

UNTANGLE



Breaking Trauma Bonds

It wasn't love. It was survival.

That's the truth most people come to — eventually — when they realize they've been living inside a trauma bond. But when you're in it, it doesn't feel like trauma. It feels like intensity. Chemistry. Passion. It feels like a desperate kind of love — the kind that grips your chest and convinces you that without them, you'll fall apart.

So you stay. Even when it hurts. Even when your soul knows better.

But why?

Why You Stay Even When It Hurts

There's a psychological trap happening beneath the surface — and it has very little to do with logic. You might know the relationship is unhealthy. You might have tried to leave before. You might even feel ashamed for going back.

But this isn't about intelligence. It's about conditioning.

Trauma bonds form when love is paired with harm, and then reinforced through cycles of hope and despair. You're starved emotionally, then fed. Then starved again. Over time, your brain begins to equate that cycle with connection. It becomes the only love it recognizes.

This creates an addiction — not to the person necessarily, but to the pattern.

Understanding the Addiction to Chaos

Trauma bonds mimic the mechanics of addiction. In fact, intermittent reinforcement (where positive feedback is given unpredictably) is the strongest form of behavioral conditioning. You don't know when the next "high" will come — when they'll show up as loving, remorseful, or kind — but you wait for it like a fix.

You tell yourself:

- Maybe this time they mean it.
- Maybe things will be different.
- Maybe if I just try harder, love harder, stay longer...

But the chaos has become familiar. And on a nervous system level, familiarity is interpreted as safety — even when it's harmful.

If you grew up in an environment where love had to be earned, where affection was unpredictable, or where survival meant self-abandonment, your system is already wired to attach to instability. It's not a personal flaw. It's a trauma response.

Letting Go of the Fantasy

One of the hardest parts of breaking a trauma bond is this: You're not just grieving the person. You're grieving the fantasy.

The version of them that existed in the beginning — the one who said all the right things, made you feel chosen, and mirrored back every desire you ever had — that version wasn't real. It was the hook.

Often, those early moments of connection were a kind of emotional performance, used to secure attachment. Once you were invested, the mask began to slip. But by then, your heart had already latched onto the illusion. Letting go of them now feels like letting go of a dream you so deeply wanted to believe in.

It's not that you miss the reality — you miss the potential.

But healing means choosing truth over potential.

Daily Practices to Untangle Yourself Emotionally

Breaking a trauma bond isn't a one-time decision. It's a daily, sometimes moment-to-moment choice to come back to yourself. Here are a few essential practices that support that process:

1. Clarity Journaling

Each time you feel the urge to reach out or go back, pause and write down:

- What triggered this urge?
- What am I hoping they will say or do?
- Have they ever consistently met that need before?
- What truth am I avoiding right now?

2. Nervous System Regulation

Your body interprets separation as danger, even when your mind knows it's necessary. Calm your system with grounding practices like:

- Cold water on the wrists or face
- Holding ice
- Breathing in for 4, holding for 4, exhaling for 8
- Walking barefoot on natural ground
- Tapping (EFT) or placing your hand on your chest and saying, "I am safe now."

3. Connection to Truth

Keep a running list titled: "What I Know for Sure." Add to it every time you feel confusion setting in. Include:

- The things they said that hurt you
- The patterns that never changed
- The ways you felt small, silenced, or unsafe

This becomes your anchor when nostalgia tries to convince you it wasn't that bad.

4. Community & Voice

Trauma bonds thrive in secrecy. Shame keeps them alive. Start talking. Join a support group. Tell someone you trust. The more you speak your truth out loud, the more power it holds.

5. Boundaries, Boundaries, Boundaries

Block them. Mute them. Delete old photos or texts. You're not being petty. You're protecting your peace. Every time you create distance, you're sending a message to your nervous system: I choose me now.

“Remember Why You Left” Pages

When the ache feels unbearable, when loneliness tempts you to reach out, when your brain starts to edit the past — go back to this list.

Write it again. And again. And again if you have to.

- I left because I was always anxious around them.
- I left because their apologies never changed their behavior.
- I left because I was losing myself.
- I left because I couldn't breathe.
- I left because it was breaking me.
- I left because I deserve peace.
- I left because I want to come home to myself.

This is your why. And it matters.

Final Words

Breaking a trauma bond is one of the hardest emotional undertakings there is. It's not quick. It's not clean. And it often requires grieving someone who is still alive — someone who may never admit what they did.

But this journey isn't about them anymore.

It's about you.

Reclaiming your reality.

Rebuilding trust with yourself.

Remembering that love is not supposed to feel like a war zone.

It's not about proving your worth.

It's about returning to it.

And every single time you choose truth over fantasy, stillness over chaos, and peace over intensity — you untangle one more knot.

Inner Child & Codependency Healing

You were never too much. You were just never truly seen.

For many people trapped in toxic cycles, the root of their pain didn't start with a partner — it started in childhood. Beneath people-pleasing tendencies, low self-worth, and emotional overfunctioning lies a little child who learned early on that love had to be earned.

This is where the healing begins. Not just with setting boundaries or cutting people off, but with turning inward to meet the wounded inner child still asking, "Am I lovable as I am?"

Tracing Patterns Back to Childhood

Codependency isn't a flaw. It's an emotional survival skill. It develops when a child grows up in an environment where their emotional needs are unmet, dismissed, or punished — and yet they're still dependent on those very people for safety and connection.

When a caregiver is unpredictable, emotionally unavailable, or controlling, the child learns:

- My feelings are too much
- I must shrink to stay safe
- Love means keeping others happy
- My needs are a burden
- If I'm not useful, I'll be abandoned

These internalized beliefs don't disappear with age. They morph into adult behaviors — like always saying yes when you want to say no, tolerating disrespect to avoid conflict, and tying your identity to how others perceive you.

You don't just "attract" codependent dynamics — you recreate the emotional blueprint you knew.

Healing begins when you stop blaming your adult self and start compassionately understanding the child you were.

Journaling With Your Inner Child

So what is inner child work, really?

It's not just visualization or writing letters to your younger self. It's learning to listen. To the part of you that still reacts emotionally like a 5-year-old when they feel abandoned, unseen, or unloved.

Your inner child is the one who:

- Panics when someone pulls away
- Clings when they feel unloved
- Explodes when they feel dismissed
- Shuts down when their needs are ignored

They don't need to be silenced. They need to be heard.

Try this journal prompt:

“What did I need as a child that I never consistently received?”

You may realize you didn't need perfection — just someone to say:

- “You're allowed to feel that.”
- “You don't have to earn love.”
- “Your presence is not a problem.”

Begin showing up with those messages now. Not once — but again and again.

Rebuilding Self-Worth and Boundaries

The most powerful thing you can do for your inner child is rebuild what your upbringing never taught you: healthy boundaries and self-worth.

Self-worth is not a feeling. It's a decision to treat yourself like you matter — even when others don't.

Start with small shifts:

- Say no without explaining
- Let people feel disappointed and don't rescue them
- Ask yourself, “What do I want?” and give it weight

- Stop managing others' emotions to keep the peace

Boundaries are not walls. They are doors — designed to let in what's safe and keep out what's harmful.

Codependency dissolves when you stop outsourcing your worth to how well you're needed and start honoring your enoughness without performing.

You were never meant to be the emotional caretaker of everyone around you.

You were meant to be free.

Scripts for Reparenting Yourself

Reparenting is the process of giving yourself now what you needed then. It's not about blaming your caregivers forever — it's about releasing the guilt and reclaiming your emotional needs without shame.

Here are a few healing scripts to say aloud when your inner child is activated:

When you feel abandoned:

“I know it hurts when they pull away. But I will not abandon you again. You are safe with me now.”

When you feel unworthy:

“You don't have to earn love. You already deserve to be loved, just as you are.”

When you're afraid to speak up:

“Your truth matters. You don't have to stay silent to stay safe anymore.”

When you overextend yourself:

“It's okay to rest. You don't have to give to be good. You are enough, even when you do nothing.”

Repeat them. Daily. Especially when it feels silly or untrue — that's usually when you need it most.

You're not being dramatic. You're healing years of neglect.

Final Thoughts

You are not broken because you crave closeness. You are not wrong for needing reassurance. But healing asks that you stop looking to others to give you what you now have the power to give yourself.

Your inner child is not your enemy. They are your compass. Every panic, trigger, or tear is not a regression — it's a reminder:

There's still something inside you asking to be loved differently.

Give yourself what you needed.

Give yourself permission to stop performing.

Give yourself the kind of love that doesn't need to be earned.

And with each act of self-trust, you'll find that what you once called "codependency" was really just an innocent child trying to survive.

Now, you get to choose something different.

Post-Breakup Grief + Rebuilding

Letting go isn't just about walking away. It's about grieving the version of you who stayed.

Breakups after toxic or emotionally abusive relationships are not like other endings. You're not just leaving a person — you're disentangling from a fantasy, a trauma bond, and often, a warped version of love that became your normal.

Grieving that kind of relationship is layered. It's confusing. You can feel angry, relieved, sad, guilty, and even still in love — all in the same day.

And that doesn't make you weak. It makes you human.

Validating the Pain of Walking Away

People often say things like:

- “At least you're free now.”
- “You're better off without them.”
- “Just focus on yourself.”

But those words — however well-meaning — erase the grief that comes with walking away.

Because leaving someone who was harmful doesn't cancel out the fact that you loved them. You fought for them. You wanted it to work. And now, even with clarity, your heart might still ache for the version of them who made you feel special... in the beginning.

That part of you deserves compassion — not shame.

Working Through Mixed Feelings: Love, Anger, Guilt

Grief after a toxic relationship is rarely straightforward. You might feel:

- Love for the good memories
- Anger over the lies and betrayal
- Guilt for walking away or not leaving sooner

- Shame for missing someone who hurt you
- Fear of being alone or never finding better

This emotional whiplash is normal. It doesn't mean you're going backward — it means you're unraveling years of confusion, conditioning, and emotional suppression.

Try not to label your feelings as “wrong” or “stupid.” Instead, sit with them:

- “It's okay that I miss them.”
- “It's okay that I'm angry.”
- “It's okay that I feel both love and resentment.”

Healing isn't about bypassing these feelings — it's about creating space for all of them to exist without judgment.

Who Am I Without Them?

One of the scariest questions that surfaces after a breakup is:

“Who am I now?”

When your identity was wrapped around being chosen, needed, or validated by someone else — their absence feels like a void.

You might ask:

- What do I even like to do?
- What makes me feel alive, safe, or seen?
- What are my values outside of that relationship?

This is the rebuilding stage — not of your future yet, but of your self.

It can feel disorienting at first. But underneath the pain is possibility. You're not broken — you're becoming. Let yourself rediscover the pieces of you that were buried under all the shape-shifting, silence, and survival.

Reclaiming Your Identity, Joy, and Space

This is the part no one talks about: healing is boring before it becomes beautiful.

There will be days when you cry in silence and others when you feel nothing at all. You might oscillate between wanting to go back and wanting to forget they ever existed.

You might even struggle with guilt for starting to feel okay.

This too, is normal.

Here's how you start reclaiming your space:

1. Relearn what safe feels like.

Create rituals around slowness. Light a candle. Sit in stillness. Drink tea without your phone. Let your nervous system experience peace without fear.

2. Get curious about yourself.

Ask:

- What makes me feel at home in my body?
 - What did I stop doing when I was with them?
 - What am I no longer willing to tolerate?
-

3. Choose joy without apology.

Joy after abuse can feel like betrayal — to your pain, to the version of you that suffered. But joy is not a rejection of your grief — it's a reclamation of your right to feel alive.

4. Be mindful of your surroundings.

Clean out what reminds you of them. Rearrange your space. Burn a letter. Play new music. Your external world impacts your inner one more than you realize.

5. Affirm your wholeness daily.

Start your mornings with:

“I’m not lost. I’m returning.”

“I am allowed to outgrow who I was in their presence.”

“Peace is not unfamiliar — it’s just unpracticed.”

Final Words

Breakups are endings — but they’re also rebirths.

And the version of you that is emerging now?

They are wiser. Softer. Braver. They are not defined by the hurt — but by the healing.

You are not “starting over.”

You are starting from experience.

And that version of you — the one who chose truth over fantasy, peace over chaos, and self-respect over being chosen — that version is already worth celebrating.

You don’t need anyone to choose you again.

You already did.

Emotional Clarity

You cannot heal what you keep denying.

When you've been emotionally entangled in toxic relationships, clarity doesn't come easily. In fact, confusion often becomes a coping mechanism — because if you let yourself truly see what's going on, you might have to make a hard choice.

Emotional clarity is not about being perfect or unemotional. It's about being radically honest — with yourself, first — about what's working, what's not, and what needs to change, even if it hurts.

Identifying Red Flags You Missed

Hindsight is a powerful — and painful — teacher.

When the fog lifts, you may start to recall things you once brushed off:

- The times they made you question your memory
- The way you always felt like you had to explain yourself
- The apologies that never led to change
- The anxiety in your chest before you saw their name pop up
- The way they called you “too sensitive” whenever you had needs

These are not small things. They are emotional bruises you learned to normalize.

It's not your fault you missed them. You weren't looking for harm — you were looking for love. And sometimes, your need to feel loved blinded you to the fact that you weren't being treated with love at all.

Seeing the red flags now isn't shameful. It's a sign you're waking up.

Differentiating Love vs. Attachment

This is where many people stay stuck: confusing deep emotional attachment with love.

Love is grounding, nurturing, and mutual.

Attachment is often fear-based — a bond created from survival, familiarity, or emotional enmeshment.

Ask yourself:

- Did I feel safe, or just addicted to the highs and lows?
- Did I feel heard, or just afraid to speak?
- Was I growing in this connection, or shrinking to stay close?

Love makes space.

Attachment clings out of fear of abandonment.

If you stayed because you didn't know who you were without them, that's not love — that's identity erosion.

Clarity starts with being willing to ask:

“Was I in love, or was I afraid to be alone?”

Naming Your Core Needs

Many of us enter relationships without clearly knowing what we actually need — we just know when something feels off.

But unspoken needs often turn into resentment.

Unmet needs often turn into shame.

Ignored needs often lead to self-abandonment.

Start by getting specific:

Emotionally, I need:

- To feel safe sharing my truth
- Validation without gaslighting
- Reassurance without begging for it

Physically, I need:

- Consistent presence
- Respect for my boundaries
- Affection that's not transactional

Spiritually or energetically, I need:

- Peace over chaos
- Intentional communication
- Alignment in values

Write these down. Post them somewhere. These are not “high maintenance” requests. They are foundational to your wellbeing.

You don't need to shrink your needs to be lovable. You need to stop negotiating your non-negotiables.

“What I Thought Was Love Was Really...” Prompts

Here's where emotional clarity sharpens: reframing.

When you rewrite the stories you told yourself, you start seeing the truth beneath the illusion. Try finishing these statements:

- What I thought was love was really... someone mirroring me to gain trust.
- What I thought was connection was really... emotional codependency.
- What I thought was passion was really... unresolved trauma triggers.
- What I thought was loyalty was really... fear of abandonment.
- What I thought was love was really... manipulation wrapped in intensity.

These realizations can sting — but they also liberate you. Every layer of truth you uncover brings you closer to a relationship rooted in reality, not fantasy.

You deserve to feel safe, seen, and supported without having to beg for breadcrumbs.

Final Words

Emotional clarity is not just a mental realization — it's a spiritual homecoming.

It's the moment you stop asking, "Why wasn't I enough for them?" and start asking, "Why was that ever enough for me?"

It's choosing to see the red flags you once painted green.

It's admitting you settled for less — not because you're broken, but because your nervous system confused chaos with love.

And now?

You choose truth.

You choose peace, even when it's unfamiliar.

You choose yourself — not just as a concept, but as a commitment.

You are not too sensitive. You are not overreacting. You are not unlovable.

You are healing.

And that means sometimes, the hardest thing to face... is the truth.

But clarity is never the enemy. It's your compass.

It's the beginning of your return to wholeness.

