show what we truly are. It is our choices”

Professor Dumbledore to Harry Potter in
“*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*”
By J.K. Rowling, 1999.

Which of these columns do you choose?

Worry-Focused Thinking

Problem-Focused Thoughts Reinforce Fear

Example: “Something always goes wrong”

Problem-focused = worry focus

- I have the worst luck.*
- There is always a problem.*
- I do not want to be caught off guard.*
- I am always worrying.*
- I feel nervous. I can't relax.*
- I always fear the worst.*
- If I relax, something bad might happen.*
- “What ifs” never end! I cannot feel relaxed with all these “what ifs.”*
- I don't trust my own decisions.*
- I fear making a mistake.*
- I fear I could fail. I don't want to try because I might fail.*

Wisdom-Focused Thinking

Solution-Focused Thoughts Reinforce Success

Example: “Whatever happens, I will be okay”

Solution-focused = problem solving

- I survived, here I am!
- Problems become opportunities.
- Events will unfold whether I am worried or not.
- I practice relaxation and meditation.
- I choose peace.
- I envision the solution.
- Bad things happen whether I am relaxed or not. I might as well relax.
- I make plans but I accept that sometimes the outcome is not in my hands.
- I can trust decisions that are aligned with my values
- I learn from my mistakes.
- Failure is giving up without ever trying.

Solution #6 Transforming *worry* ⇨ into ACTION

List below several things you believe that you really **SHOULD** do. These “shoulds” may be physical or concrete ideas such as:

- | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lose weight | <input type="checkbox"/> Relax |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Make new friends |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Get organized | <input type="checkbox"/> Exercise | | <input type="checkbox"/> Meditate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Save money | <input type="checkbox"/> De-clutter | | <input type="checkbox"/> Finish projects |



Or the “shoulds” may be psychological or abstract ideas such as:

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worry less | <input type="checkbox"/> Love |  | <input type="checkbox"/> Think positively |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Be assertive | <input type="checkbox"/> Be happy | | <input type="checkbox"/> Improve self-esteem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forgive | <input type="checkbox"/> Have faith | | <input type="checkbox"/> Let go |



What **SHOULD** you do? *I should* _____

I should _____

I should _____

Now fine-tune your list:

⇨ Remove the unrealistic “*shoulds*” from your list.

Example: “I should make my spouse stop drinking.” You cannot control other people.

⇨ Remove the *shoulds* that already have action plans.

Example: “I *should* lose weight.” If you are currently practicing good nutrition and exercising regularly, losing weight will be the end result. Scratch it off your *should* list. You are doing it!

Transforming “SHOULD” into COULD

Also known as taking responsibility

Complete the sentence below by inserting the remaining items from your *should list* into the blanks below.

⇨ Transform every “should” item on your “should” list into a “COULD” below:

If I really wanted to I **COULD** _____.

(Insert your “*should*” item here)

If I really wanted to I **COULD** _____.

If I really wanted to I **COULD** _____.

⇒ **When transforming your “should” into a “COULD,” notice how your body feels.**

“Shoulds” create judgment and feelings of worry, shame, obligation or resentment.
A “COULD” allows you to feel the possibility of success. Your world just opened up.

⇒ **Now finish the sentence.** List your reasons for *not* moving forward.

If I really wanted to I COULD _____ BUT I do not because: _____
Insert your “could” item

_____.

If I really wanted to I COULD _____ BUT I do not because: _____

_____.

If I really wanted to I COULD _____ BUT I do not because: _____

_____.

If I really wanted to I COULD _____ BUT I do not because: _____

_____.

If I really wanted to I COULD _____ BUT I do not because: _____

“BUTS” are excuses.

Excuses are a form of “getting your BUT in the way.”

**Notice how often you “should” on yourself* by inserting your BUT
as an excuse for not problem-solving,
not moving forward.**

*“Thought is the sculptor who can create the person you want to be.”
Henry David Thoreau*

*The term “*shoulding on yourself*” was first coined by cognitive behavioral psychologist Albert Ellis. The term gained popularity when used by author John Bradshaw in his bestselling book, *Healing the Shame That Binds You* (1988).

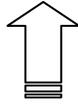
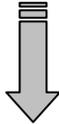
Solution #7 Cognitive Reframing

You learned how to use a thought ladder in Week #5. Use the ladder below to transform your “SHOULD” into a COULD.

**If I really wanted to I COULD
BUT I do not because....**



Negative thought



Transforming reframed thought

• I do not have time.

• *I make my schedule. I will prioritize my time!*

• *I do not know how.

• *I could learn how. I will seek information.*

• It is too hard.

• *Others have done it. Perhaps if I break it down into small steps I could do it too.*

• I do not have the money.

• *I could seek options within my budget. I will find affordable solutions.*

• It is not a priority.

• *I choose my priorities. I could prioritize this.*

• I am too tired.

• *I could pace myself. I will seek simpler, less difficult methods.*

• I am afraid.

• *I could face my fears. If I spend time thinking about what really frightens me, I can make a plan for support and success.*

• I do not want to.

• *If I do not want to AND I do not have to, then I will take it off my “should” list. I only spend energy on what I **choose** to change.*



*If I do not **want** to but I really **must**, then I will look at my choices. I will find ways to make that which I must do easier or more enjoyable. I will change my attitude. I will be like Nike and **JUST DO IT**.*

* When you catch yourself thinking “I can’t because but I don’t know how”.

Consider this:

Others have already successfully overcome whatever obstacle you struggle with. If you want to learn how to do something, Google it. Not only will you find a book about it, there’s probably a community support group, a YouTube video or even a made for TV movie. If your excuse is so unique that no books exist, then you are in luck. Do the research and write your own book!

Still Feeling Stuck in Worry and Fear?

“Even if you are on the right track, You will get run over if you just stand there.”
Mark Twain

Acknowledge thoughts and actions that lead to procrastination, stagnation and resistance to change. All that apply to you.

1. *I only do what is easy, interesting and comfortable. I avoid tasks that cause conflict, stress or anxiety.
2. I am afraid to ask for help or to delegate. I am too ashamed to let anyone know the real me. I remain stuck in my problems, guarding my secrets.
3. “What if I fail?” “What if I can’t?” I also fear change, mistakes and imperfection.
4. *I can’t focus long enough to complete tasks. Distractions interfere with my success.
5. *I struggle with procrastination and stagnation. When I begin a project, I do not finish due to loss of interest and motivation.



6. *My life is chaotic. I feel overwhelmed. I do not make lasting changes because I surround myself with too much stuff, too many piles.
7. I resent the fact that I am the one who has to change. Why should I make changes when no one else will?
8. *I do not know how to prioritize my time. I don’t have the energy or focus I need to follow through with the changes that I would like to make.
9. *I suffer from an intense need for perfection, fear of mistakes, repetitive rituals, counting, fear of germs, or urge to check and recheck.
10. * I don’t know where to start. So I don’t.



Scoring: *Checked items #1, #4, #5, #6, #8, #9 or #10 indicate a need for additional evaluation.

Discuss these symptoms with your therapist or physician. Take this page with you to your next appointment. Attention Deficit Disorder, Anxiety Disorder, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Dysthymia (mild chronic depression) may be causing these thoughts.

10 things you need to know about procrastination, stagnation, worry and fear

- 1. Procrastination is a choice.** Take the mystery out of wondering why you procrastinate. You choose your response to every situation. Unless you have a medical problem, procrastination is a decision you make.
- 2. Medication is a coping tool for procrastination caused by brain disorders and other medical problems** such as attention deficit disorder, dementia, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression and anxiety. A rehabilitation counselor or physician may assist with procrastination resulting from drug or alcohol dependence.
- 3. Habitual procrastination or excessive worry may become part of your identity.** *“If I didn’t worry, I wouldn’t know what to talk about!” “I am always late. I never get things done on time. That’s just who I am.”*
- 4. FEAR** is an acronym for **F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal. (See *Chicken Little* on page 36). Practice a reality check as you become mindful of your worry or fear.
- 5. Procrastination, worry and fear are the direct opposite of problem-solving.** Replace worry with problem solving. If your problem has no solution, then it is not a problem. It’s a fact to be coped with and accepted.
- 6. Fear causes you to hold your breath.** Remember to breathe. Frequently.
- 7. Consider the question “Who owns this problem?”** Only the owner of the problem has the power and the right to fix it. Good personal boundaries help you release worries about issues that are not yours to fix. *Offering unsolicited advice is nagging.*
- 8. Worry is not love.** Worry is a form of anxiety and fear, not a symbol of love. Viewing other adults as incompetent or incapable sabotages relationships. Healthy relationships choose love rather than worry or fear.
- 9. Excessive worry and fear may be a wake-up call to make important changes.** Examine each worry or fear that comes to mind. *Afraid you may be spending too much money? Worried about your poor eating habits? Fearful that your skills are not updated? Worried about someone’s drinking and driving?* **Notice when your worry is a healthy response to problems not yet solved and solutions not yet formulated.**
- 10. You may choose to learn healthier coping strategies.** Worry and fear become bad habits and self-defeating thoughts when they impair your ability to work through your emotions by problem solving.



Frequently asked Questions

“They say that time changes things, but you actually have to change them yourself.”

Andy Warhol

Question. *“I like the idea of making changes in my life, but I’m not sure how or where to start. What’s the best way to begin changes?”*

Adam, age 43

Answer: There is no single best way. You can create your personalized strategy for change by answering these questions:

1. Consider the changes you made in the past, how did you begin those changes?
2. How would you like to role model the necessary changes in your life?
3. What one small thing could you easily change today without much effort?
4. How could you make your changes more fun and more interesting?
5. What support or accountability do you need to help you maintain your changes?

“It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.” Charles Darwin

Question. *“I have tried making changes in the past. Lots of times. They never last for long. How can I make sure that will stick?”*

Spencer, age 34

80/20 Rule

Answer: Nobody is perfect. An expectation of 100% compliance means that just one mistake provides an excuse to completely give up on all progress. This “all or nothing” thinking creates a yo-yo effect on your life changes. The “80/20 rule” is a common standard for lifestyle self-improvements. 80% of the time you adhere to your plans for change. 20% of the time, not so much. An 80% consistent follow through helps you realistically build your self-trust and personal confidence. Many nutrition experts apply this 80/20 rule to eating habits. You can also apply this moderate approach to your exercise program, cleaning schedule and maybe even your budget. Even a worry habit will improve greatly if you limit yourself to worrying only 20% of the time!

Question: *I don’t think I choose to feel worried and afraid. How do I apply coping tools to emotions that don’t feel like a choice?*

Courtney, age 27

Answer: You may not always choose your emotions. But you do choose how to respond to your emotions. Some worry and fear is instinctual. Humans, as a species, have innate fears to keep us alive. So the first question to ask yourself, is whether your worry or fear seems to be helping you survive. Fear of traveling during a storm or worry related to bills that exceed your income are both examples of emotions resulting from potential danger. *Choosing your response* means that you choose to respond to your worry or fear in a logical, problem-solving way. Your response serves as a role model. How would you advise your beloved regarding worry about dangerous

weather or financial hardship? Respond to worry and fear with dignity intact. Problem-solve rather than remain stuck in emotion.

**Everyone feels worried and afraid sometimes.
Make decisions based on your values, not your emotions.**

External Stimulus	⇒	Internal Stimulus	⇒	Choice	⇒	Response
(trigger for the emotion:) <i>Bad weather, overdue bills</i>		Bodily sensation and thoughts <i>negative thoughts, exaggerations, racing pulse, upset stomach, troubled sleep</i>				<i>Avoid, procrastinate? Blame? Drink? Eat? Problem-solve?</i>

You may also notice some worries or fears that are not so logical or smart. Expending energy, tensing muscles, getting headaches and losing sleep over things you have absolutely no influence or control over is self-destructive. It also provides a lovely diversion from attending to concerns within your control, issues you truly have the power to change. Next time you find yourself stewing over things you cannot control, ask these questions:

- 1. If I were not thinking about issues out of my control, what would I be accomplishing right now?*
- 2. How would I feel if I attended only to problems within my control?*
- 3. When I fret over things out of my control, what is my intention?*

Question. *“My parents are worriers. I have always been a worrier too. How do I change something I have been doing my whole life?”*
Heather, age 30

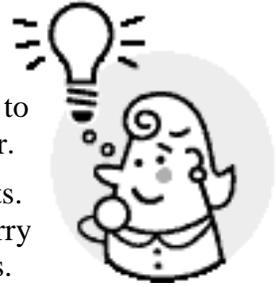
Answer. The first step is to ask yourself if you *are willing to release your need to worry*. Notice any resistance to giving up your worry. Consider the following questions:

- *Do you have a magical belief that your worry prevents bad things from happening?
- *Do you think if you stop worrying, you won't know what to talk about?
- *Do you think if you stop worrying, it means that you don't care?
- *Is your cultural identity tied to worrying?
- *Is worry a way you connect socially with other people?
- *Does worry provide a reason to shop, spend, eat, yell, smoke or drink?
- *Does worry about other people help you avoid working on your own issues?

The best way to release worry is to replace it with problem solving. When you are ready, replace each of your worries with the same positive problem solving you would use to coach your friends through their fears. Shirley's story on the next page may help.

Stage 3: Let Go and Grow

You will know you have worked through your fears when your actions change. Worry, fear and stagnation will fade as positive changes take root. Working through emotions often results in what is commonly referred to as a “light bulb moment”. Sudden insight replaces confusion, worry and fear. The deepest most painful worry is that which is reserved for parents. Whether one’s “child” is 21, 35 or even 50 years of age, parents may worry about their children to the point of heartache, despair or even physical illness.



How do you heal the worry and fear related to your adult children making huge mistakes or living a life headed toward self-destruction?

“Shirley’s Story” illustrates exactly how parents may *let go* of worry by choosing to detach from problems they do not own. Remember, you choose your response to every situation. Here is how Shirley made a better choice.

Shirley’s Story

Shirley originally chose this workbook to learn how to cope with her adult daughter’s chaotic lifestyle. Her underlying motivation however was to *fix her daughter’s life*. After practicing the strategies in Week #7, Shirley understood she needed to change *her own* response.

“I finally figured out that I need to *let go* of my daughter’s problems instead of trying to fix them for her,” she shared. “This morning my daughter walked across our adjoining backyards like she does every morning. She sat at my kitchen table. While I poured the coffee, she poured the troubles. She told me what an ass her husband was. He lost another job. The rent money went to cigarettes and beer again. Her car died. She piled a verbal mountain of chaos and bad decisions right there on *my* kitchen table. With every word my daughter spoke, the mountain grew higher and steeper.” Shirley used her hands to gesture a growing pile of burdens on the kitchen table as she recalled the events of the past morning. “I realized then that everyday is the same. My heart thumps when I hear the kitchen door swing open. I feel sick and helpless. I always do the only thing I know how to do. I grab my checkbook, offer up my car or volunteer to babysit. But this morning I realized I have been putting all of *my* energy into figuring out some way that *I* could climb *her* mountain of problems. No more.”

“I made a different choice. My daughter is 38 years old. This time when she built “Problem Mountain”, I just listened. I never once interrupted her with advice. I did not ‘should’ on her at all. Her mountain is not mine to climb. Instead of fixing her life, I just remembered to breathe. I sat peacefully. For the very first time, I felt no anxiety at all. I pushed my chair away from the table. I said to her, ‘I know you’ll figure this out honey. I believe in you. Excuse me for a few minutes. I just remembered that I have to do my meditations and affirmations this morning.”

There comes a day when parents no longer put Band-aids on their children’s boo-boos. Shirley transformed her worry into wisdom by realizing parents teach their adult children to heal their own wounds by allowing them the time and space to seek their own life solutions.

Shirley's Lessons: Let go and grow

Replace worry with healthy role modeling. A parent's most powerful teaching strategy is to lead by example. Provide a stable role model for both a healthy lifestyle and healthy relationships.

- 1. Parents must *prepare* children for adulthood, not *protect* them from growing up.** Maturity evolves by working through problems, learning from mistakes and overcoming obstacles.
- 2. *Worrying* about people undermines their confidence.** *Worrying* sends a message of perceived incompetence or inferiority.
- 3. Adults do not need people who worry about them-*they need people who believe in them.***
- 4. People who "help" others by solving problems *for* them, rob them of opportunities to learn, grow and mature.**

***"No longer lend your strength to that which you wish to be free from.
Fill your lives with love and bravery and you shall lead a life uncommon."***

"Life Uncommon" by Jewel Kilcher, *Spirit*, 1998.

Letting go requires replacing parental worry and fear with inspirational support.

Letting go requires role modeling rather than rescuing, fixing or controlling.

Letting go requires replacing past parental guilt with healthy role-modeling now.

Letting go is the natural result of *working through* worry and fear.*

* Consider reviewing Week #2 or looking ahead to Week #10 for additional help with issues related to stressful relationships.

You will know that you have "let go" when you have replaced worry and fear with FACT:

- ❖ Faith *in your ability to choose your response.*
- ❖ Acceptance *of what you cannot control.*
- ❖ Confidence *in your ability to cope with whatever happens.*
- ❖ Trust *in the process and flow of life.*

Week #7 Healing Worry and Fear Homework

“If your head is in the right direction, You don’t have to worry about your feet.”

Author unknown

1. **Meditation questions:** Consider the possibility that your worry and fear stem from your core beliefs about yourself and about how you view the world.
 - ❖ How would your life be different if you were not so afraid?
 - ❖ What purpose does procrastination, stagnation, worry or fear serve in your life?
 - ❖ What are your choices?
 - ❖ What is your intention?
 - ❖ What coping strategies are you willing to use to face your worry and fear?

Eckhart Tolle’s 2004 book, *The Power of Now*, describes using meditation as a tool to heal mental pain and negative judgments. He writes:

“Focus attention on the feeling inside you. Know that it is the pain-body. Accept that it is there. Don't think about it - don't let the feeling turn into thinking. Don't judge or analyze. Don't make an identity for yourself out of it. Stay present, and continue to be the observer of what is happening inside you. Become aware not only of the emotional pain but also of "the one who observes," the silent watcher. This is the power of the Now, the power of your own conscious presence. Then see what happens.”

Recommended Readings:

Bourne, E. and Garano, L. (2003). *Coping with Anxiety: 10 Simple Ways to Relieve Anxiety, Fear & Worry*. New Harbinger

Fredrickson, B. (2009). *Positivity*. Crown.

Freed, J and Shapiro, J. (2007). *4 Weeks to an Organized Life with AD/HD*. Taylor Trade.

Grayson, J. (2004). *Freedom from Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: A Personalized Recovery Program for Living with Uncertainty*, Berkley Trade.

Johnson, S. (1998). *Who Moved My Cheese? An Amazing Way to Deal with Change in Your Work and in Your Life*. G.P. Putman’s Sons.

Recommended TED website video links

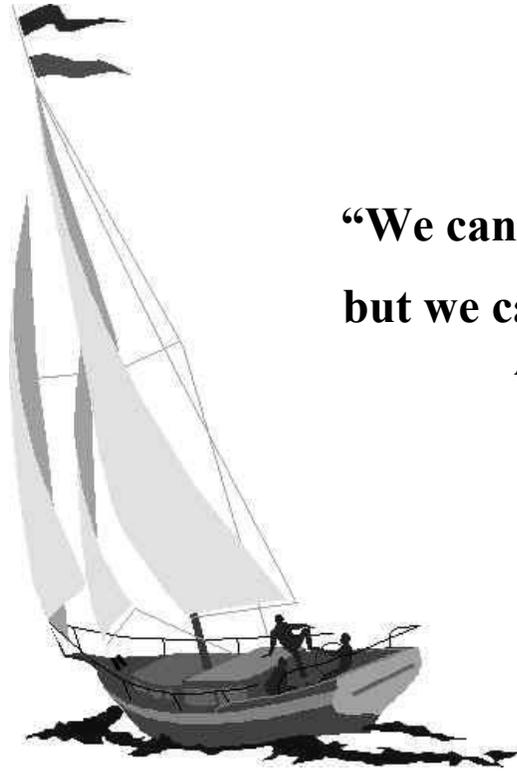
Brene Brown PhD, *Studies of vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame*,
www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html

Ric Elias *Three things I learned*, www.ted.com/talks/ric_elias.html

Kathryn Schulz: *Don't regret regret*, www.ted.com/talks/kathryn_schulz_don_t_regret_regret.html

Week #8

***LIVING* with Stress**



**“We cannot direct the wind
but we can adjust the sails”**

Author unknown

The Parable of the Starfish

I would like to share a story that inspires me when I feel overwhelmed by stressful events.

During the final year of her battle with cancer, a former hospital administrator demonstrated the *Parable of the Starfish* through her dedication to help others. Despite her poor prognosis, she continued to remain positive in her role as an enthusiastic and effective leader. She died in May, 2001 shortly after sharing this parable with her staff. She was 52 years old.

The Parable of the Starfish



An old man was walking along the ocean shoreline one morning after a very high tide. As he walked, he noticed thousands of starfish that had been washed ashore and he realized that they would die if they were not returned to the sea. However, there were so many—there was no way to save them.

As he looked up from the sand, in the distance he saw someone bending, reaching, then standing and throwing something into the sea.

He approached and realized that a child was methodically grasping the starfish and throwing them, one by one, repeating the process again and again. The old man stopped the child and asked, “Why are you bothering? There are miles and miles of beach and thousands and thousands of starfish. You can’t possibly make a difference.”

The child looked at the old man, bent down, grasped another starfish, tossed it gently into the sea and replied, “But it made a difference to that one.”

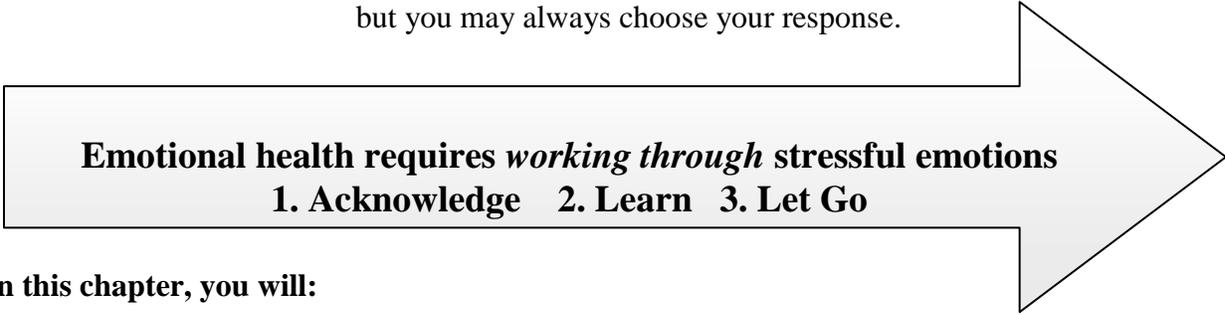
Author Unknown



Week #8 *Living with Stress* Overview

“Crisis stems for the Greek word meaning “problem plus opportunity.”
Marianne Williamson

Living with stress refers to the idea that you may not always choose what happens to you, but you may always choose your response.



Emotional health requires *working through* stressful emotions
1. Acknowledge 2. Learn 3. Let Go

In this chapter, you will:

1. Acknowledge:

- ❖ Consider your beliefs regarding stress.
- ❖ Test your Stress-Management Competence
- ❖ Identify your response to stress. Do you:
Speed up/Blow up? Shut down/Give up? Problem solve /Cope?
- ❖ Experience the difference between healthy and unhealthy stress.
- ❖ Use cognitive dissonance theory (page 155) to identify the origin of stress.

2. Learn:

- ❖ Apply cognitive dissonance theory as a stress management tool to *live* with stress.
- ❖ Understand the six stress management ingredients to transform crisis into opportunity.
 1. Balance
 2. Responsibility
 3. Creating meaning or purpose
 4. Self-discipline
 5. Self-acceptance
 6. Letting go

3. Let go:

- ❖ Embrace the gift in each stressful situation. Releasing painful beliefs allows you to transform each crisis into an opportunity, each wound into wisdom.

Crisis and Stress: Problem Plus Opportunity.

Below is a story as it appears in Dan Millman's *The Way of the Peaceful Warrior*.



"An old man and his son worked a small farm, with only one horse to pull the plow. One day, the horse ran away. "How terrible," sympathized the neighbors. "What bad luck."

"Who knows whether it is bad luck or good luck," the farmer replied. A week later, the horse returned from the mountains, leading five wild mares into the barn.

"What wonderful luck!" said the neighbors.

"Good luck? Bad luck? Who knows?" answered the old man.

The next day, the son, trying to tame one of the horses, fell and broke his leg.

"How terrible. What bad luck!"

"Bad luck? Good luck?"

The army came to all the farms to take the young men for war. The farmer's son was of no use to them, so he was spared.

"Good? Bad?"

Everything has a purpose; it's for you to make the best use of it.

There are no accidents.

Everything is a lesson."

Way of the Peaceful Warrior. Revised edition. Copyright 2000 by Dan Millman. Reprinted with permission HJ Kramer/New World Library, Novato, CA. www.newworldlibrary.com.

Test Your Stress Management Competence

Below is a selection of items from the *Epstein Stress Management Inventory (ESMI-i) as it appeared on page 30 of the 2011 September/October edition of Scientific American Mind Magazine. To get a rough measure of your competence in the four areas measured by the test, check off items that apply to you. If you are able to check off three or four items in a category, you are probably reasonably competent in that category. Grand Total scores under 12 have room for improvement. To take a full version of the test visit <http://MyStressManagementSkills.com>

Competency I. Manages Sources of Stress

- I have adequate shelf, file and drawer space to serve my needs.
- I consistently put important tasks ahead of unimportant tasks.
- I try to schedule appointments and meetings so that they won't overlap.
- I have no trouble keeping my work area organized.

Competency II. Practices Relaxation Techniques

- I schedule some relaxation time every day.
- I sometimes visualize soothing scenes to relax.
- I sometimes use healthy breathing techniques to help me relax.
- I sometimes tense and relax my muscles as a way of fighting stress.

Competency III. Manages Thoughts

- I regularly examine and try to correct any irrational beliefs I might have.
- I am aware that my thinking is sometimes unclear or irrational.
- I keep myself calm by being selective about what I pay attention to in my environment.
- I often reinterpret events to reduce the stress I am feeling.

Competency IV. Prevents Stress from Occurring

- I try to fight stress before it starts.
- I keep an up-to-date list of things I am supposed to do.
- I spend a few minutes each morning planning my day.
- I have a clear picture of how I'd like my life to proceed over the next few years.

Grand Total _____

*Author of this Stress Management Competency Test is Robert Epstein Ph.D. He has a Ph.D. in psychology from Harvard University and is a contributing editor for Scientific American Mind as well as the author of 15 books.

Stress Response Choices

Shut Down/Give up: Views stress as a **personal failure**.

Speed up/Blow up: Views stress as **someone's fault**.

Healthy Stress Management: Views stress as a **normal** part of life, a **learning opportunity** and **motivation for change**.

**What's your response?
Check all that apply:**



Shut Down/Give up

- Poor self-care
- Chaos
- Easily overwhelmed
- Guilt, shame
- Depression
- Learned helplessness
- Denial about choices
- No support
- Procrastination
- Self-sabotage
- Victim/defeat

**Extreme stress
leads to: illness,
mood disorders,
bad habits &
victimization**

Healthy Stress Management

Balance:

- Healthy self-care
- Problem-solves
- First things first
- Embraces opportunity
- Creates support
- Delegates
- Structure & routine
- Relaxation
- Meditation/prayer
- Letting go

Coping strategies
prevent extreme stress
reactions and lead to
coping with life
successfully!



Speed up/Blow up

- Poor self-care
- Chaos
- Blames, judges
- Irritable/angry
- Stress is excuse for anger or violence
- Impulsiveness
- All or nothing thinking
- Perfectionism
- Temper outbursts
- Controls/ Bully's

**Extreme stress
leads to: illness,
poor judgment,
bad habits,
violence & crime**

Healthy Stress versus Unhealthy Stress



Dictionary definition of stress:

- Strain. Force that deforms or strains.
- Mental or physical tension.
- Urgency or pressure.
- Emphasis, importance.

Unhealthy stress refers to strain that creates physical or psychological damage. Unhealthy stress leads to feeling *overwhelmed* or *defeated* by life challenges, experiences or changes. Unhealthy stress has no moderation or balance. (*Examples: addiction, dysfunctional relationships, toxic work environments*). Choosing to live with excessive unhealthy stress is a self-defeating behavior. *Constant exposure to unhealthy stress causes illness.*

Healthy stress refers to pressure or tension required for success. Moderation and balance are essential ingredients of healthy stress. This type of stress is energizing, inspirational and motivating. (*Examples: exercise, parenthood, job training, vacation*). Healthy stress functions as a cure for boredom, stagnation and burnout. The management of healthy stress is an important coping skill.



The difference: stress is *healthy* or *unhealthy* depending on the view of the person experiencing the stress.

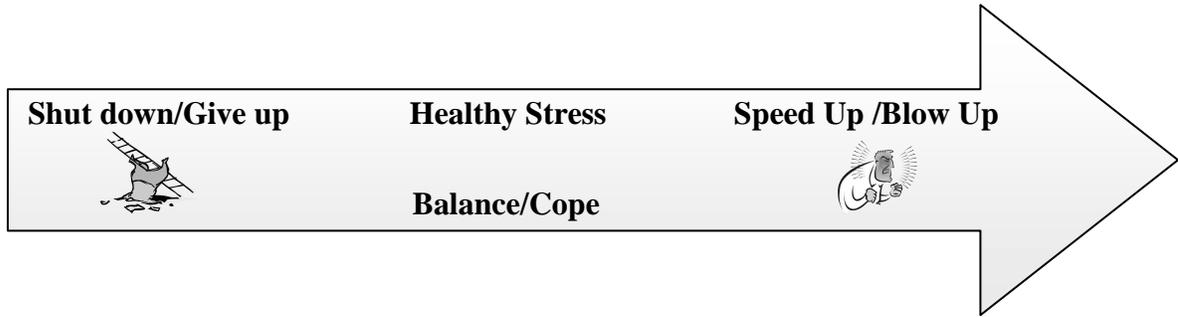
**“People are disturbed not by things,
but by the view which they take of them.”**

Epictetus

Healthy stress *Unhealthy Stress

- ❖ While some students feel discouraged, anxious and overwhelmed by school, other students thrive and excel on academic pressure.
- ❖ The stress of parenthood leads some couples into chronic arguments while other couples form a stronger bond over those same parental demands.
- ❖ Some workers experience boredom, frustration or burnout at their jobs while their co-workers enjoy a challenge and feel inspired to learn and grow.

Healthy Stress versus Unhealthy Stress Inventory



1. Take a moment to consider your own life. List your **unhealthy stressors** (overwhelming, excessive, chaotic, unbalanced, defeating or upsetting stress) here:

From the list above, circle the unhealthy stressors you are interested in addressing.

2. Now, list your **healthy stress** (inspirational, rewarding or a motivational challenge) here:

Your view of stress will depend on your values, experience and expectations.

Your RESPONSE to stress is a choice you make.

Stimulus	➔	Choice	➔	Response
(Internal stress: physical body External stress: environment)				(When stressed, do you choose dignity and self-respect?)

Do you shut down, speed up?
Meditation thoughts for consideration.

- Notice when you take responsibility for coping and problem solving during stressful events.
- Notice when you blame a stimulus (stressor) for your unhealthy response.
- Notice how your body physically responds to healthy verses unhealthy stress.
- How could you transform an *unhealthy stress* into a *healthy stress* by using moderation and balance?

Use Cognitive Dissonance Theory on the next page to decide how best to cope with unhealthy stress.

Cognitive Dissonance Theory

A Tool to Identify the Origin of Stress

Cognitive Dissonance Theory, developed in 1957 by Stanford University social psychologist Leon Festinger, is the idea that cognitive dissonance causes stress. In other words:

**According to cognitive dissonance theory,
you experience stress when your thoughts, beliefs or values conflict with your actions.
A conflict between your thoughts & actions = Stress**



Identify the conflict between your *thoughts* and your *actions*. Check all that apply.



- 1. You *believe* in loving relationships, but your *behavior* in relationships consists of criticizing, nagging, blaming, yelling or lying.
- 2. You *believe* in building trust in relationships, but your *actions* are to distrust others, gossip or seethe with jealousy.
- 3. You *value* hard work, but your *behavior* reflects avoidance and procrastination.
- 4. Your *thoughts or beliefs* support recovery, but your *behavior* involves relapse.
- 5. You claim to value nutritional eating and healthy weight management, but your *behavior* is to over-eat, grab fast food or engage in binge eating.
- 6. Your *beliefs* support becoming financially responsible, but your *behavior* is to continue to spend more money than you earn.
- 7. Deep down you *believe* you are not enough but your *actions* reflect success. No matter how much you accomplish, you never believe you are good enough.
- 8. You *value* stress management, but your *actions* create a life of chaos.
- 9. You *value* loyalty, but your *behavior* demonstrates betrayal.
- 10. You *believe* in self-improvement, but your *behavior* reflects an obsession with waiting for other people to improve.

Scoring: Total your check marks. Zero check marks indicate integrity with thought and action. The presence of check marks indicate a “do as I say, not as I do” philosophy. Did you notice the “but” in each sentence? What other areas in your life do your thoughts, values or beliefs conflict with your actions?

Cognitive dissonance theory A Tool to help you LIVE with STRESS



Now that you are mindful of how the conflict between your thoughts and your actions cause stress,



**What do you choose?
What is your intention?**

According to cognitive dissonance theory, you have three choices:

- #1. You may choose to remain stressed. (*Change nothing*).
- #2. You may choose to *change your thoughts* to match your actions.
- #3. You may choose to *change your actions* to match your thoughts.

Choice #1: Remain stressed. Change nothing. Sadly, many people choose this option. You may recall the “*fly in the window*” story in the beginning of this workbook. I discussed how people continue to repeat the same behaviors each time expecting different results. The *fly in the window* strategy falls under Choice #1. Many people buy self-help workbooks or engage in psychotherapy but never actually *DO* anything differently. They *talk* about change but do not take action.

Choice #2 & Choice #3: Match your beliefs to actions or your actions to beliefs. Changing your thoughts or actions requires courage. This change also requires practice. Let us practice by using the examples provided on the previous page.

Example # 1: You *believe* in loving relationships, but your *behavior* in relationships consists of lying, yelling, blaming, nagging and criticizing.

What is your intention? If you decide to change your *thoughts* about loving relationships to *match* your nagging and criticizing, then you must believe that nagging and criticizing are the correct actions. Many people actually do promote this choice. They say “*I wouldn’t nag or criticize in this relationship if my loved one didn’t.....*”

(Insert any blame statement here.)

The example above demonstrates a new attitude of acceptance and tolerance toward negative behavior. Additional examples of how people adjust their thoughts to support negative behavior include an increase in nationwide obesity and the prevalence of other equally self-defeating behaviors such as excessive credit card spending and drunk driving.

“Do you want to defend your behavior or do you want to change it?” Dr. Phil

Changing your *thoughts* to match your *behavior* can be a positive choice.

Example #2. Deep down you *believe* you are not enough but your *actions* reflect success.

What is your intention? Would you like your negative thoughts to become as positive as your successful actions? To match your *thoughts* about yourself with your successful *actions*, you must accept the idea that perhaps you are good enough. Perhaps you are indeed a competent, successful person. Refer to Week #9 to work on improving self-love.

“Remember this: Every decision you make stems from what you think you are, and represents the value that you place upon yourself”

The Course in Miracles

Learning to *live* with stress is a choice. What do you choose?

Consider ideas for using cognitive dissonance theory as a stress management tool in your life.

Which of your *actions* would you like to change to better fit your *values*?

Example: “I’d like to be more loving by withholding unsolicited advice and by practicing more compassion.”

“I’d like to improve my nutrition by planning meals and packing my lunch.”

Write your new *actions* here: _____

Which of your *beliefs* need to be modified to better match your *actions*?

Example: “I’d like to believe I am worthy of success and know that I am good enough.”

“I’d like to accept that I make mistakes and forgive myself for not being perfect.”

Write your new thoughts/beliefs here: _____

Six Ingredients for Stress Management: Transform Crisis into Opportunity

“Before you agree to do anything that might add even the smallest amount of stress to your life, ask yourself: What is my truest intention? Give yourself time to let a yes resound within you. When it’s right, I guarantee that your entire body will feel it.”

Oprah Winfrey

Stress signals opportunities for improving, learning and growing.

Emotional healing requires the ability to calm, defuse, reframe and learn. Every stressful event offers the opportunity to practice problem solving. Consider using the lessons below to transform your *unhealthy* stress into healthy coping skills.

Ingredient #1 Balance.

Lives without balance are burdened with *unhealthy stress*. “More” is not always better. Sometimes it is just MORE-too many hours worked, too many scheduled activities, too much noise, too much clutter, too many credit cards, too much time on computers, TV or phone, too many nights out, too many expectations, and too much “people pleasing.”



Lives based on self-neglect also create imbalance-no time for yourself, not enough sleep, feeling guilty or selfish if you do take time, no energy to get organized, no set goals and no idea *what* you need. An imbalanced life often fluctuates between “too much” and “not enough.” Alcoholics Anonymous refers to chaotic lifestyles causing people to become “*sick and tired of feeling sick and tired.*” People who are accustomed to chaos or neglect may have no idea how to create balance. “Balance” may even feel boring when drama and upheaval are absent.

A balanced life refers to:

- ❖ A life that prioritizes an alignment of values with actions.
- ❖ A life lived with purpose and intention.

Today I choose to create balance in my life. *I will do this by:* _____

*“We come into this world head first and go out feet first;
in between, it is all a matter of balance”.*

Paul Boese, Dutch Botanist

Ingredient #2. Responsibility

You learn the lesson of **responsibility** “*ability to choose your response*” when old excuses fade and there is no one left to blame. You may not always choose what happens to you, but you always choose your response to what happens. No one understood this concept better than Viktor Frankl (1905-1997), the Austrian psychiatrist who wrote about his experience as a survivor of the Nazi prison camps. In his 1963 book *Man’s Search for Meaning*, Frankl observed human responses to incredible, indescribable levels of stress.

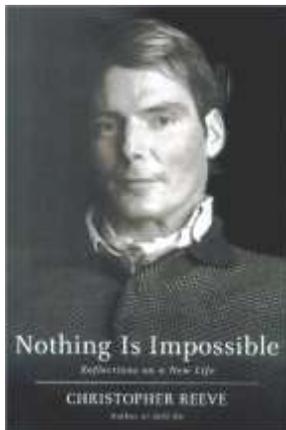
"Everything can be taken from a man but ...the last of the human freedoms – to choose one's attitude in any given set of circumstances, to choose one's own way."
Viktor Frankl

Today I choose to take responsibility for my life. I will do this by: _____

Ingredient #3. Creating meaning/purpose

People are willing to suffer incredible physical or emotional stress when they believe that doing so serves a purpose. (Think of parents, fire fighters, soldiers, emergency room staff, etc.). Lives without meaning or purpose fall prey to *unhealthy* stress. Jewel Kilcher’s song *Deep Water* speaks to this type of stress:

“And you wake up to realize your standard of living somehow got stuck on survive.”
Jewel



Transforming crisis into opportunity requires that you create meaning or purpose during stressful events. Christopher Reeves (1952-2004), who suffered an accidental spinal cord injury in 1995, was asked in an interview if he thought his accident had happened for a reason. Mr. Reeve’s response was essentially that he viewed his injury as a freak accident, but that he believed it was his responsibility to create purpose and bring meaning to the events of his life.

Rabbi Harold Kushner’s 1981 best selling book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People* described how to overcome the temptation to dwell on blame or guilt during times of crisis. Rather than becoming lost forever in the tragedy of his young son’s illness and eventual death, Rabbi Kushner wrote best selling books that continue to inspire millions of readers.

“In the final analysis, the questions of why bad things happen to good people transmutes itself into some very different questions, no longer asking why something happened, but asking how we will respond, what we intend to do now that it happened.”

Harold Kushner

Today I choose to create meaning in my life. I will do this by: _____

Ingredient #4. Self-discipline: (Self-control and delayed gratification)

Self-discipline requires impulse control. You must say “no” to yourself when saying “yes” would bring self-destructive or immoral consequences. **Self-discipline aligns your actions with your values.** It allows you to “*Be the change you seek*”. Self-discipline also requires you to *delay gratification*: forgo an immediate pleasure or reward in order to gain a more substantial one later. Example: study today for an improved test score tomorrow; skip dessert now for reduced waistline later. Without self-discipline, self-trust is impossible. You demonstrate self-discipline through self-control, impulse control and delayed gratification.

Today I choose to practice self-discipline in my life. I will do this by: _____

Ingredient #5. Self-acceptance

“I don’t care to belong to a club that accepts people like me as members.” Groucho Marx

Many people refuse to take responsibility for the stress caused by their lack of self-acceptance. They remain stuck in blame or victim thinking by claiming, “*Other people judge them or reject them.*” Some people attempt to heal problems with self-acceptance by hiding behind a mask of arrogance, conceit or perfectionism. A problem with *self-acceptance* is never solved by insisting *others* must adore you. Mindful self-acceptance requires choosing to honor your own “human-ness” by non-judgmentally accepting mistakes, flaws and imperfections. Stress caused by the lack of self-acceptance is healed only by *your decision* to believe that you are “good enough” or “worthy enough.” *Self-acceptance* is an *inside* job.

Today I choose to practice self-acceptance in my life. I will do this by: _____

Stage 3: Letting Go.

Stress signals opportunities for living, learning and letting go. The story of *Rebecca's Bath* illustrates how releasing painful beliefs can transform a crisis into an opportunity, a wound into wisdom.

Rebecca's Bath: A Lesson in Letting Go.

Rebecca enrolled in my *Life Solutions* stress management series to help tackle the pressure of her superwoman lifestyle. She struggled with managing a challenging career while also raising a growing family. She longed for a relaxing bubble bath at the end of the day, but she felt too overwhelmed. She complained to the group "I am sick of my family constantly demanding my attention, especially when I'm trying to take my bath. I can't even use the toilet without someone barging in on me! I have no personal space, no privacy!"

Would Rebecca continue her *belief in stress*? Or, would she choose to seek *relief from stress*? The choice was hers. The group encouraged Rebecca to envision herself in her own home—luxuriously enjoying a bubble bath behind a securely locked door.

Her response reflected her feelings of helplessness and guilt. "I can't lock the door, I don't have a lock. Even if I could lock the door, the kids would bang on it. They would tantrum and cry. How could I shut my family out? Wouldn't that be cruel? Or selfish?"

Everyone has the right to privacy and to personal space. It is up to you to teach others how to respect your privacy. You are responsible for advocating for yourself. Setting limits with others by taking care of yourself is not selfish. It is role-modeling.

With her fears addressed, Rebecca returned to group, ready to share her progress. "I decided I deserved to take my bath in peace, so I examined what type of lock I would need for my bathroom door." She scanned the room. "I couldn't believe it," she sighed. "I have lived in my house for the last 8 years. I never noticed before. My bathroom door has a lock."

Once you *let go* of old beliefs in helplessness, powerlessness and fear, opportunities for healing appear.

For years, Rebecca could not see the lock on her own bathroom door. Once she realized stress could be viewed as an opportunity, Rebecca was able to view her world differently. She challenged her core belief in powerlessness. Rebecca acknowledged childhood memories of abuse. As a small child, unable to protect herself, Rebecca's personal and emotional space was violated. She had no rights, no privacy.

Even as an adult with a home of her own, Rebecca continued to recreate her familiar stressful feelings of helplessness, vulnerability and victimization. Once she was able to release her core belief in powerlessness, she established personal boundaries. She transformed her wounds into wisdom. She *let go* of her past. Rebecca gave *herself* permission to see that she held her key to success. All she had to do was unlock it.



Week #8 *Living with Stress* Homework

1. **Home Reflection:** Consider the environment you call “home”. On the space below, write words that describe your living space. (Examples: *cluttered, chaotic, in need of repair, outdated, organized, peaceful, clean, warm...etc*).
-
-



Now study your descriptive words. How do those words describe your view of your life? How do they describe your view of yourself?

Meditation questions:

- ❖ How does my home contribute to my healthy stress? My UN-healthy stress?
- ❖ Does my home reflect the life of a neglected child? A perfectionist? A human being?
- ❖ How am I “living by example”?

For additional inspiration on how to *live* with stress:

Albom, M. (2005). *Tuesdays with Morrie*.

Bolte Taylor, J. (2009). *My Stroke of Insight: A Brain Scientist's Personal Journey*.

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Jampolsky, G. & D. Cirincione (1992). *Attaining Inner Peace: Practical Applications of a Course in Miracles* (Audio Cassette Nightingale Conant Series).

Muth, J. (2002). *The Three Questions*.

Myss, C. (2002). *Spiritual Madness*. Audio CD. Sounds True Inc.

Pasricha, N. (2010). *The Book of Awesome: Snow Days, Bakery Air, Finding Money in Your Pocket, and Other Simple, Brilliant Things*

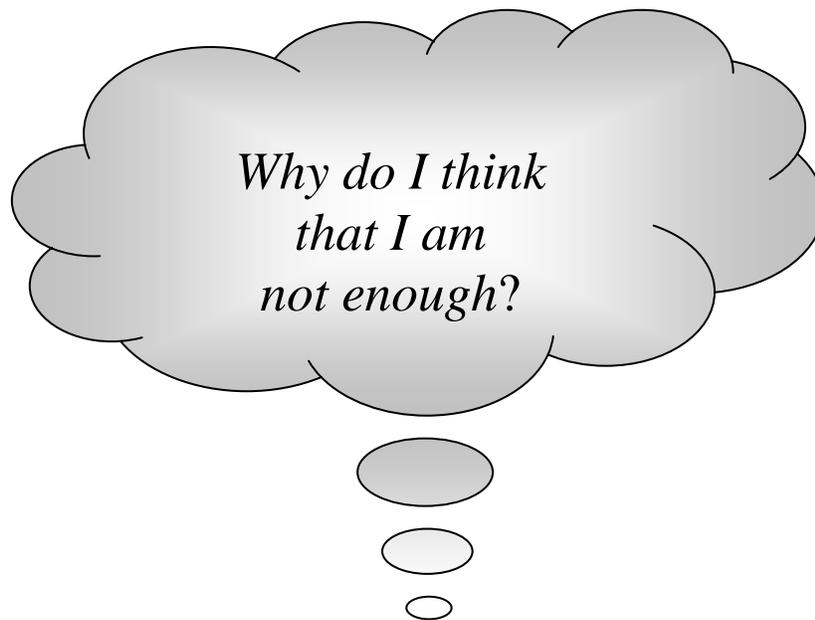
Reeve, C. (2004). *Nothing is Impossible: Reflections on a New Life*.

Reeve, C. (1999). *Still me*.

Vanzant, I. (2001). *Yesterday, I Cried*.



Week #9



“The greatest danger
for most of us
is not that our aim is too high
and we miss it,
but that its too low
and we reach it.”

Michelangelo (1475-1564)

The Golden Eagle

By Anthony de Mello, author of *The Song of the Bird*

A man found an eagle's egg and put it in the nest of a backyard hen. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them.

All his life, the eagle did what the backyard chickens did, thinking he was a backyard chicken, he scratched the earth for worms and insects. He clucked and cackled. And he would thrash his wings and fly a few feet into the air like the chickens did. After all, that is how a chicken is supposed to fly, isn't it?

Years passed and the eagle grew very old. One day he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. It floated in graceful majesty among the powerful wind currents with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings.

The old eagle looked up in awe. "Who's that?" he asked his neighbor.

"That's the eagle, the king of the birds," said his neighbor. "But don't give it another thought. You and I are different from him."

So the eagle never gave it another thought.

He died thinking he was a backyard chicken.



"Until his sudden death on June 2, 1987, Fr. Tony de Mello was the director of the Sadhana Institute of Pastoral Counseling near Poona, India. Author of five best selling books, renowned worldwide for his workshops, retreats and prayer courses, he aimed simply to teach people." HOW TO PRAY, how to WAKE UP AND LIVE. www.demello.org



“Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the fairest of us all?”

Do you feel inadequate around affluent, creative, intelligent or attractive people?
Does the status, ability or talent of others intimidate you?

You are not alone. Many people have difficulty resolving
the painful belief that they “are *not enough*”.

*“I’ve spent my whole life
trying to please others.
Nothing I do is ever good
enough.”*

*“I am deeply
ashamed of things
I have done. I
don’t deserve to be
loved.”*

*“I don’t look like the
pictures in magazines.
No one will ever love
me for who I am.”*

*“If you had my
childhood, you would
understand why I have
such low self-esteem.”*

*“My dad left. All of my
relationships fail.
There must be
something wrong
with me.”*

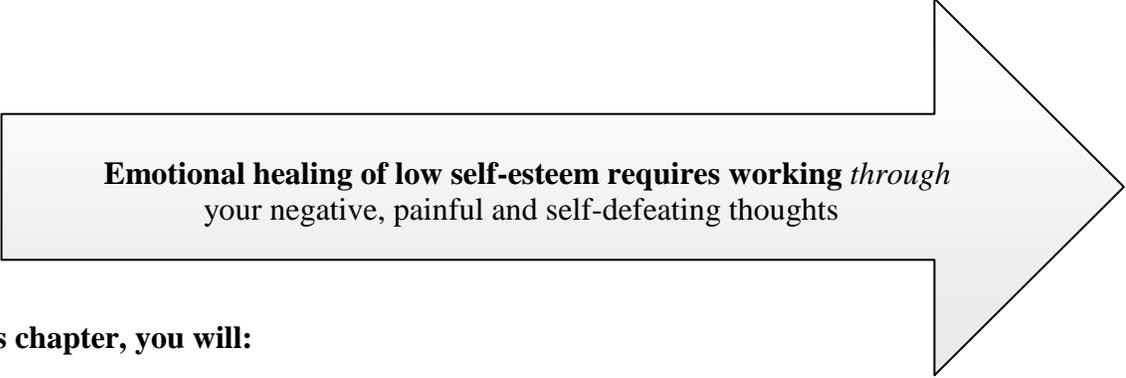
**Do you choose to believe you are just a backyard chicken?
Or do you dare to believe you can soar with the eagles?**

Week # 9 Overview

“Self pity is our worst enemy and if we yield to it, we can never do anything wise in the world.”
Helen Keller 1880-1968

You need not spend one more minute feeling unworthy, inadequate, insecure or jealous.

- ❖ **The value you place upon yourself is your choice.**
- ❖ **Replacing a negative view of yourself, with a more positive one, is also a choice.**



Emotional healing of low self-esteem requires working through *through*
your negative, painful and self-defeating thoughts

In this chapter, you will:

Stage 1. Acknowledge the gap between your real self and ideal self.

- ❖ Identify the terms:
Self-esteem, Self-confidence, Character, Body image, Public image
- ❖ Identify the myths associated with self-image and self-esteem.
- ❖ Use Tool #1: Healing low self-esteem in both thought and action.
- ❖ Apply Tool #2: Identify thoughts and actions that sabotage self-esteem.

Stage 2. Learn tools to practice healthy self-esteem.

- ❖ Tool #3 Embrace Unconditional Love: Body Image Test
- ❖ Tool #4 Living AS IF
- ❖ Tool #5 Character Building
- ❖ Tool #6 Self-esteem mindfulness ladder
- ❖ Tool #7 Redefining the problem

Stage 3. Let Go

- ❖ Release the belief that you are only a backyard chicken. Choose to fly like an eagle.

Change Your Thoughts Heal Your Life-Week 9
“Why do I think that I am not enough?”

Humans are born with the ability to love themselves and others unconditionally. Babies never worry if their bottoms look too big in diapers. Toddlers offer up a smile and a wave without fear of rejection. Pre-schoolers transform into twirling princesses and mighty action heroes before your very eyes.

Once upon a time, you KNEW you were wonderful. You were amazed with yourself, inside and out, all the way down to your little piggy toes. Then something happened.

Sometime in early childhood you became aware of a gap between your



“Real self”

and your

“Ideal self.”

You became consciously aware of every fault and flaw that exists in this gap between your *real self* and your *ideal self*.

This self-awareness is normal. If you had no self-consciousness, something would be missing. The important question now is “*What is your intention?*”

Do you intend to use your awareness of the gap between your real and your ideal self as fuel for depression, anxiety and self-defeating behaviors?

Or

Do you wish to embrace your humanness by growing, living, learning and loving yourself into your best self?

“The worst loneliness is not to be comfortable with yourself.”
Mark Twain

Let’s start with clarifying terms. Different words describe the value you place on yourself.

Self-Esteem is the value you place on yourself as a Human being.

Self-Confidence refers to the value you place on your abilities: Human doing.

Character refers to your spirit, your true nature, integrity or moral fiber.

Body Image is the view you have of your **outer physical appearance, your earth suit.**

Personality Self: Public Image The value you place on your status in comparison to others: Influenced by societal status and cultural norms. This image is shaped by demographics: sex, age, ethnicity, nationality, health, religion, education, income, career and marital status. Public Image is transformed by popularity and reputation and is vulnerable to stereotypes and discrimination.

Myth #1: You are not responsible for your low self-esteem and you can't do anything about it. Like height, low self-esteem is something you are stuck with.

Fact: Self-esteem (the value you place on yourself) is your choice.

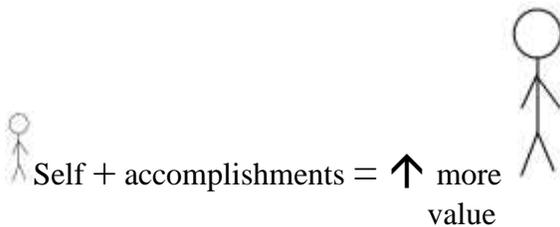
“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent” Eleanor Roosevelt

As a child, you were not responsible for feelings of inferiority or inadequacy. Children believe what they hear. If the adults or authority figures in your young life said you were “stupid, fat, ugly, bad or unwanted,” you believed them. If they failed to acknowledge you as a valuable and worthy person, you thought that failure was your fault. Unfortunately, children are fragile targets for emotional and verbal abuse.

As an adult, you have a choice.

As an adult, you realize that no child deserves emotional, verbal or physical abuse. You also realize that children are never responsible for an adults’ emotions, reactions or coping skills. As an adult, you may release the pain of the past and begin to embrace your value and worth as a person.

As an adult, you have the right to reclaim your worth as a human being.



Myth #2: Self-esteem is dependent on external events. Self esteem only increases due to accomplishments like:

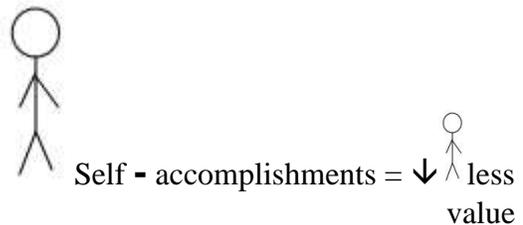
“I’m good enough and worthy of self-esteem when...

- ...I lose the weight
- ...I have the education, career, promotion
- ...I buy the right stuff, have piles of stuff
- ..I am popular, have a partner

And self-esteem decreases with negative external events “Now that I have gained weight,

- ... lost my job, lost my credit,
-failed in my relationship

I am no longer worthy of self-esteem.”



Fact: Healthy self-esteem is not “dependent” on external events. External events do not increase or decrease your value as a human being.

Humans do not increase or decrease in value. You may become more or less wealthy, popular, attractive or fit, but your inherent value as a *human being* never increases nor decreases. You were born a valuable human, worthy of love. You always will be. Nothing can change that fact.

Tool #1 Heal low self-esteem through thought and action

Choosing to value yourself requires alignment in both thought and action. Harold Kushner defined the alignment of two elements of self-love in his book, *Living The Life That Matters*. Kushner believes that the key to fully loving yourself lies in your ability to embrace both the maternal and paternal elements of self-love.

Maternal, Unconditional Love Requires Loving Thoughts

Kushner defined maternal self-love as “no strings attached”. This unconditional love accepts you exactly as you are, simply for *being* you. Unconditional love is most often bestowed upon children, family members and pets. These beloveds need not perform or compete to win love. Unconditional love is guaranteed even after weight gain, financial misfortune and loss of bladder control. Are you willing to love *yourself* as unconditionally as you love others?

Paternal, Conditional Love Is Earned Through Actions

Kushner defined paternal self-love as dependent on actions-love earned by *doing*. This conditional love is earned. Conditional love strives for self-improvement. It fuels the drive to lose the weight, find the partner or climb the mountain. What conditions do you place on love?

Action: Human DOING Paternal

Earned self-love

- Act as a role model
- Set goals
- Learn, improve, grow
- Practice self-discipline
- Delay gratification
- Act with dignity
- Seek solutions, be the change
- Create a stable living environment
- Assert your rights
- Keep promises
- Contribute to your community

Thought: Human BEING Maternal

Unconditional self-love

- Create purpose
- Believe in yourself
- Live in the present
- Reflect
- Trust yourself
- Choose your response
- Respect yourself
- Seek inner peace
- Search answers from within
- Maintain integrity
- Honor your values

Tool #2 Identify thoughts and actions that sabotage self-esteem

“Are you fit company for the person you wish to become?” - Anonymous

Claiming your right to value yourself is difficult for many people. Below are the most common self-defeating thoughts and actions sabotaging progress.

Check each statement below that is true for you.

In general, do you:

- 1. Quit when difficulties arise?
- 2. Fail to forgive yourself?
- 3. Rarely challenge your abilities?
- 4. Have difficulty accepting your mistakes?
- 5. Take the easy way out?
- 6. Never feel satisfied?
- 7. Deny your right to make choices in your own life?
- 8. Feel inadequate when you compare yourself to others?
- 9. Practice self-loathing?
- 10. Live irresponsibly or become dependent on others?
- 11. Refuse to accept yourself?
- 12. Fail to set goals or pursue life-long dreams?
- 13. Practice self-defeating behaviors i.e.; substance abuse, over-eating, over-spending, etc.?
- 14. Feel jealous of another's success?
- 15. Believe in helplessness and hopelessness?
- 16. Avoid trying new things because of fear of failure?
- 17. Remain “stuck in blame?”
- 18. Dwell on your flaws and imperfections?



Scoring: Each checked item represents your choice to devalue yourself. You may choose to begin healing at any time. Take a breath. Proceed when you are ready.

Tool #3 Embrace Unconditional Love The Body Image Test

Take a moment to envision someone you love-perhaps a child, family member or life long friend. Visualize this person standing beside you now. Look deep into this beloved's eyes. Imagine that your beloved has gained 25 pounds. Notice your reaction. Have you stopped loving this person? Envision your beloved disfigured by a freak accident. Was your love diminished by the presence of scars or broken limbs? Picture your beloved unemployed, disabled or homeless. Does the love you feel for the most special people in your life vanish when attractiveness fades or a crisis strikes? This ability to love others unconditionally may be applied to yourself as well. The choice is yours. Use the Body Image Test to learn how.

Body Image Test

Do you physically compare yourself to others? Does your negative attitude toward your appearance, your weight or your age cause you to feel *less valuable* than other people?

Take the body image quiz below. Check each statement as **T** (True) or **F** (False).

1. My appearance or my weight affect my ability to love and value myself. T F
2. I have difficulty valuing myself because I am not smart enough. T F
3. I do not accept growing older. As I lose my youth, I lose self-esteem. T F
4. I do not like the color of my skin. I feel *inferior* because of it. T F
5. My gender or my sexual orientation diminish my self-worth. T F
6. My status as a minority challenges my self-esteem. T F

Scoring: Each true statement indicates a shared belief with an infamous leader in history. He also valued people based on appearance, gender, sexual orientation, intelligence and a host of ethnic factors. He believed so strongly in the supremacy of some people over others that he planned to create a superior nation by breeding only the blue eyed, fair-skinned people. His name was Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) Determining the value of humans by comparisons to others is destructive. Improve your body image by releasing any degrading, prejudice or intolerant judgments. *Your value as a human on this planet is not determined by your earth suit.* Make a choice to release such thoughts. The next time you notice yourself making a negative judgment ask yourself, “*what is my intention?*”

“A thought never leaves its source.” The Course in Miracles

Imagine how much better you will feel when you no longer expend energy by feeling offended, judging others or devaluing yourself.

Tool #4 Living with value...as if..

Consider how your life would be different if you woke up tomorrow morning feeling positive about yourself. **How might your life be different if.....**

Complete each sentence

1. If I woke up tomorrow morning feeling really positive about myself I would ... _____

2. If I had more self respect I would stop... _____

3. If I truly loved my body, the the first thing I would do differently is... _____

4. If I had more confidence in my abilities I would ... _____

5. If I focused on love rather than fear I could... _____

Tool #5 Character Building

*You can't truthfully explain your smallest action
without fully revealing your character.
Author Unknown*

“Character” refers to your spirit, your true nature, integrity or moral fiber.

- ❖ What characteristics do you think represent a “strong character”?
- ❖ Do you believe you have a strong character?



Explore your criteria for becoming a good person by completing the inventory on the following page. Remember, your character is a reflection of the choices you make.

**The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands
in moments of comfort,
but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."**

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Character Building Criteria Tool #5

"Those who stand for nothing fall for anything." Alexander Hamilton

Rate each statement below based on how true the statement is for you.

5 = Always True 4 = Mostly True 3 = Sometimes True 2 = Rarely True 1 = Never True

- ___ 1. My lifestyle reflects *my* choices, *my* values and *my* beliefs.
- ___ 2. I accept my mistakes. I use them as opportunities to learn and grow.
- ___ 3. I understand that I am a role model. Everyone is. I decide which kind.
- ___ 4. Treating others as I wish to be treated is a priority in my life.
- ___ 5. I manage my financial affairs with integrity.
- ___ 6. I spend time listening to my inner voice.
- ___ 7. I take responsibility for all of my emotions and all of my actions.
- ___ 8. I value a positive attitude.
- ___ 9. I lead by example.
- ___ 10. I strive to be kind, empathetic and caring.
- ___ 11. I am tolerant and accepting of those who are different.
- ___ 12. I care about the earth. I do not litter. I recycle. I conserve energy.
- ___ 13. Rather than just complaining, I seek positive solutions to my problems.
- ___ 14. I contribute to society. I buckle up. I obey laws. I pay taxes. I vote.
- ___ 15. I never intentionally cause harm to animals or property.
- ___ 16. I make decisions based on what I believe is right even when it is not easy.
- ___ 17. I avoid gossip.
- ___ 18. I respect people's privacy and confidentiality by minding my own business.
- ___ 19. I maintain my dignity, even when angry or upset.
- ___ 20. I keep my word.

Scoring: Do your answers reflect the person you choose to be? You decide your comfort level with your answers. Monitor your progress by retaking this inventory as often as you like.



Tool #6 Climb the thought ladder toward higher esteem

“The most terrifying thing is to accept oneself completely”.

Carl Jung

In Week #5, you learned how to imagine your thoughts as rungs on a ladder. Your self-critical thoughts descended the ladder down toward your wounded place. Tool #6 uses this ladder to improve self-esteem.

“I understand that my negative thoughts cause me to feel bad, but I can’t improve my self-esteem because my negative thoughts are true! How do I improve my self-esteem when my negative thoughts are actually TRUE?”

James, age 42

You choose to accept what is true. Embrace your flaws with the same sense of love and respect you give your imperfect friends. Embrace flaws as human. When I facilitate my Life Solutions programs, I acknowledge the fact that this workbook contains editing flaws. To keep the production cost as low as possible, we did not use professional editing. The workbook is a work in progress, improving over time with each new revision.

“Every time you go out on the ice, there are slight flaws. You can always think of something you should have done better. These are the things you must work on.” Dorothy Hamill

- ❖ Do you accept your flaws the same way you accept flaws in a beloved?
- ❖ Which of your flaws or imperfections are *out* of your control?
- ❖ Which of your flaws or imperfections are *within* your control?
- ❖ How have you chosen to respond?

Apply your thought ladder tool to transform negative “truths” into emotional wisdom.

1. List each negative thought that you believe is true about yourself. Include both the negative thoughts you tell yourself and the negative comments others have said to you.



2. **Once your negative thought list is complete, question each item on the list.** Some items may not actually be true. Once scrutinized, you may find some statements to be false.

Examples:



✓ **If you think you are “not smart enough,”** then how do you explain your creativity, common sense or intuitive nature?

✓ **How would your family and friends feel if they heard you say “nobody cares” about you?** Are you discounting the affections of important people in your life? Perhaps you are discounting the respect of your co-workers, the concern of your neighbors or the loyalty of a pet or a houseplant.

✓ **If you think you are “not attractive,”** perhaps you have not noticed your kind eyes, witty humor, friendly smile, engaging laugh, warm heart or your generous spirit.

✓ **If you consider your abusive past to be a “negative truth,”** consider the story of the African American girl born in Mississippi in 1954. She grew up during a time and in a place where it was not safe to be a black woman. Throughout her childhood and adolescence, she survived emotional, physical and sexual abuse. These events could have shamed her into a life of self-destruction. She did not allow her personal hardship to become an excuse to live her life in the shadows. During her appearance at a 2006 women’s conference, she shared the fact that when she began pursuing her life’s dream, a Chicago TV station owner told her that she did not have the right “look” to succeed in broadcast journalism. He said she “*was not pretty enough. Her skin was too dark and her hair was too nappy.*” He tried to cancel her contract, but she refused to give up. According to Forbes.com., today Oprah Winfrey is the richest woman in entertainment and the only black female billionaire.

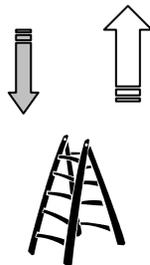
3. **Once you have eliminated your false beliefs about yourself, reframe each remaining item on your list.** Choose a positive response to your negative thought. Refer to the examples below.

Negative belief

• I am divorced. I failed at a relationship.

• I do not have many friends.

• I did not do well in school.



Choose your new response.

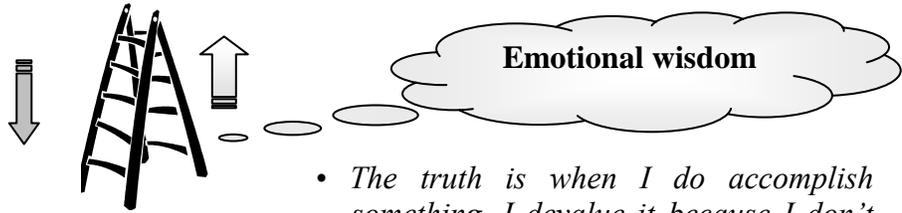
• *My relationship ended. That does not make me a failure. Good people get divorced. I do not withhold love from others for getting divorced. Therefore, I will not judge myself so harshly.*

• *My life is more meaningful than a popularity contest. My value does not go up or down based on the number of friends I have.*

• *Grades do not determine the value of a human being.*

Negative belief

Choose your response



- I have not accomplished much with my life.

- *The truth is when I do accomplish something, I devalue it because I don't give myself enough credit. Today I choose differently.*

- I am obese. American society doesn't value fat people.

- *I don't value myself at this size. I am slowly killing myself. I need to do whatever it takes to live a healthier lifestyle. Devaluing myself was one of my excuses for continuing to overeat. Today I choose a healthier response.*

- I can't trust anyone.

- *When I trust myself, I will learn healthy trust. I'll earn my trust by listening to and living by my own best advice.*

- They never loved me.

- *Feeling loved is a choice I make. It's not about them. Today I choose to generate love within me and all around me.*

- I'm not as good as...
pretty as...
successful as...
athletic as...
popular as...

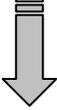
- *What is my intention? Today I choose not to compare myself to others. My worth as a human cannot be increased or diminished by another's approval.*

- I'm a failure.

- *Failure at what? According to whom? My actions may have failed, but I am more than my actions. I choose to learn from mistakes. I am not a mistake. I am a "work in progress." I accept my life lessons and my human limitations. Rather than focus on past failure, I will focus on how I am able to learn, grow and serve. I will focus on what I have to offer.*



Practice reframing by filling in the blanks. Choose your best healing response. Speak to yourself as if you were counseling a friend who has similar negative beliefs.

Negative belief:     Emotional wisdom

Choose your new response. Choose to heal.



Celebrate your vision of who you are and who you wish to become by making a self-esteem collage. Use photo albums, magazines or newspapers to find words and pictures that describe your interests, talents, dreams and ambitions. Place these words and pictures decoratively on a large sheet of paper or poster board. Notice how you feel as you select images that represent you, your dreams and your future. Once your collage is complete, display it in a location that maximizes daily reflection. Feel free to go digital by creating your collage on the computer. However you decide to complete your collage, let your creativity shine! The example below is from www.rosiemolinary.com/2010/12/22/having-vision/



Tool #7 Redefining the Problem

Still stuck? Need more help with “*Why do I think that I am not enough?*”

“I am never satisfied. I realize that my standards are unrealistic, but deep down I really believe that I could do better. Nothing I do is ever as good as I think it should be. I’m miserable. I truly do not love myself as I am. What now?” Joe, age 54

Good question- let us explore possible solutions.

❖ **Do you forgive others for mistakes that you will not forgive in yourself?** Do you set unrealistically high standards of perfection for yourself and lower, more realistic standards for others? This double standard reflects arrogance, not low self-esteem. “*I should do better. It’s fine for THEM, they are human, but not ME, my standards are above that!*” Heal this arrogance by accepting the fact that you are human. Create standards that are more realistic for yourself by adhering to the same standards you set for others.

❖ **Unrealistic expectations may be a symptom of an anxiety disorder.** Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (O.C.D.) causes intense frustration and anxiety when appearance, grooming or clothing is not perfect. O.C.D. may also manifest as repeated, unwanted disturbing thoughts. Excessive focus on rituals, cleanliness, germs, counting and ordering are common OCD symptoms. For more information, consider a consultation with a health care professional or visit www.ocfoundation.org.

❖ **Another explanation for chronic dissatisfaction might be a mild form of depression called Dysthymia.** Low self-esteem is one of the symptoms of Dysthymia. Anhedonia-the inability to experience pleasure or joy-is also a symptom of Dysthymia. Just as with suspected O.C.D., discuss diagnosis and treatment of mood disorders with a health-care professional.

❖ **Dissatisfaction with yourself could also be a habit or learned behavior.** Are you more comfortable with a complaint than with a compliment? Persistent thoughts of dissatisfaction may be a habit of judging, complaining and criticizing. The good news is that learned behavior may be changed. Individual therapy with a cognitive behavioral therapist can help resolve this problem.

Apply your cognitive reframing tools to heal the habit of self-criticism and self loathing

1. **Listen.** For the next 30 days be mindful of every negative comment you make about yourself.
2. **Notice** how each comment affects you physically.

Example #1: “*I heard myself say I will never get all this work done and then I noticed I had a headache and muscle tension in my neck.*”

Example # 2: “*I told myself I was fat and then I noticed how depressed I felt. I fought a very strong urge to visit the refrigerator.*”

- 3. Keep a record** of how your thoughts trigger your emotions. Notice the relationship between your thoughts, emotions and behaviors.
- 4. Choose your response.** Counter each negative or dissatisfied comment with a positive or solution-focused response. Replace fear with coping skills.

Example: *“Once I noticed I was thinking that I “would never get all of this work done”, I corrected my thought. I reassured myself; whatever I do not finish today will be here tomorrow. I am a good worker.”*

Do not let negative thoughts slip by uncorrected. Notice your body’s response to your new thoughts.

- 5. Record your progress as you choose better responses.** Take pride in choosing self-respect and coping skills over fear and self-loathing.

“A man cannot be comfortable without his own approval.”

Mark Twain

Stage 3. Let Go

Letting go is the result of positive intention.

Letting go of the thoughts and actions that devalue you, is a choice.

Is holding onto your belief that *“you are not enough”* serving a purpose?

What is your intention? What purpose is served by your dissatisfaction with yourself?

Everything you do is for a reason. Consider journaling or meditating until your inner voice reveals the truth to you. Read Week #11 for more tools devoted to Stage 3 *Letting go*.

**“Our greatest fear is not that we are inadequate,
but that we are powerful beyond measure.
It is our light, not our darkness, that frightens us.**

**We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous,
handsome, talented and fabulous?**

Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world.”

Marianne Williamson,
A Return To Love

Week #9 Homework

“Why DO I think I am not enough?”

- 1. Do one thing each day that inspires you.**
- 2. Begin each morning with the belief that you are loved and valuable. Demonstrate this belief in every choice you make. Check off each item once accomplished:**
 - Fuel your own body with the food worthy of serving a beloved. (Just fuel, never stuff).
 - Care for your own health as you would care for your beloved’s health.
 - Schedule your day with the same care you would plan events for a beloved.
 - Choose your inner dialogue to reflect the advice and support given to others.
 - Honor your own thoughts, interests and dreams as you would honor those of your beloved.
 - Solve your own problems with the same attention to detail that you use to solve your beloved’s problems.
- 3. If you have not completely decluttered and organized your living space as of yet, make a plan to finish now.** (Eagles deserve a comfortable nest).
- 4. If you have not searched local newspapers, public libraries or the internet to find the resources available in your community, do so this week.**
- 5. Find people who role model healthy esteem and notice their attitude and actions.**

Recommended Resources:

If you have not watched The Brene Brown 20 minute video yet, watch it right now!

TED Talks: Brene Brown PhD studies vulnerability, courage, authenticity, and shame.

http://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_on_vulnerability.html

Positivity, by Barbara L. Fredrickson Ph.D.

Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, by Stephen Covey.

Attaining Inner Peace: Practical Applications of a Course in Miracles, by Gerald Jampolsky.

- 6. If after reading this chapter, you still *think that you are not enough*, you have just become the most difficult person in your life. I wrote the next chapter just for you.**

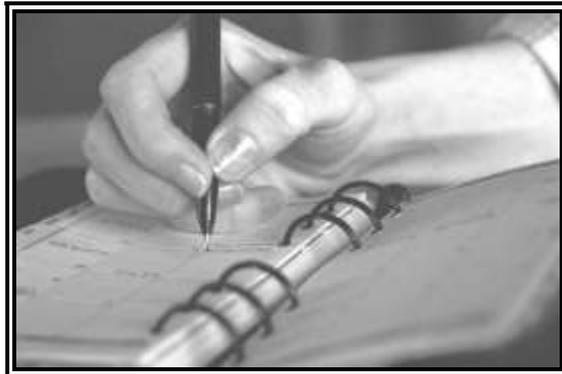
Week #10

Dealing with Difficult People

(Combining Anger Management with Healing Stressful Relationships)

**“I will stop complaining when I'm dead, she said,
so I got out my day planner
& told her I'd love to pencil that in.”**

Brian Andreas
www. StoryPeople.com



Dealing with Difficult People

*Take notice of how **you** view the world.*

The House of 1000 Mirrors

Japanese Folktale

Long ago in a small, far away village, there was a place known as the House of 1000 Mirrors. A small, happy little dog learned of this place and decided to visit. When he arrived, he bounced happily up the stairs to the doorway of the house. He looked through the doorway with his ears lifted high and his tail wagging as fast as it could. To his great surprise, he found himself staring at 1000 other happy little dogs with their tails wagging just as fast as his. He smiled a great smile and was answered with 1000 great smiles just as warm and friendly. As he left the house, he thought to himself, “This is a wonderful place. I will come back and visit often.”

In this same village, another little dog, who was not quite as happy as the first one, decided to visit the house. He slowly climbed the stairs and hung his head low as he looked into the door. When he saw the 1000 unfriendly looking dogs staring back at him, he growled at them and was horrified to see 1000 little dogs growling back at him. As he left, he thought to himself, “That is a horrible place and I will never go back there again.”

All the faces in the world are mirrors.

What kind of reflections do you see in the faces of the people you meet?



Dealing with Difficult People Overview

I placed the “Dealing with Difficult People” strategies near the end of this workbook because it requires the application of ALL of your previously learned tools. Before you read on, ask yourself “*When dealing with difficult people, what are my intentions?*” Most readers will admit that their primary intention is to:

“**Make them listen!**”
“**Make them understand!**”
“**Get them to change!**”

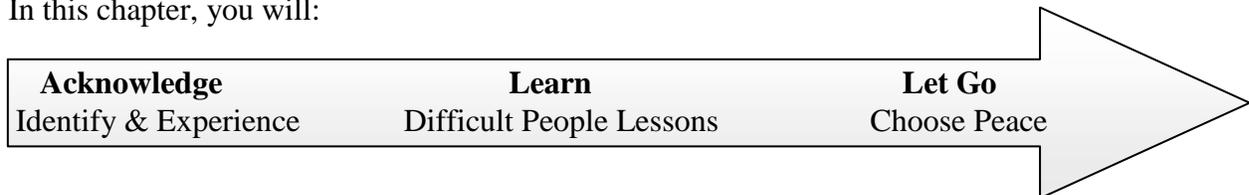
Difficult people are defined as those people who do not think, feel or act the way *you* think they should.

By this definition, *you* lose YOUR ability to maintain YOUR inner peace in their presence.

If your intention is to *change* a difficult person, you will be greatly disappointed in this chapter.

This chapter is based on the idea that you cannot change other people, but you can choose a healthier response to difficult people.

In this chapter, you will:



Stage 1: Acknowledge: Identify the types of people you find difficult. **Experience** your passive or aggressive response using:

- ☞ Difficult People Inventory.
- ☞ Emotional Response Inventory
- ☞ Behavioral Response Inventory
- ☞ Test: Are You a Difficult Person?
- ☞ Bully Inventory

Stage 2: Learn tools to embrace the lessons difficult people bring into your life:

- ☞ 3 Difficult People Lessons
- ☞ Difficult People as Teachers
- ☞ 10 Common Dealing with Difficult People Insights
- ☞ Difficult People Projection Tool
- ☞ 18 Assertive Communication Guidelines
- ☞ Fair Fighting Rules
- ☞ Communication Tools to Assert Yourself
- ☞ Reframing Communication From Aggressive to Assertive
- ☞ Assertive Response to Substance Abuse and Addiction

Stage 3: Let Go. Once your underlying issues with difficult people are resolved, you are free.

Difficult People Inventory: Who are your difficult people?

Place a next to each personality type you find difficult. Although each type below may be considered annoying, check only those types who trigger significant emotional distress within you. Which difficult people really push *your* buttons?

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive, angry people | <input type="checkbox"/> Back stabbers, gossips | <input type="checkbox"/> Interrupters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Violent people, bullies | <input type="checkbox"/> Liars/cheats | <input type="checkbox"/> Worry warts |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Manipulative, controllers | <input type="checkbox"/> Drug addicts | <input type="checkbox"/> Drama queens |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Argumentative people | <input type="checkbox"/> Alcoholics | <input type="checkbox"/> Bad drivers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Bossy, control freaks | <input type="checkbox"/> Rude, ill-mannered people | <input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice or racist people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Know-it-all's | <input type="checkbox"/> Attention seekers | <input type="checkbox"/> Brown-nosers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Those who never apologize | <input type="checkbox"/> Passive, wishy-washy types | <input type="checkbox"/> Free loaders |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clean freaks | <input type="checkbox"/> Perfectionists | <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive, jealous people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Slobs, messy people | <input type="checkbox"/> Guilt inducers, martyrs | <input type="checkbox"/> Negative people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lazy procrastinators | <input type="checkbox"/> Judgmental people | <input type="checkbox"/> Complainers |

Scoring: Notice which types trigger your judgmental, righteous or aggressive reaction. Also notice which types of difficult people trigger your feeling intimidated, inferior or judged.

Who Else?

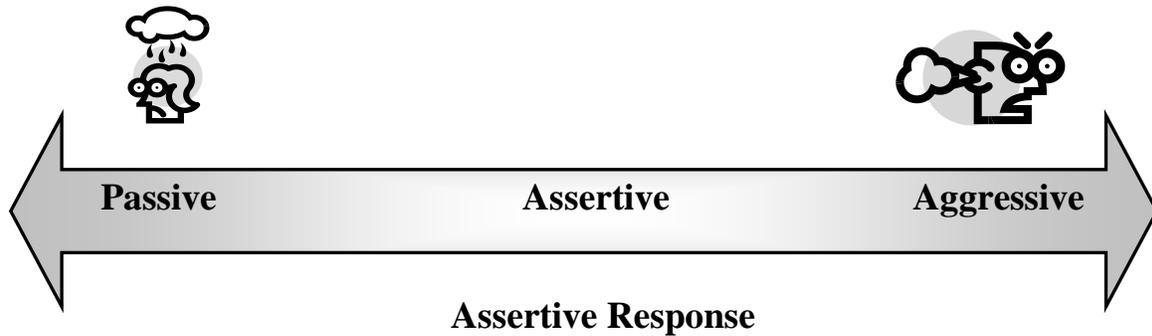
Who else really bothers you? Place a next to each additional type you find difficult.

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Men | <input type="checkbox"/> Democrats | <input type="checkbox"/> Factory Workers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Women | <input type="checkbox"/> Poor people | <input type="checkbox"/> Liberals |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teenagers | <input type="checkbox"/> Politicians | <input type="checkbox"/> Unwed mothers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rich people | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreigners | <input type="checkbox"/> Deadbeat dads |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Atheists | <input type="checkbox"/> Vegetarians | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservatives |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lawyers | <input type="checkbox"/> Divorcees | <input type="checkbox"/> Nuns |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Farmers | <input type="checkbox"/> Minorities | <input type="checkbox"/> Smokers |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Doctors | <input type="checkbox"/> Caucasians | <input type="checkbox"/> Jews |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Priests | <input type="checkbox"/> Homosexuals | <input type="checkbox"/> Overweight people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Republicans | <input type="checkbox"/> Southerners | <input type="checkbox"/> Christians |

Scoring: Checkmarks in the “Who else?” columns reflect a prejudice. Prejudice refers to condemning an entire group because they share gender, race, religion, occupation or other demographics. Congratulations if you did not engage in prejudicial thinking!

Response Inventory: How do you respond to difficult people?

Your journey toward improved insight requires more practice acknowledging your emotional responses to difficult people. The three main categories of emotional responses are passive, assertive and aggressive. How do you respond?



The more comfortable and confident you are within yourself, the more compassion you will feel toward difficult people. Assertive people are comfortable dealing with people for a variety of reasons.

- ❖ **Assertive people teach others how to treat them.**
- ❖ **Assertive people do not betray themselves to win approval or to avoid conflict.**
- ❖ **Assertive people feel confident resolving conflict and setting limits.**
- ❖ **Assertive people problem-solve rather than blame, control or manipulate.**
- ❖ **Assertive people take responsibility for their emotions and their actions.**



Passive and aggressive responses to difficult people



Why do some people trigger uncomfortable, judgmental, aggressive or passive emotions? Rather than expressing curiosity as to why *you* respond the way that you do, you may believe you have no choice.

You may be convinced the difficult person is the problem.

“You don’t understand. My response isn’t the problem. That person’s behavior is unacceptable!”

“Everybody hates this person! Believe me-this person is a @#!!!”*

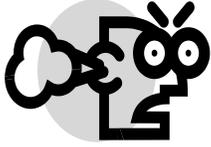
“It isn’t fair! I shouldn’t have to change when they are the ones being difficult!”

- ❖ When you continue to blame difficult people for *your* response, you fail to gain insight.
- ❖ Blaming others for your reaction reflects your passive (victim/codependent) or your aggressive (bully) response.
- ❖ You become an emotional hostage when you wait for a difficult person to change.
- ❖ You may not control the thoughts or actions of a difficult person, but you always choose your *response* to them. Choose dignity. Problem solve.

Emotional Response Inventory

Consider how you respond to the various difficult people in your life.

Check all that apply in each column.

		
Passive emotions	Assertive emotions	Aggressive emotions
<input type="checkbox"/> Fear	<input type="checkbox"/> Calm	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry
<input type="checkbox"/> Shame	<input type="checkbox"/> Acceptance	<input type="checkbox"/> Judgmental
<input type="checkbox"/> Submission	<input type="checkbox"/> Democratic	<input type="checkbox"/> Domineering
<input type="checkbox"/> Inferior	<input type="checkbox"/> Equal	<input type="checkbox"/> Superior
<input type="checkbox"/> People pleaser	<input type="checkbox"/> Authentic	<input type="checkbox"/> Manipulative
<input type="checkbox"/> Insecure	<input type="checkbox"/> Nonjudgmental	<input type="checkbox"/> Condemning
<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidated	<input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant	<input type="checkbox"/> Intolerant
<input type="checkbox"/> Victim/martyr	<input type="checkbox"/> Confident	<input type="checkbox"/> Intimidating
<input type="checkbox"/> Overly self-critical	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Prejudice
<input type="checkbox"/> Defensive	<input type="checkbox"/> Realistic	<input type="checkbox"/> Unrealistic
<input type="checkbox"/> Avoidance/denial	<input type="checkbox"/> Peaceful	<input type="checkbox"/> Offensive
<input type="checkbox"/> No boundaries	<input type="checkbox"/> Inspired	<input type="checkbox"/> Complain, blame
<input type="checkbox"/> Disrespect self	<input type="checkbox"/> Sincere	<input type="checkbox"/> Sadistic
<input type="checkbox"/> Guilt	<input type="checkbox"/> Self respect	<input type="checkbox"/> Disrespectful
<input type="checkbox"/> Dependent	<input type="checkbox"/> Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling

Behavioral Response Inventory

You may behave differently depending on the situation. What behavior do you choose?

Check all that apply.

Does stress from dealing with difficult people give you an excuse to:

- Deny? Avoid? Escape?
- Over-eat, binge, purge or starve yourself?
- Spend excessive hours on the computer or watching television?
- Enable, micromanage, fix, rescue or control others? (*Perhaps you call it "help"*)
- Compulsively clean, order or organize?
- Drop your interests or give up your dreams?
- Isolate from trusted family or friends?
- Drink, smoke or use illegal drugs?
- Spend money foolishly, shop excessively, rack up credit card bills or take financial risks?
- Seek extra-marital affairs or engage in other sexual activity that violates your values?
- Tantrum, rage or justify abusive language and aggressive behavior?

Are you a difficult person?

Unless you are a fantastic actor, your difficult people sense your judgment and discomfort. As your difficult people read this chapter, they think about their relationship with you.



Check the items below that accurately reflect your thought process.

1. I think other people should live by MY *values, standards and beliefs*. Mine are correct.
2. I feel angry when people make their own personal decisions without consulting me first.
3. If other people were not so stupid, I would not have to be so rude.
4. I compete with everyone. I need to be the best and have the most. I must win.
5. I demand that people listen to me.
6. I either say nothing or I blow-up.
7. I expect other people to fix my problems. They owe me.
8. Other people keep messing up my life.

9. To avoid conflict, I withhold information and sometimes say things that are not true.
10. I compete over who is right. I remind people of their past mistakes.
11. I place myself in the middle of other people's personal business.
12. I discuss other people's private business without their permission. (*A.K.A. gossip*)
13. I delegate tasks. Then I micromanage how those tasks are completed.
14. I do more complaining than I do problem-solving.
15. No one ever lives up to my standards. Perfection is the only option.
16. I am always late.
17. I never ask for what I really want. I assume nobody cares anyway.
18. I accuse people of being *selfish* when I do not get *my way*.
19. I manipulate or control people with my anger.
20. I take the easy way out. Giving in is easier than addressing conflict.
21. I pout, cry or yell when I do not get my way.
22. I seek attention by having the biggest problems.
23. I do not let anyone help me, then I complain about how I had to do it all myself.
24. I tell people what they want to hear-whether it is true or not.
25. Why stand up for myself? They might not like it.
26. If I procrastinate long enough someone else will do it for me.
27. I have to be right. I don't really ever think that I am wrong.
28. I feel better about myself when I am noticing other people's flaws and imperfections.
29. I "*should*" on people.
30. I must have the last word.

Scoring. The more boxes you checked, the more difficult you may be. Try to see yourself through the eyes of the observer.



- ❖ How do you imagine other people feel in your presence?
- ❖ What type of neighbor, co-worker, friend, partner or family member are you?
- ❖ What is your intention as you interact with others?



Bully Inventory

Some difficult people abuse power or authority. They plan personal attacks intended to cause physical or psychological harm. Glenn Stutzky, a Michigan State University instructor in the School of Social Work, created the criteria below to help determine when conflict is normal and when conflict represents “bullying”.



Normal Conflict

- ❖ **Equal power: friends, peers.**
- ❖ **Conflict happens occasionally.**
- ❖ **Accidental harm.**
- ❖ **Not serious or dangerous.
No fear of real danger.**
- ❖ **Equal emotional reaction
between parties.**
- ❖ **Not seeking power.**
- ❖ **No hidden agenda.
Able to share insight in the
relationship.**
- ❖ **Remorseful over conflict.
Owns responsibility for own role.**
- ❖ **Efforts made to negotiate,
compromise, problem-solve or
resolve conflict.**
- ❖ **Relationship may improve from
the experience of working
through the conflict or difficulty.**

Bullying

- **Imbalance of power (Power based on
role, position, religion, age, social status,
financial resources or physical strength.)**
- **Repeated negative interactions.**
- **Purposeful, intended harm.**
- **Serious threat of physical, financial,
occupational or psychological harm.**
- **Strong emotional reaction of victim.**
- **Seeking power, control.**
- **No remorse. No insight. Blames the
victim for the problem.**
- **No effort to solve problem,
uncooperative, increased hostility.**
- **Pattern of problem relationships
repeated.**

Difficult People are Your Teachers

Look for patterns and themes in your relationships with others. These patterns are not accidental or coincidental. People who trigger your **PASSIVE RESPONSE** offer you an **opportunity to regain balance** by learning to become more assertive. Lessons include:

- ☞ Learn to advocate for your needs and rights.
- ☞ Learn to face conflict without fear of “what they might think”.
- ☞ Learn to communicate more directly, tactfully and assertively.
- ☞ Learn to set personal boundaries, even when *they* do not approve.
- ☞ Learn to say “no” without feeling guilty.
- ☞ Learn when to walk away.



People who trigger your **AGGRESSIVE RESPONSE** offer you an **opportunity to regain balance** by learning to manage your aggression. They provide practice for softening aggression into assertiveness and blame into insight. Lessons include:

- ☞ Learn to control your impulses and behavior (self-discipline).
- ☞ Learn to heal your more painful emotions hiding beneath your anger and blame.
- ☞ Learn to recognize your unrealistic expectations and poor coping skills.
- ☞ Learn to become more tactful in your communication style.
- ☞ Learn to choose your battles. Learn when to walk away.



People who trigger your codependent responses:

"A codependent person is one who has let another person's behavior affect him or her, and who is obsessed with controlling that person's behavior"

Melody Beattie 1987

- ☞ Learn that you are powerless over another adult's thoughts, behavior or addiction.
- ☞ Learn to release the need to “people please,” fix, control or rescue adults.
- ☞ Learn to identify and heal your own shortcomings rather than focus on others' faults.
- ☞ Learn to set limits and boundaries. Become consistent. Role model the changes you seek.
- ☞ Learn healthy detachment from feeling guilty or responsible for other adults' emotions and actions.

Lessons with difficult people repeat until the lesson is learned.

If you do not learn your lesson from one difficult person, do not worry. The lesson will reappear in another relationship. You will continue to have opportunities to learn until you have changed your response. The lesson is learned when dealing with a specific personality type is no longer difficult for you. **The difficult person will not change, you will.**

10 Insights for Dealing with Difficult People

Insight and action transform a difficult relationship into a learning opportunity.
Integrate these 10 insights into dealing with your difficult people.

1. **Difficult people trigger issues deep within you.** They do not create your issues. They reveal them to you. Embrace your issues as yours to heal. Acknowledge gratitude for the lesson.
2. **Heal your wounded place.** When *you* heal your emotional wounds, no one can scare you, guilt you or manipulate you. (Refer back to Chapters #5 and #9 to work on healing your “not good enough” thoughts and building your self-confidence.)
3. **No longer blame YOUR thoughts and behaviors on others.** Take responsibility for your actions and for your emotions. Embrace your opportunity to change and grow.
4. **Choose your response.** Respond to difficult people with assertiveness, dignity, self-respect and introspection. (Tools in this chapter and in Chapter #2 help with improving your assertiveness).
5. **No longer reward inappropriate behavior.** Do not make decisions based on denial, guilt, fear, emotional blackmail or the unrealistic wish to change *them*.
6. **Practice addressing conflict.** People have the right to disagree. Practice the “Fight Fair” and “18 Assertive Communication Guidelines” outlined later in this chapter.
7. **Detach from other people’s problems.** While you lie awake all night worrying about *their* problems, *they* may be sleeping soundly!
8. **Understand that people have the right to dislike what you do and what you say.** Rather than become wounded or defensive, place critical responses in your mental “*good to know*” file described in Chapter 2. Consider their opposing views as an opportunity to practice self-validation and tolerance.
“Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.” Bill Gates
9. **Understand that difficult people have rights and make choices.** Everyone has the right to make mistakes and to fail. People may choose to disappoint you, betray you, mislead you or even leave you. They have that right. (Again, use mental “*good to know*” file).
10. **Provide consequences rather than “cover-ups”.** People learn from consequences. Do not thwart this learning process by softening the consequences of their behavior and choices.
 - ❖ Practice releasing the need to feel guilty or responsible for other adults.
 - ❖ Enabling is not “helping.” Allow others to experience the consequences of their choices.
 - ❖ Accept the fact that adults may choose to dislike you, betray you or leave you.
 - ❖ Consider the lessons and opportunities for insight offered in every relationship.
 - ❖ Enjoy the peace that comes with improving self-confidence and assertiveness.

Difficult People Projection Lesson

Like a movie projector displays pictures onto a screen, the psychological term **projection** refers to placing your own attitudes, feelings, thoughts or desires onto someone else. You may use your knowledge of psychological projection to gain insight into your problems with a difficult person. Complete the sentences below.

My difficult person is _____.

List all of your complaints about your difficult person.

S/he _____.

S/he _____.

S/he _____.

S/he _____.

S/he _____.

Your list may look something like this one:

*My difficult person is **my partner, parent, child, sibling, friend, co-worker or boss.***

S/he makes me feel inadequate.

S/he is never satisfied with anything I do.

S/he does not value me.

S/he tries to control me with guilt or manipulation.

S/he gets angry over the littlest things.

S/he never respects my decisions.

S/he cannot accept me for who I am.

S/he does not treat me with love or kindness.

S/he never listens to me.

S/he thinks I am a failure.

Transform your blame into insight.

Cross out the name of your difficult person and replace it with the word “**me.**”

The sentence now reads: “My difficult person is me.”

Using your list of complaints about your difficult person, cross out the word **s/he** and insert the word “**I**”.

Your transformed list may now look something like this one: *My difficult person is **me.***

*I make **myself** feel inadequate.*

***I am** never satisfied with anything I do.
(Also consider...**I am** never satisfied with **my difficult person**).*

*I never value **myself**.*

*(Also consider **I** never value my difficult person).*

*I control **myself** with guilt or manipulation. ..*

*(Also consider **I** control others with guilt or)*

I get angry over the littlest things.

***I** never respect **my** decisions.*

*I cannot accept **myself** for who I am.*

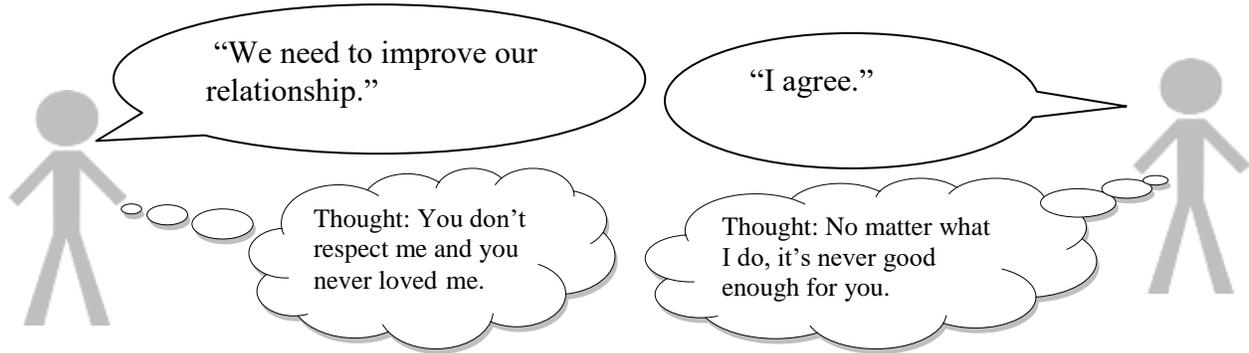
***I** cannot accept **my difficult person** for who s/he is.*

*I do not treat **myself** lovingly or kindly.*

***I** never listen to **myself**. **I** think **I** am a failure.*

Projection provides emotional protection.

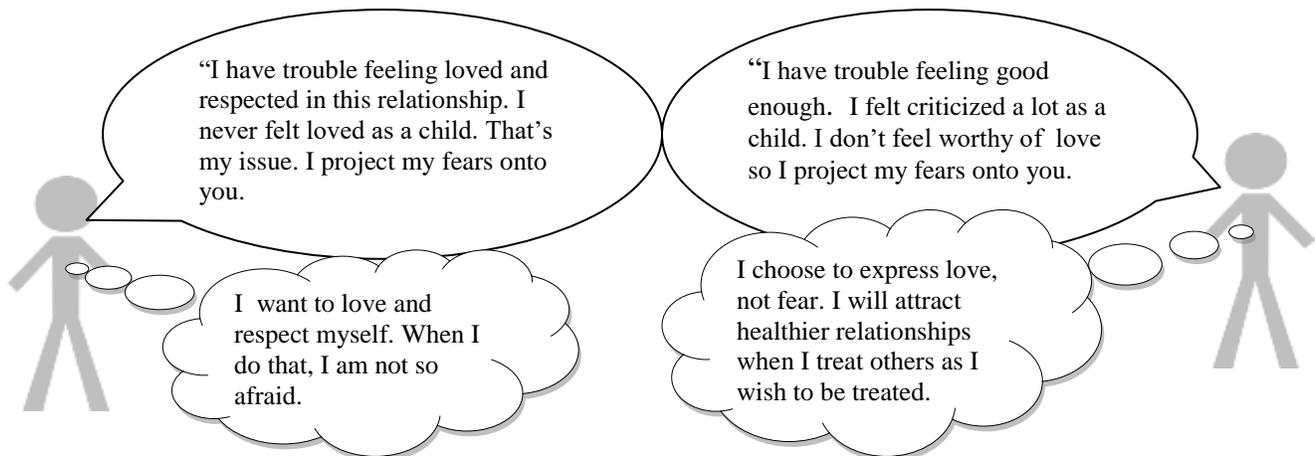
Projection is a psychological defense mechanism whereby one "projects" one's own undesirable thoughts, motivations, desires, and feelings onto someone else. Until you completed the sentences on the previous page, you had no idea that you were projecting YOUR own issues onto your difficult person. When you report what YOU THINK someone else is thinking, you are usually acknowledging your own thought process. The thought bubbles below illustrate projection.



- ☞ **Self-critical people are quick to feel criticized by others.**
- ☞ **The more self-critical you are, the more critical you may be of others.**
- ☞ **Your urge to blame others offers an opportunity for inner self-reflection.**

Additional Insight

Your history plays a key role in projection reflection. The next time you encounter your difficult person ask yourself, ***“How do I really feel? No more focus on the other person, what is going on within me? How can I take responsibility for my emotions rather than project them onto others? When have I felt like this before?”***



Difficult people often trigger familiar pain from your past. Once you take responsibility for YOUR emotions, you are able to begin problem solving with healthier communication.

18 Assertive Communication Guidelines



- ❖ **Assertive communication does not change difficult people.** Assertive communication only changes *your response* to difficult people. Maintain your dignity.
- ❖ **Assertive communication aligns *your* words with *your* values and beliefs.**
- ❖ **Difficult people may not like or accept your values and beliefs.** Conflict may escalate when you assert yourself with difficult people.
- ❖ **Prepare yourself before dealing with difficult people.**

Preparation:

1. **Be clear about your intention.** Focus on what you wish to accomplish.
2. **Vent your thoughts in a letter or journal *before* communicating** with your difficult person. Venting privately allows you to address your emotions without causing embarrassment or damage.
3. **Breathe deeply, relax your muscles.** Remind yourself to breathe during preparation for challenging situations. Breathe deeply as tension rises during conversations.
4. **Practice your anticipated conversation aloud to yourself or rehearse with a trusted friend.** Practicing speaking out loud helps you really hear yourself. Listen closely to your tone.
5. **Prepare for all potential responses.** Consider strategies to address possible outcomes. Prepare for negative as well as positive responses from your difficult person. Also prepare for avoidance, denial or no response at all.
6. **Practice positive thinking.** Speak to yourself like a coach. You can't control your difficult person, but you can control yourself. Believe in your ability to communicate truthfully and appropriately no matter what other people do.
7. **Consider role reversal.** As you prepare yourself, consider a switch in roles. If your difficult person were preparing to have this conversation with you, how would you wish to be spoken to?
8. **Use positive visual imagery.** Meditate and affirm. Imagine yourself interacting well. Be

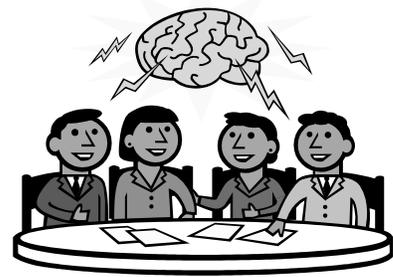
still. Imagine yourself choosing *action* rather than *reaction*. Stay focused on your best self.

9. Seek to understand the life lesson in this experience. Picture yourself receptive to insight and understanding rather than “blame,” “manipulation,” “competition “ or “victory”.

10. Plan your strategies then detach from the outcome. You are responsible for how clearly, assertively and tactfully *you* converse. You are not responsible for, nor can you control, how your difficult person reacts.

11. Provide a “heads-up.” Give your difficult person a basic understanding of your agenda before the meeting so that she/he may also prepare.

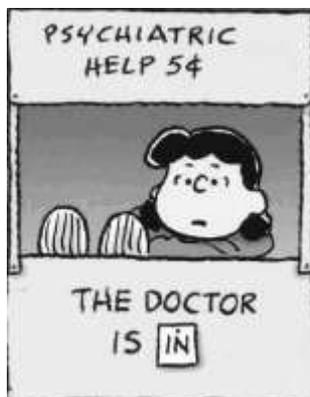
12. Establish rules for communication before the discussion. (Examples of rules are: no drinking, drugs, smoking, name-calling, swearing, verbal abuse, threats or weapons). Focus only on the current agenda.



13. Consider your timing. Schedule your conversation for a time when each person is able to focus on communication. Avoid discussions when either of you are intoxicated, hungry, emotionally drained, angry, distracted, vulnerable, exhausted or extremely moody.

14. Choose a positive and safe environment for communication. Distractions, interruptions, loud noise, televisions, cell phones, smoke and other physical discomforts have a negative impact on conversations.

15. Consider documenting the conversation. Keep a written record of your meeting in situations where details are essential and understanding is crucial. Seek permission for an audio or video recording of the meeting if necessary.



16. Seek counsel when necessary. Ask for advice from those who have been successful in a similar situation. Invite a mediator, witness or advocate during tenuous or difficult situations. A counselor, attorney, pastor or trusted family friend may serve as a mediator. In a work setting, consult with your labor union representative, human resources department or employee assistance program.

17. Safety first. Prepare for immediate help in situations that could potentially escalate toward violence. Refuse to meet alone with potentially abusive or violent people. If you must meet face to face, choose a public location with witnesses, security and an easy escape route.

18. Deal Breaker. Remember that you have the right to end conversations that become ineffective or escalate out of control. When the communication deteriorates, feel free to try again later.

Fair Fighting Rules



- 1. No one ever “WINS” a fight.** Intimacy, respect and dignity may be increased, maintained or damaged. (*Refer to Week #6 Relationship Accounts: “With every comment and action, you either make a deposit or you make a withdrawal in your relationship bank account”*).
- 2. Listen first.** Truly understand the other person’s position before stating yours.
- 3. Remain in the present.** Do not use the past as a weapon or baggage.
- 4. Ask for what you want.** Avoid nagging or complaining. Replace whining and blaming with problem-solving. Example: Rather than saying, *“I can’t deal with you. You’re a lazy slob!”* Try this, *“Let’s discuss how we can cooperate with each other more effectively.”*
- 5. Be specific.** No vague references, generalizations or mind reading allowed. Avoid exaggerations like “all” and “never.” Provide specific examples and quotes to clarify your intention. For example: replace *“You never help me, all you do is watch TV”* with *“I need your help. Would you please turn off the TV and bathe the children?”*
Replace: *“You never want to have sex”* with *“I’d like to talk about our sex life. What can I do to improve our intimacy? What do you need from me?”*
- 6. Avoid making assumptions.** Ask for clarification. Be sure you know exactly what is intended. *“What is your intention?” “Help me understand what you mean by.....”*
- 7. Resolve one issue at a time.** Do not bring up a new topic until you have closure on the first issue. *“I’d like to address that problem next, but first let’s resolve the original issue.”*
- 8. Give feedback.** *“I think your point is...”* Also, ask for feedback. *“What did you hear me say?”*
- 9. Practice negotiating.** Seek win/win solutions. Explore opportunities for cooperation.



10. Do not “should” on anyone. Unsolicited advice is commonly referred to as nagging. Do not tell another adult what he/she *should* know, do or feel.

11. No bullying! Avoid use of guilt, manipulation, control or intimidation.

12. No aggression allowed. **Zip it and walk away before your anger contaminates the conversation. If your words or actions are unkind, STOP.* (For additional help with anger, refer to Week #4). Continue the discussion when you are calm.

**Allow others to zip it and walk away when they become angry. Do not pursue an angry person with the intention of forcing more communication or blocking the exit.*

Change Your Thoughts Heal Your Life-Week 10
Communication Tools to Assert Yourself

“No” is a complete sentence. You never have to explain anything else.”
Self-defense instructor to student.

Assertiveness is not about people pleasing, it is about self-respect.

- ❖ Do not betray yourself to win the approval of others.
- ❖ Build confidence in yourself, trust in your abilities and seek support.
- ❖ Never let your kindness be mistaken for weakness.

Some difficult people may not cooperate with your *Fair Fighting Rules*. As you practice the tools in this chapter, they may back off or they may escalate. Be prepared.

1. Advocate for yourself.

“My personal space is important to me. I need more time to myself.”

“I am taking some time to think this over. I’ll get back with you about my decision.”

“I have a right to this information.”

“I deserve to be treated with respect.”

“I need to know I can trust you.”

2. Set limits.

“You are clearly upset. We will discuss this later when you are calm.”

“My answer is no. That is my final answer.”

“I work 8 hours. I will do my best in the time available.”

“I do not accept phone calls after 10:00 p.m. I will talk to you tomorrow, good night.”

“I’m sorry but I never lend money. I don’t want money to damage our relationship.”

“Let’s find a more private location. This is not the place to have this discussion.”

3. Address conflict.

“Are you angry with me or are you just having a bad day?”

“This topic is best left with an agreement to disagree.”

“I need to give you some feedback that will be uncomfortable, but necessary.”

“You are out of line. You need to stop or I will leave.”

4. Maintain boundaries.

“This issue is really not your concern, but thank-you for caring.”

“I prefer to keep my personal life private.”

“I realize that you would handle this differently, but because this is my problem I must do what I think is best.”

“Thank you for sharing your ideas. I will consider them as I make my final decision.”

“This is not a good time to continue this conversation. I’ll call you later after we have both had a chance to calm down and think more clearly.”

“I appreciate you and thank you for all you have done for me as my parent, but I am an adult now and I need to make my own decisions.”

What if the difficult person is dangerous
or impossible to deal with safely and assertively?

Make a decision to protect your safety:

- ★Unlisted phone number and caller I.D.
- ★ Union representation ★ Formal grievance ★Transfer ★ Resignation
- ★Civil lawsuit ★Legal sanction ★Involuntary commitment ★Eviction
- ★ Divorce ★ Relocation ★ Domestic violence shelter ★Personal protection order
- ★Restraining order ★Police involvement ★Criminal prosecution
- ★The witness protection program

What if your child is a bully? Discipline stems from the word disciple, which means student or learner. When you discipline, you teach. Effective discipline teaches children to problem-solve and become responsible citizens. Children who demonstrate “bully” behavior may have been mistreated by aggressive parents or inappropriately empowered by passive parents. Whether your child is 12 or 32 years old, it is never too late to learn healthy parenting skills. Consider taking a parenting class to learn how to set age appropriate limits and establish consequences for “bully” behavior. Notice which behaviors you are modeling and which behaviors you are rewarding. Seek help for aggressive behavior caused by medical conditions such as brain injury, mental illness or substance abuse.



What if the difficult person threatens to kill him or herself ? Threats of homicide or suicide should not sway you into tolerating inappropriate behavior. Never let anyone blackmail you into something you believe is wrong. A difficult person who is so deeply disturbed that he poses a danger to himself or to others needs professional help. Let the professionals do their jobs. Obtain professional psychiatric care or emergency police intervention. Succumbing to threats never helps anyone nor really solves the problem.

Say What? **Reframing Aggressive Communication**

Reframe aggressive responses by replacing them with more subtle, tactful and assertive responses.

1. **Identify** your aggressive statements and actions- those intended to be harmful, shaming, punishing, manipulative or controlling. “*Who, me?*” Be honest here.
2. **Learn** alternative, more tactful ways to address people. Remember, *your* aggression may trigger passive, anxious, defensive, offensive or aggressive responses in others. Is that your intention?
 - ❖ Always speak to others in the same manner you prefer to be spoken to.
 - ❖ Vent, reframe and resolve angry emotions prior to communicating with others.
 - ❖ Practice different assertiveness styles until you are comfortable with your tact.

Aggressive statement



- ☞ *"What's your problem?"*
- ☞ *"That's not true and you know it!"*
- ☞ *"Why can't you just do what I say?"*
- ☞ *"Shut Up! I can't stand your yelling!"*
- ☞ *"I don't see why you are being so stubborn about this!"*
- ☞ *"You are too rough."*
- ☞ *"Quit complaining."*
- ☞ *"No I can't help you, I'm overloaded. You'll have to wait."*
- ☞ *"Don't interrupt!"*

Assertive statement



- ☞ **"How may I help?"**
- ☞ **"You and I view this differently."**
- ☞ **"I'd like to work this out with you."**
- ☞ **"Please lower your voice. You are hurting my ears."**
- ☞ **"We both have very strong opinions."**
- ☞ **"I prefer your gentler touch."**
- ☞ **"This is really hard for you."**
- ☞ **"I'll be glad to help you as soon as I finish my other work."**
- ☞ **"You'll have your turn in a moment."**

Aggressive

- ☹ *"Those pants make your butt look as big as a barn."*
- ☹ *"I can't believe this! How could you be so stupid?"*
- ☹ *"This is all your fault!"*
- ☹ *"If you didn't make me mad, I wouldn't have blown up."*
- ☹ *"I hate you. You are such a @#!*!"*
- ☹ *"You never help me."*
- ☹ *"You never listen to me."*
- ☹ *"You love them more than you love me."*
- ☹ *"You treat your friends better than you treat me."*
- ☹ *"You're crazy!"*
- ☹ *"Why does everything have to be your way?"*
- ☹ *"You think you know everything."*
- ☹ *"Who do you think you are?"*
- ☹ *"What made you think I care?"*
- ☹ *"You are so mean to me!"*
- ☹ *"I am not defensive!"*

Assertive

- ☺ **"Those pants are not as flattering as others I have seen you wear."**
- ☺ **"Help me understand how that happened."**
- ☺ **"I'm angry. I need to cool off before we discuss this further."**
- ☺ **"I get mad when you do that."**
- ☺ **"I'm done here. I can't talk to you right now, I need to cool off."**
- ☺ **"I need to be able to depend on you."**
- ☺ **"I need to know that you hear me."**
- ☺ **"I feel insecure and jealous about your other relationships."**
- ☺ **"I'd like to be treated as nicely as you treat your friends."**
- ☺ **"I'm having trouble understanding you right now."**
- ☺ **"I'd like to work with you toward a win/win solution."**
- ☺ **"You sound very confident."**
- ☺ **"Your actions are inappropriate."**
- ☺ **"I'm sorry, I just can't deal with this right now."**
- ☺ **"I do not like how you are treating me. We need to do something differently."**
- ☺ **"Help me understand what you are referring to."**

Reframing Aggressive Communication Worksheet

- 1. Identify:** Write *your* aggressive/blaming/manipulate statements in the spaces below. These statements are the comments you make that often lead to arguments or hurt feelings. *Be honest. Would you want someone talking to you that way?*
- 2. Learn:** Using the examples on the previous page, write alternative, more tactful ways to address people. How could you express your true intention more tactfully? Speak as you would wish to be spoken to.



Your most effective communication has a positive intention.

If you have difficulty with this exercise, ask tactful people for help. Seek professional advice if you need additional guidance.

 **Aggressive** 

 **Assertive** 

For additional help read:

TONGUE FU! How to Deflect, Disarm, and Diffuse Verbal Conflict, by Sam Horn
St. Martins Griffin Press, 1997.

Visit Sam Horn's website for video links, newsletters and much more
<http://www.tonguefu.com>

Assertive Responses to Substance Abuse and Addiction



“How do I know if someone has an alcohol or drug problem?”

If someone's use causes *a problem for you*, chances are he or she has a **problem**. (See Chapter #1, page 21.) Search for additional resources available in the Twelve Step Recovery Programs such as Alcoholics Anonymous and Alanon. In the State of Michigan, a blood alcohol content (BAC) above .08 makes driving illegal. Learn more about approximating “how much is too much” with the *Intoximeter's Drink Wheel*. (The *drinkwheel* approximates blood alcohol levels using weight, sex, the type of drink and the number of drinks consumed over a specific time period. (www.intox.com/wheel/drinkwheel.asp).

1. Refuse to participate in denial. (D.E.N.I.A.L. - Don't Even Notice I Am Lying).

- ☞ **Do not hide the problem.** When use causes problems, the “party” is over.
- ☞ **Speak the truth whenever someone is too drunk, stoned or hung over to honor a commitment.** Example: When a substance-abusing student flunks a class, don't pass it off as “typical student behavior”. Do not glamorize a “hangover.” Reality check: hangovers are alcohol poisoning or an accidental overdose. Do not excuse substance abuse because of stress, depression or other medical problems.
- ☞ **Do not nag.** Do be specific about naming the problem. Follow through with consequences rather than speeches.

2. Refuse to enable the substance abuse/addiction.

Enable : “Any action by another person or an institution that intentionally or unintentionally has the effect of facilitating the continuation of an individual's addictive process.”
University of Pennsylvania Health System.

- ☞ **Just as aggressive people need passive people to tolerate their inappropriate behavior, every substance abuser needs an enabler.** Enabling consists of:
 - ✓ Avoiding, denying or excusing substance abuse.
 - ✓ Minimizing the consequences of the substance abuse in an attempt to “help.”
 - ✓ Assuming physical, financial, legal or emotional responsibility for the actions of the substance abuser.

Examples of enabling:

- ✓ “I like him better after he has had a few drinks. He is nicer to us. He plays with the kids. He passes out on the couch without causing any trouble at all.”

- ✓ *“All the kids wanted to party after the prom-so I thought if the keg was in my backyard, I could watch over the drinking better. They were underage, so I bought the keg.”*
- ✓ *“I have to support her. I have no choice. She has no money. She can’t get a job because she can’t pass the drug test.”*
- ✓ *“I know my son has a drug problem. But if I take the car away, he’ll get mad. What if he gets depressed and hurts himself?”*
- ✓ *So my college age child got an MIP, just because I pay for college, doesn’t mean I am enabling! I mean, all the underage college kids binge drink. There is nothing I can do about it. Good thing the dorms are so close to the bars so they aren’t driving.*

☞ **Establish household rules regarding substance abuse. Maintain a “no tolerance” of underage drinking, alcohol abuse or illegal drug use rule.** You have the right to say “My home is a safe haven. I do not allow alcohol abuse or illegal drugs.” This rule may apply to your spouse, your adult child, your unemployed brother, your elderly parent, your son/daughter-in-law—whoever is asking to visit or live with you. Follow through with consistent role- modeling, rules and consequences.

☞ **Let addicts/abusers experience the financial consequences of their lifestyles.** Do not fund substance abuse or addiction in any way. Paying their bills allows them to spend more money on alcohol or drugs.

- ✓ **Do not provide bail money or pay legal fees.**
- ✓ **Do not step in to “help” with your checkbook.**
- ✓ **Do not lend money or co-sign loans.**



☞ **Let substance abusers stay where they pass out.** (But do check for danger first: lit cigarette, blocked airway, accidental overdose, substance-induced coma, or an oncoming train). **Call 911 or transport the addict/abuser to the nearest emergency room when you suspect alcohol poisoning or a drug overdose.**

☞ **Leave the evidence (bottles, pipes, vomit, urine or other mess) exactly where the abuser left it.** If the debris from the abuse is hazardous to children, take the children and leave. When the abuser wakes, s/he will find the mess. You and the children will be safely out of reach.

☞ **Let abusers clean up their own mess.** Do not clean up their urine, vomit or spilled fluids. Do not “help” by cleaning their apartment, house, car or office. Do not wash their laundry, clean their dishes, take out their trash or sort their bills. Let the mess they created illustrate how “messed up” their addiction is. Refusing to clean up the mess is NOT unkind. This is the most positive, loving action you could possibly role model. Find the courage to be strong by NOT cleaning up or covering up.

3. Refuse to enable driving under the influence.



- ☞ **Role-model responsible drinking.** Know your limit regarding legal blood alcohol level by becoming familiar with the *Intoximeter's Drink Wheel* and state laws.
- ☞ **Do not allow a minor with a substance abuse history to obtain a drivers license.** Insist that maintaining an alcohol and drug free lifestyle is a prerequisite to becoming a licensed driver.
- ☞ **Confiscate the license of a minor at the first indication of underage drinking or drug use.** Require abstinence from alcohol and drugs for several months prior to returning driving privileges. Continue to monitor.



- ☞ **Contact the police when the driver insists on driving under the influence, refuses to relinquish keys or becomes unmanageable.**
- ☞ **Refuse to allow children to ride as passengers with drivers who have open intoxicants, illegal substances in their possession or are driving under the influence of mood altering substances.** Instruct minors to call a trusted adult or 911 if anyone attempts to transport them with open intoxicants or while under the influence.
- ☞ **Do not allow teenagers to chauffeur intoxicated adults/parents.** Intoxicated passengers create an unnecessary physical, legal and emotional burden for underage, inexperienced drivers.
- ☞ **Refuse to become a taxi service for intoxicated friends and family.** While designated drivers are wonderful for social drinking, designated drivers inadvertently enable binge drinking, public intoxication, alcoholism and drug addiction.

4. Information is power.

- ☞ **Contact an attorney regarding your risks and your rights.** This is particularly important when you share marital, parental, business, financial, or other legal obligations with a substance abuser.

Ask your attorney or legal advisor the following questions:

- ✓ Could I be prosecuted when minors use drugs/alcohol on my property or in my vehicle?
 - ✓ Would I be held responsible for debts incurred during his/her substance addiction/abuse?
 - ✓ Could his/her use jeopardize my pension, retirement, credit rating or life savings?
 - ✓ Could the state remove minor children because of his/her substance abuse problem?
- ☞ **Consult with an addiction specialist.** Regardless of whether or not your substance abuser seeks treatment, you need to learn the healthiest *response* to his or her addiction.

- ☞ **Check your library for literature dealing with addiction and recovery.** Become an expert on enabling, codependency and stages of addiction and recovery. Understand the “family dynamics” of addiction and recovery including the term ACOA. (Adult Children Of Alcoholics).
- ☞ **Complete an internet search for substance abuse treatment available in your area.** Alanon has chat rooms and meetings online. Check your local newspaper for Alanon 12-Step meetings.

5. Break the Secrecy.

- ☞ **Seek help for minors.** Everyone with helpful information should be included in your support network. Access the school, your physician, community youth programs, athletic coaches, local church, the legal system, area hospitals and addiction counselors.
- ☞ **Inform family and friends of the problem.** Ask your local hospital for help planning an intervention if possible. If not, warn family and friends of the potential dangers ahead. Discuss how the family can work together to stop enabling. Invite them to attend an Alanon meeting. Read this chapter together or offer to teach them this material.

“A family is as sick as it’s secrets.”

Alanon

6. Provide honest feedback and firm guidelines:

- ✓ *“I can’t control your choices, but I choose not to live with addiction in my life.”*
- ✓ *“I miss you. When you are using, I can’t relate to you. I miss our relationship.”*
- ✓ *“I will go with you, but I will not watch you get drunk/stoned. If you choose to use, I will leave.”*
- ✓ *“You can’t babysit my children when you are smoking or drinking.”*
- ✓ *“I will inform protective services if you are intoxicated/stoned around the kids.”*
- ✓ *“I am attending Alanon to learn how to cope with the fact that you have an addiction. I understand I cannot change or control your decision to use. I need to learn how I can remain healthy regardless of your actions.”*
- ✓ *“Smoking marijuana before we had kids did not bother me, but now the kids are old enough to smell it. I have to decide what my values now.”*
- ✓ *“I love your friends and family, but I am bored when I am the only sober person in the room. I have decided to leave early, before everyone gets drunk.”*
- ✓ *“I agree that our sex life could be better. I enjoy you more when you are sober, showered and don’t smell like beer and cigarettes.”*

Question: *“I’m afraid that if I talk to him about his drinking, he will get very mad. He might hurt himself. Talking about it might push him over the edge!”*

C.J., age 48

Answer: Your fear of his anger and your fear of “pushing him over the edge” indicates that you are taking responsibility FOR his feelings and actions. Feeling responsible FOR him causes you to want to control HIS response. Instead, choose YOUR response. Choose not to participate in emotional blackmail (threats of self-harm or violence). If he presents a danger to himself or others, he needs professional help. Call 911 for assistance in a potentially dangerous situation. If you are not sure what to do, professional counseling or Alanon may help you sort out your healthiest response to a loved one’s addiction.

Question: *“I struggle with my anger and blame. How do I let go of anger when it really is their fault.”*

Shantaya, age 19

Answer. Maybe it is their fault. For example, let’s say that you blame your father for drinking away your childhood or you blame your spouse for your child’s accident and both examples are true. Now what? You could not control what they did, but you can choose your response. Emotional health requires that you take responsibility for *working through* your thoughts and feelings. Blaming others creates an illusion of control or superiority. You may be holding on to blame to avoid facing your feelings of loss, vulnerability and helplessness. Difficult people teach you that you still have deeper emotional work ahead.

Question *“I keep getting sucked back into my beloved’s numerous problems, drama and chaotic lifestyle. I’m drained and exhausted. I don’t know how to help and I don’t know how to let go.”*

Hanna, age 35

You have a choice. Let’s look at what “help” really means.

⇒ **You may think you are “helping” your beloved by participating in her chaos, also referred to as enabling or codependence.** Enabling/codependence includes; nagging, fixing, rescuing and controlling. Enabling is often followed by guilt, depression and anger. Enabling results in your suffering along with her. You follow your beloved down into the pit of her chaotic lifestyle.

⇒ Or **admit that you are powerless over your beloved’s problems.** Detach from the need to fix or control her life. Focus instead on taking responsibility for your own personal growth and well-being (your own personal recovery). Your positive role-modeling serves as a ladder. Your beloved may join you in a healthy lifestyle by climbing up out of her chaotic pit whenever she chooses. You understand that your beloved’s progress, recovery, success or future is not in your hands. She makes choices, she has consequences for the choices she makes.



Question *“If I “let go” of what he did to me, he’s off the hook. Why should I give him the satisfaction of my “letting go” of the past as if his evil actions never occurred?”*

Jessie, age 40

Answer: Your anger does not keep him on a hook, it impales you. “Letting go” allows you to release the power that he holds over you. Marianne Williamson has a term she refers to as “Positive Denial”. She says:

“You do not deny what happened, you deny its power over you.”

You had no choice about “what he did.” You do however, choose your response to what he did. You may choose to *work through* then release your pain. You may choose self-acceptance, inner peace and self-love. *Letting go* of the pain is the gift you give *yourself*. If he had violated your best friend, what would you say to help her?

Stage 3: Let Go.

“Remember: It's ok to look back but don't stare.” Alcoholic Anonymous

You will know that you have “let go” of a difficult person:

- ❖ When they no longer trigger your passive or aggressive response.
- ❖ When you choose peace over judgment, fear, control and chaos.
- ❖ When you embrace the lessons difficult people bring.

**“Getting over a painful experience is much like crossing monkey bars.
You have to let go at some point in order to move forward.”**

Author Unknown

**“We must be willing to let go of the life we have planned,
so as to accept the life that is waiting for us.”**

Joseph Campbell

Homework Week #10: Dealing with Difficult People



Recommended reading for dealing with difficult people

Covey, S. (2001), *Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Seven Habits of Highly Effective Families*, (1999) and *The Eighth Habit*, (2004).

Horn, S. (1997). *Tongue Fu! How to Deflect, Disarm and Diffuse Verbal Conflict*.

Beatty, M. (1992-2001). *Language of Letting Go* and *Co-dependent No More*.

Also consider resources for Adult Children Of Alcoholics (ACOA), www.alanon.org
www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.

Recommended reading related to mental illness and irrational behavior:

(If your difficult person is irrational, exhibits violent behavior or severe mental illness, seek professional help. This problem is too big to address alone. You deserve help).

Mason, P. & Kreger, R. (1998). *Stop Walking on Eggshells, Taking Your Life Back When Someone You Care About Has Borderline Personality Disorder*.

Miklowitz, D. (2002). *The Bipolar Survival Guide, What you and your family need to know*.

Neuharth, D. (1999). *If You Had Controlling Parents: How to Make Peace with Your Past and Take Your Place in the World*.

Recommended reading related to parenting:

If your difficult person is your child, consider free parenting classes available through your area schools and community education programs.

Cline, F. & Fay, J. (2006). *Parenting with Love and Logic. Updated and Expanded Edition*.

Dinkmeyer, D. & McKay, G. (2007). *The Parent's Handbook: Systematic Training for Effective Parenting*, (Also see *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting of Teens*).

Karp, H. (2008). *The Happiest Toddler on the Block: How to Eliminate Tantrums and Raise a Patient, Respectful, and Cooperative One- to Four-Year-Old*. Revised Edition Bantam

Kimes, J. & Colleary, R. (2009). *Teenagers Suck*. Adams Media.

Shure, M. (2000). *Raising the Thinking Child* and *Raising the Thinking Preteen*.

Wolf, A. (2002). *Get Out of My Life, but First Could You Drive Me & Cheryl to the Mall: A Parent's Guide to the New Teenager, Revised and Updated*.

Week #11 Letting Go

Everything That
Begins



Also Ends.



Make
peace with that
and all will be well.

The Buddah

A Zen Story

Author unknown

Two monks were returning home in the evening to their temple. It had been raining and the road was very muddy.

They came to an intersection where a beautiful girl was standing, unable to cross the street because of the mud.

Just in the moment, the first monk picked her up in his arms and carried her across. The monks then continued on their way.

Later that night the second monk, unable to restrain himself any longer, said to the first, “How could you do that?! We monks should not even look at females, much less touch them. Especially young and beautiful ones.”

“I left the girl there,” the first monk said, “Are you still carrying her?”



**Not forgiving,
is like
drinking rat poison,
and then
waiting for the rat
to die.**

Anne Lamott
Author of
*Traveling Mercies:
Some Thoughts on Faith*

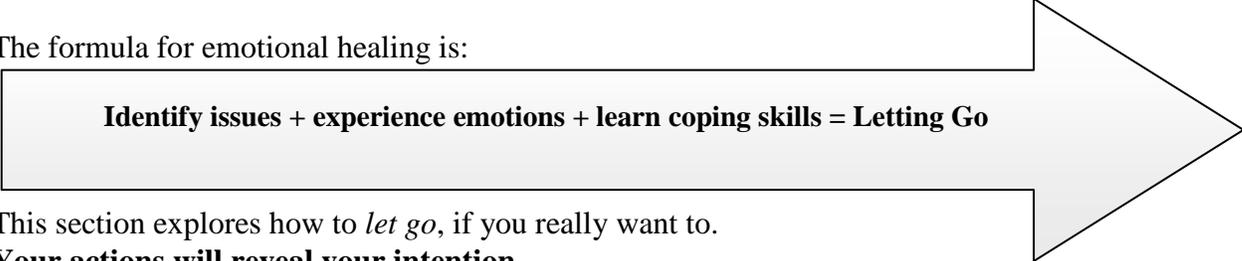
Letting Go: Overview

Previous chapters in this workbook have taught you that the only way to *let go* of something is to
WORK THROUGH IT.

Feelings must be **acknowledged**. Emotional pain must be **experienced** rather than denied, avoided or stuffed. Lessons must be **learned**. Coping skills replace self-defeating behaviors and negative thoughts. **Intention** aligns behavior with values. **Letting Go** is the final stage in the process of this emotional healing.

The formula for emotional healing is:

Identify issues + experience emotions + learn coping skills = Letting Go



This section explores how to *let go*, if you really want to.

Your actions will reveal your intention.

In this section you will:

Stage 1: Acknowledge.

- ★ Apply Dr. Kubler–Ross’s stages of grief and loss to the stages of emotional healing.
- ★ **Identify** the "UNDERLYING" or "CORE" emotions beneath unresolved issues. Give yourself the courage to **experience** your emotional pain. Claim and validate all of your emotions. **Identify** the self-defeating thoughts and behaviors that block your ability to work through issues.

Stage 2: Learn.

- ★ 10 Tools For Putting The Past Behind You.
- ★ Affirmation Tool: “Right Action Thoughts” for Letting Go. *Letting Go Takes Love.*
- ★ Practice the Letting Go Meditation Tools.
- ★ Apply the “Taking Care of Yourself: Tools for Letting Go.”
- ★ Complete “10 Steps to Create a Personal Relapse Prevention Plan.”

Stage 3: Let GO.

- ★ *Letting go* is simply the result of completing stage 1 and 2.
- ★ If you have not *let go*, you have more work to do. You may repeat stages 1 and 2 as often as necessary. Emotional healing occurs on various levels over time.

Letting go—Grieving the loss, accepting the life lesson and moving on



Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross (1926-2004) created a model to describe the emotional stages of grief and loss. Her stages of grief apply to all major life losses. Traumatic events and death create feelings of loss. Unemployment, retirement and empty nests involve losses. Changes in health and the aging process both create a sense of loss and grief. Even choosing to give up bad habits such as smoking, drinking, excessive shopping or over-eating create a sense of loss. Below, I have added my interpretation of Dr. Kubler-Ross's five stages of loss and grief to the process of emotional healing.

Denial This stage seems surreal. The emotional numbness and confusion feels like finding yourself trapped in a bad dream or nightmare, “*What’s real? Is this happening? I can’t believe it.*” You keep waiting to wake up, but waking up in this case means you will discover the bad dream is real.

Anger Once you realize the loss or change is real, anger and indignation creep in. “*How could this happen? Who is to blame? This is not fair. This is not right.*” Anger and blame protect you from the pain of emerging out of your denial. Anger is the defensive outer layer of emotion sheltering your more painful and vulnerable feelings of sorrow, vulnerability shame and fear. In the grieving process, anger is simply sorrow and fear disguised by a loud voice, sharp tongue or clenched fist.

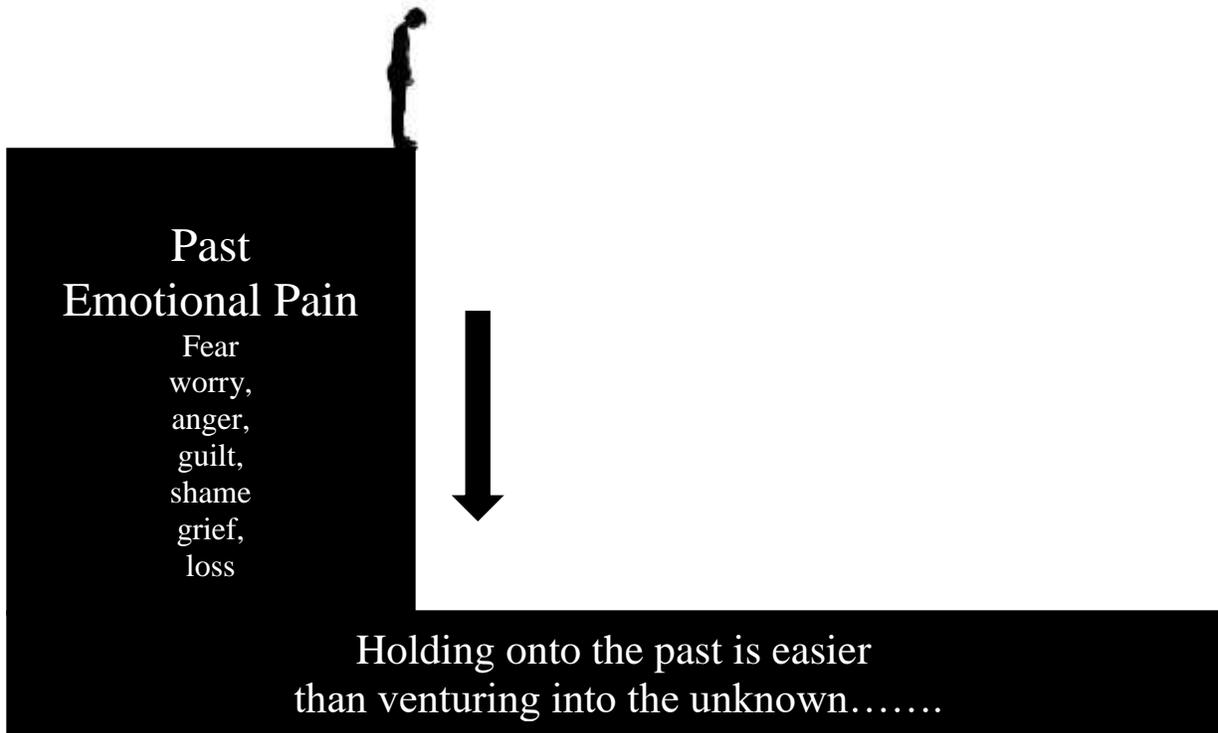
Bargaining is a magical thought process that creates a false sense of power or control. The bargain refers to a deal with a higher power. “If I _____, then everything will be okay again.” Bargaining is a combination of denial, wishful thinking and magical problem-solving.

Depression When bargaining does not bring results, depression sets in. Those deeper, more painful underlying emotions now rise to the surface, no longer bargained away, shielded by denial or disguised by anger and blame. Depression is the most emotionally painful stage—the darkness before the light. People who have not yet “let go” have not fully worked through this stage. Rather than experiencing their pain, they return to blocking it with denial, anger/blame or self-defeating behaviors.

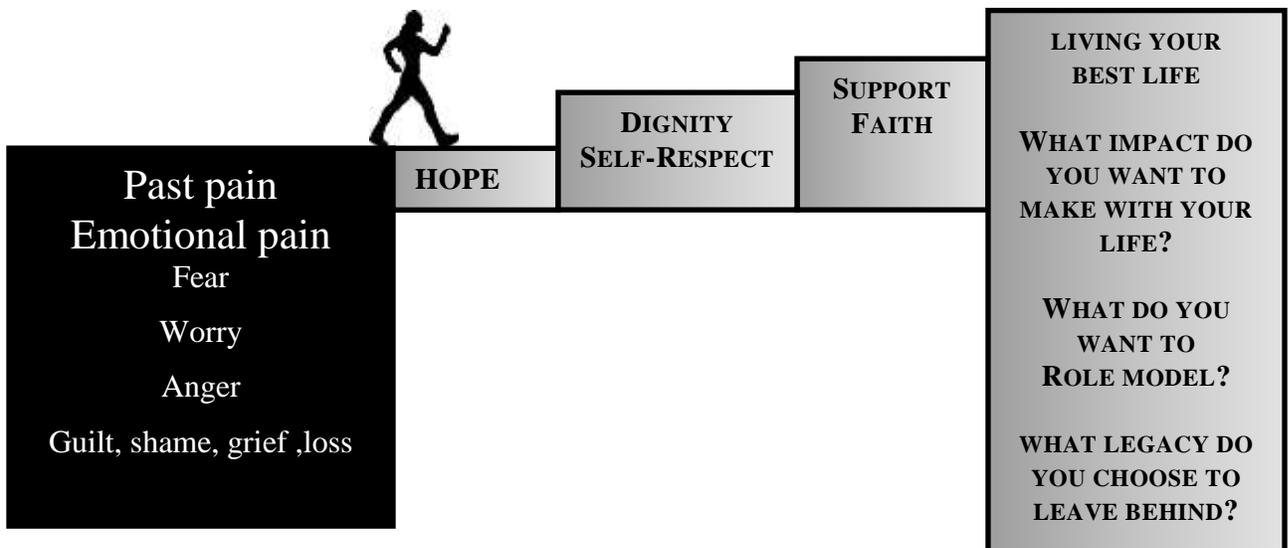
Acceptance With the passage of time, the practice of good coping skills and the completion of difficult emotional work, depression gradually transforms into acceptance. Just as *letting go* is the result of successful emotional healing, acceptance is the result of working through Dr. Kubler-Ross's first four stages of grief.

- ❖ Acceptance is a choice.
- ❖ Acceptance requires defining yourself as a survivor rather than as a victim.
- ❖ Acceptance of what you cannot control allows you to move on, let go and live in today.

Letting Go is a Process and a Choice.
Letting go of the past can feel
like stepping..
off
a cliff.



**To let go of the past, you must first create a future
that you choose to embrace.**



Letting Go: A Process And A Choice

“The world is full of suffering, it is also full of overcoming it.” Helen Keller



Dr. Elizabeth Kubler-Ross never intended her stages of grief and loss to be linear. Emotional healing unfolds in multiple directions with various intensities. Just as you begin to accept the change, loss or trauma, you find yourself detoured down yet another dead end with anger or depression. Emotional healing is a process.

Working through the process is a choice.

“Problems do not go away. They must be worked through or else they remain, forever a barrier to the growth and development of the spirit.”

M. Scott Peck

Are you ready to LET GO? Circle “Yes” or “No” to the questions below.

- Yes No** 1. I have identified the thoughts, behaviors, memories or events that I wish to “let go.” (*Example: anger, worry, fear, low self-esteem, relationship, bad habit, loss, death*).
- Yes No** 2. I have identified and experienced my full range of emotions surrounding the issues I wish to release. (*Example: “I raged, cried, meditated and prayed until a sense of peace washed over me”*).
- Yes No** 3. I spent time journaling and expressing my emotions related to “letting go.” (*Example: “ I practiced each tool and completed every exercise in this workbook”*).
- Yes No** 4. I have envisioned my future. I have created a plan for how I will move forward. (*Example: “I feel ready to release the past. I am not afraid to live my new life. I am able to picture my new future in great detail*).
- Yes No** 5. I have forgiven myself. (*Example: “I forgive myself for feeling broken, helpless, stuck, guilty, self-destructive, angry, and afraid. I realize now that my reaction was human”*).
- Yes No** 6. I have created coping skills to replace my self-defeating thoughts and bad habits.
- Yes No** 7. I have aligned my vision of my future with my intention to let go and release the past.

Scoring: “No” answers indicate a need to continue working. You cannot release what you have not *worked through*. Use the tools on the next few pages to help continue your work.

10 Tools for Putting the Past Behind You Feeling stuck? Unable to let go?

Have you *worked through* the issues that block your ability to *let go*?
NOW is the turning point in your life. Today you have choices.

1. Meditate Through Healthy Grieving. Use your flashlight.

Envision yourself holding a flashlight as you mentally travel into your unresolved, painful, dark emotions. Your flashlight shines insight onto whatever pain you encounter. Your healthy, loving thoughts empower your flashlight to illuminate the darkness. As you practice this meditation, you may notice an urge to go have a snack, drink, smoke, or do a household chore. This urge distracts you from mindfulness and insight. Continue to re-focus your attention within. Shine your light of attention on unresolved emotions. Embrace them. Allow a good healthy cry if needed. Use your flashlight to shine your way back up out of the painful emotional darkness when you are ready.



2. Accept the fact that you cannot *change* the past.

But you may change what you *tell yourself* about the past. Tell yourself that you did the best you could. You may change how you *remember* the past. Remember the life lessons. You may choose your *response* to the past. Choose dignity.

3. Understand that bad things do happen to good people.

Emotional healing is difficult for those who believe God, the Universe or a Higher Power abandoned them. Seek spiritual counsel to address feeling guilty, blamed or punished because something bad happened. Consider reading Harold Kushner's book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*.

4. Seek support from other survivors or role models.

Find a circle of people who have successfully healed and released similar pain. Learn how they worked through their pain. Let yourself feel loved, inspired and supported by people you respect.

5. Love heals.

Loving thoughts and actions heal from the inside out. Generate love through providing service to others. Service work requires feeling passionate about a cause, a charity or community organization. Give your time and energy to something greater than yourself. According to *The Course in Miracles*, "*Whatever you send out, comes back multiplied.*"

6. Visualize the life you desire.

Creating the life you seek today helps release your hold on the past. Imagine yourself free. Believe that you deserve a new life. Begin today. Do not give time or attention to the issues you wish to release. Stephen R. Covey said it this way:

"The one thing more powerful than your past, is your vision of the future." S. Covey

7. Risk making mistakes.

Consider mistakes as opportunities to learn and grow. Give yourself permission to be human. Abraham Lincoln lost several political races prior to becoming president. Release the need to be perfect. Let yourself explore future possibilities without the fear of failure or fear of success.

8. Create closure.

Use a symbolic gesture to finalize your “letting go” process. Ideas you might try include:

- A. Burning Bowl:** Write a list of the past events or feelings you wish to release. Place the written list in a safely contained fire or flame. Watch the flames transform the past into smoke.
- B. Plant** a memorial tree, bush or flower.
- C. Release** a balloon with a message in it.
- D. Donate** or recycle objects that trigger unwanted memories.
- E. Reorganize,** rearrange, de-clutter, cleanse and simplify your living space.
- F. Begin** a new tradition to symbolize your fresh start.
- G. Treat yourself** to a massage, new hairstyle, manicure, makeover, gym membership or vacation to symbolize letting go and moving on.
- H. Plan your future.** Schedule your next few days, months or even years by using a calendar or journal to navigate exactly how you will move forward from here.

9. Start NOW.

No more putting off “letting go” until..... . Take the first step now. Choose one small thing you could do right NOW to move forward. Be a Nike person. Just do it.



10. Remember that your power is in the present.

Today is all you have. You are in this moment. Take a breath. Hold it. Release it. Feel your muscles gently relax with each exhale. Look at the time. Say the time and the date aloud. You are in this moment right NOW. Yesterday has no hold on you. Today brings new choices and new possibilities. With every new breath, you have a new opportunity. Accept that the

only time you own is NOW. Right NOW, what do you choose? Breathe.

“I’m having trouble letting go. I’m afraid that if I let go, it means I don’t care.”

Kathryn, age 48

Affirmation Tool: “Right Action Thoughts” for Letting Go

“Letting go” may require a mind-shift into the thoughts that allow you to detach without feeling heartless, selfish or unloving. Use the following below to affirm the “right action” thoughts of letting go.

To “Let Go” Takes Love

To “let go” does not mean to stop caring. It means I cannot do it for someone else.

To “let go” is not to cut myself off. It is the realization that I cannot control another.

To “let go” is to admit powerlessness, which means the outcome is not in my hands.

To “let go” is not to try to change or blame another. It is to make the most of myself.

To “let go” is not to care for, but to care about.

To “let go” is not to fix, but to be supportive.

To “let go” is not to judge, but to allow another to be a human being.

To “let go” is not to be in the middle arranging all the outcomes, but to allow others to effect their own destinies.

To “let go” is not to be protective. It is to permit another to face reality.

To “let go” is not to deny, but to accept.

To “let go” is not to nag, scold or argue, but instead to discover my own shortcomings and to correct them.

To “let go” is not to adjust everything to my desires, but to take each day as it comes and to cherish myself in it.

To “let go” is not to criticize and regulate anybody, but to try to become what I dream I can be.

To “let go” is not to regret the past, but to grow and live to the future.

To “let go” is to fear less and to love more.

Author Unknown

Continue your journey toward releasing and letting go



*“Backward, turn backward,
oh time, in your flight,
make me a child again just for tonight”*
Jim Brandenburg

**Further reflection heals unresolved issues that interfere with releasing the past.
Use the questions and examples below as a guide.
Then reflect on your own questions and answers.**

1. How are your thoughts and actions today connected to your past?

Jennifer: *“Remember that shy kid in school, the one at the playground with no friends? That was me. I’m 30 years old now but I still have trouble speaking up at work. I haven’t really made friends with my co-workers.”*

Debbie: *“I remember as a child I always had to take care of my younger siblings. When I complained about it, my mother called me a selfish brat. Now I’m a 52 year old nurse and I feel guilty taking care of myself or spending time developing my own interests.”*

2. What current thoughts or actions stem from your attempt to correct the past?

Jennifer: *“It’s easier to be alone because it’s familiar but I am tired of the loneliness. I joined a therapy group because I need to learn to trust and enjoy people.”*

Debbie: *“My becoming a nurse was my attempt to correct the past. I found a profession that pays me to take care of other people. Now I need to learn how to take care of myself.”*

3. How would you be different RIGHT NOW if you were not focused on past pain?

Jennifer: *“I’d be confident at work. I’d invite a co-worker to lunch. I’d volunteer to help at the community center sporting events. I think I might even join a team.”*

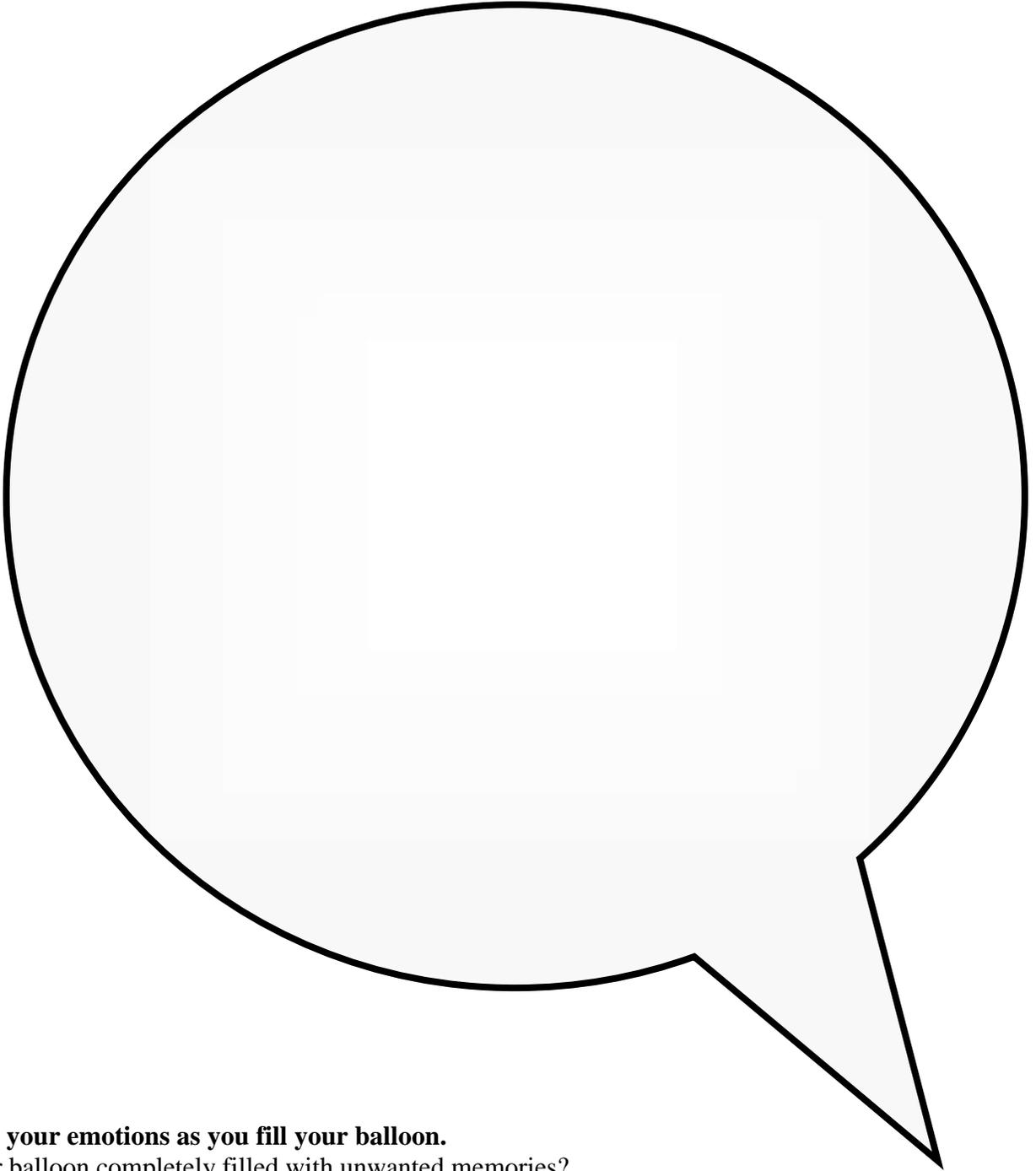
Debbie: *“I would stop feeling so guilty for my success. I’d quit loaning my family money. I think I could even buy myself something nice and not feel selfish.”*

Letting Go Meditation Tool

Part 1. Choose something you would like to release. Place that thought, event, emotion or person in the center of a large imaginary balloon. That balloon will magically transport all that you wish to release, straight up to the outermost reaches of the universe. You may put everything in this balloon that you would like to release. Use the example below as a guide, then create your own balloon on the next page.



Part 2. Your turn. Write everything you wish to release in your balloon.



Notice your emotions as you fill your balloon.

Is your balloon completely filled with unwanted memories?

Unwanted emotions?

What shade would you like your balloon to be? Color it now.

Envision this balloon in your mind as you practice the following meditation.

Letting Go Meditation

Take a deep breath.

Notice the cooling sensation around your nostrils as you inhale.

Hold it.

Slowly release your breath. Notice the warmth around your nostrils as you exhale.

Repeat this breathing exercise until your body feels relaxed and calm.



Now picture your balloon filled with emotions and memories. You have filled your balloon with everything you wish to release. You are at peace with your decision to release the past. You are at peace with your choice to live in today.

Imagine that your balloon has a very long string. Feel that string in your hands. Does it feel rough or smooth in your grip? Are you holding tight? Or is your grip loose? This string is your only connection to those unwanted emotions and memories. This connection is a choice.

When you are ready, slowly release the string.

Feel your grip release and relax.

Watch your balloon drift up and away.

Higher.....Higher.

How did it feel to let go? Now that your balloon has been released, you no longer need to use your energy to hold on to your past. What do you choose to do with your time and energy now?

If you resisted letting go, what are you still holding on to?

What purpose is served by maintaining your connection?

What will help you choose to let go?

Give yourself the permission you need.

You may let go when you are ready.



TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF TOOLS

As a therapist, it's my job to witness the emotional pain, suffering and heartache of my clients. I am frequently asked how I am able to "let go" of the stress I encounter on a daily basis. My answer lies in the advice I received at the end of graduate school. I no longer recall the source, but I want share this advice with you. It has worked for me:

1. Know that you are knowledgeable, competent and trust your skills.
2. Have reasonable expectations for yourself.
3. Understand the dynamics of grief. Accept your own losses-resolve your own grief.
4. Think about what your spiritual purpose is and feed your soul.
5. Understand where you are most vulnerable, identify your own needs and keep checking to see if you are meeting them.



6. Live "life" as you must-not as others would have you. You are not here to meet the expectations of others.
7. Know how to ask for help when you need it-you have that right. Have capable friends.
8. Have a support system that you can trust: friends, professionals, ministers and community resources.
9. Don't make someone else your whole life. Be careful not to lose yourself.
10. Give yourself permission to make mistakes and try again.
11. Understand stress: its causes, prevention and management.
12. Accept the fact that you will die; you must think about it, talk about it, and let it go. Only when you accept death will you truly begin to appreciate life and people in it.



Relapse Prevention

10 Steps to Create a Personal Relapse Prevention Plan

Life is not traveled in perfectly straight lines. Stress happens. Bad habits create detours. Self-defeating thoughts and behaviors cause people to lose alignment with their values and intention. I use “relapse” to refer to falling back into old patterns of self-destructive thoughts or actions.

“Relapse Prevention” refers to getting back on track once the inevitable detour has occurred.

Complete this aftercare plan by filling in the blanks below.

1. Incorporate a healthy lifestyle into your daily routine.

Example: “I will create a routine bed time. I will pack my lunch. I will plan vacation days.”

My healthy lifestyle plan is: _____

2. Practice time management daily.

Example: “I will keep a calendar and use a planner. I will schedule time each day for getting projects completed. I will schedule relaxation time. I will limit how many nights and weekends are busy.”

My time management plan is: _____

3. Prioritize emotional needs in a daily routine.

Example: “I will meditate, journal and practice mindfulness regarding my emotions.”

My plan to address my emotional needs is: _____



4. Schedule social and recreational needs into a monthly routine.

Example: “I will walk with a friend for 20 minutes each day, attend my club meetings and plan recreation once per week. I will spend time on hobbies three times a week.”

My social and recreational plan is: _____

5. Address spiritual needs in a daily or weekly routine.

Example: "I will meditate every morning. I will listen to inspirational materials."

My spiritual plan is: _____

6. Seek role models and mentors.

Example: "I will befriend people I respect. I will read inspirational biographies."

My plan for role models and mentors is: _____

7. Detach from people who sabotage your progress.

Example: "I will end unproductive phone conversations. I'll take my own car when I visit difficult people so I can leave when I need to. I'll respect my own privacy. I won't tell everyone my personal business."

My detachment plan is: _____

8. Make decisions based on VALUES.

Example: "I won't participate in family or office gossip anymore. I will stop yelling at my kids."

My plan for making decisions based on my values is: _____

9. Review your progress regularly.

Examples: "I'll keep track of what I eat, how much I spend and I'll review this book with friends once a month to monitor progress."

My plan to track progress is: _____

10. When you relapse, you can resume *positive intention* anytime that you wish.

Example: "I stopped working on my goals then I resumed where I left off and started charting my progress again. I did not let my relapse become an excuse to give up completely. I treated myself as I treat my friends when they fall. I helped myself back up using the 80/20 rule."

My plan to resume right action following relapse is: _____

Tips to Compliment Your Personal Relapse Prevention Plan

Use these additional ideas to compliment your personal plan:

Listen to your loving inner voice. Let it guide you in all areas of your life.

Identify your personal dreams and goals.

Focus on mindfulness and intention. Set aside a few minutes each morning and evening for self-reflection.

Envision yourself as the person you wish to become.

Simplify your life. Minimize noise, clutter and chaos.

Observe yourself. Become a witness to your own life.

Let your healed inner-loving voice calm your fears and self-defeating thoughts.

Unwind at the end of each day. “Clock out” 30 to 90 minutes prior to sleep. No more chores, no more work. Create balance by maintaining a regular bedtime routine-even on weekends.

Take advantage of the free community resources available in your area. Use the library, internet, newspaper or yellow pages to explore options for relaxation, learning and support.

Imagine your life free from negative thoughts and self-defeating actions.

Organize a small discussion group to practice the material in this workbook.

Never give up on yourself. You are worth your hard work.

Success stems from believing in yourself. *You* are that wise person you have been waiting for your whole life. All of your answers lie inside of you. Take a deep breath. Release. When you are ready, believe.



“Home is knowing.

Knowing your mind, knowing your heart, knowing your courage.

If we know ourselves, we're always home, anywhere.” Glinda the Good Witch

Closure Exercise: Positive Feedback Tool

Bring closure to a shared experience, event or gathering with the Positive Feedback Tool. **Closure in this context refers to a sense of peace about the fact that something has come to an end, been released or *let go*.**

For readers working with a small group of people, this tool is a nice way to bid farewell as you end your journey together. The Positive Feedback Tool also serves as closure to a family reunion, birthday celebration, retirement party or other intimate gatherings.

Group Instructions for Positive Feedback Tool:

1. Give each member a piece of paper or greeting card.
2. Instruct each person to write his or her own name on the front of the paper or card.
3. Each person then passes his or her paper to the person on the left.
4. Instruct each person to write three positive descriptive words about the person whose paper he or she is now holding. Example: Jane Doe: *Wise, compassionate, fun*.

Below is a list of descriptive words to help find just the right description for each group member. Use this list or use ideas of your own.

Describe each group member with your own words or three from the list below.

achiever	determined	intuitive	attractive
balanced	brave	calm	centered
charming	compassionate	confident	fun
energetic	friendly	gentle	leader
goal-directed	honest	inner-directed	creative
insightful	loyal	natural	seeker
intelligent	motivated	nonjudgmental	wise
pathfinder	optimistic	peaceful	sensitive
happy	relaxed	role model	sincere
self-actualized	strong	talented	trustworthy

5. Continue passing the papers to the left. Each member adds three positive feedback words to each member's paper until all members have received the paper with their own name.

6. Group discussion:

- ★ How does your body feel as you read the positive feedback?
- ★ Which feedback feels like a fit? Notice any resistance.
- ★ How did you feel sharing feedback with others?
- ★ What has this experience meant to you?

Additional thoughts for bringing closure:

★ Letting go is easier when closure occurs (a sense of peace when something has ended). Individuals create closure in many ways. Below are a few examples of how others have achieved a peaceful closure to painful issues.

“Once I learned that my daughter’s suicide was the result of a brain disease, I was able to resume my life again. Until I understood that depression was an illness, I was trapped between anger and guilt.”
S. J.

“Spending time helping those less fortunate than myself helped me release my anger at my body for having Multiple Sclerosis. I can now see the blessings in my situation. Service work showed me how many people need my help. The children I tutor love taking rides with me in my wheelchair.”
M.K.

“One day I said to myself, I am done being the fat girl. That was the day I started eating only when my stomach felt hunger. It was amazing how much weight came off as I learned to differentiate between boredom, anxiety, loneliness, anger and hunger. I stopped over-eating. I no longer felt bloated and overstuffed. I work through my emotions now. I never diet. I use food for fuel.”
R.R.

“The fear and anger I felt toward my father since childhood lifted when I witnessed him from a distance. I did not recognize him at first. He was this little shriveled up old man. He was not the monster I remembered. I said to myself, “He can’t hurt you anymore.” And he really couldn’t.”
E.M.

★ What areas of your life still need closure? _____

Note from the author:

Thank you for taking this journey with me. I am honored that you chose to use my workbook to help change your thoughts and heal your life. Over the years, many people have shared their preference of re-reading this workbook several times while working through their emotional healing. Please feel free to take the time you need to absorb and practice this material. You have the right to make changes in your own time, at your own pace. Send me your thoughts or comments about this workbook by sending me an email at TelkaAR@comcast.net or visit my website at www.TelkaArend-Ritter.com I’d love to hear from you.

Telka

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