

# Working With Hurt & Painful Emotions



NEW PATHS COUNSELLING

Painful emotions are a natural part of being human – but when they show up intensely, suddenly, or more often than we'd like, it's easy to feel overwhelmed or stuck. Rather than trying to push feelings away or "get over it," we'll explore how to **notice**, **make space**, and **respond** in ways that support your wellbeing and reflect your values. You don't have to fight your emotions – you can learn to hold them gently and move forward with clarity and steadiness.

## 1. Notice What Shows Up (Awareness of the Present Moment)

What emotions are here right now?		
hurt	sadness	shame
disappointment	anger	resentment
something else _____		

*Instead of pushing feelings away or getting swept up in them, we gently name them.*

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Where do I feel it in my body?		
stomach	head	chest
shoulders	muscles	
other _____		

*As you breathe for a few moments, just notice where you feel this emotion in your body.*

## What thoughts are coming up as I experience this emotion?

“They don’t care”

“I’m not enough”

“I always get treated this way”

Other \_\_\_\_\_ -

## 2. Unhook From the Thought

This isn’t about stopping the thought or changing it. We don’t look at thoughts as being “right or wrong” or “good or bad”. What we try to work on is how thoughts “hook us”. So this step is about loosening the grip that a thought has over us.

Try one of these practices:

### Label The Thought:

- “I’m having the thought that \_\_\_\_\_”
- “My mind is telling me \_\_\_\_\_”

*This small step helps us recognize that we HAVE a thought but a thought isn’t WHO we are.*

### Name The Story

- “Ah, this is my “I don’t matter” story”.
- “This is the “I did something wrong” story.”

### Thank Your Mind

- “Thanks mind - I see you’re trying to protect me.”

### Visualize The Thought

- Imagine placing the thought on a leaf and watching it flow away on a stream
- Imagine the thought as words on a screen
- Imagine the thought as a cloud passing in the sky overhead“

*Which strategy would you like to try?*

### 3. Make Space For the Feeling

We don't want to fight the hurt feeling or shut it down. Instead, we soften around it- feelings communicate meaning to us. We want to acknowledge that meaning by making space for it.

Try one of these:

- Remember when you located where the feeling shows up in your body? When you breathe in, imagine your breath going to that spot where the tension is.
- Place a hand over your your heart or chest as you breathe.
- Say: "This is a moment of hurt. I can allow this feeling to be here."
- Imagine the feeling as a wave the rises and falls.
- Notice its shape, temperature, and movement.

*Take a moment to notice: "What happens when I stop resisting this feeling?"*

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### 4. Connect With What Matters

Hurt and painful emotions often point to something deeply important to us.

Ask: "What value is being touched here?"

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respect

kindness

belonging

connection

integrity

fairness

other \_\_\_\_\_

*Given my values, how do I want to show up in this situation?*

*This shifts the focus from "Why did this happen to me?" to "Who do I want to be in this moment?"*

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## 5. Choose One Small Action That Aligns With Your Values

*Even tiny steps help us move forward instead of staying stuck or “hooked,”*

*Examples:*

- Take a grounding breath before responding
- Set a boundary
- Let the moment pass without engaging
- Speak from curiosity rather than hurt
- Do something nurturing for yourself
- Step away to reset

*My next step is* \_\_\_\_\_ -

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## 6. Offer Yourself Compassion

You are not the hurt. You are the one noticing the hurt.

*Try one of these:*

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- “This is hard, and I’m doing my best.”
- “Anyone with my history and my values would feel this way.”
- “I can be gentle with myself right now.”
- “This feeling will pass - I don’t need to rush it.”

*A compassionate phrase I will try:* \_\_\_\_\_ -

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## A Gentle Reminder

These steps don’t happen all at once, they come with practice and self-compassion. The great thing is that these steps don’t have to be followed in a particular order- you can choose whichever step or strategy feels best for you right now. And this isn’t about making a negative thought feeling or thought go away - it’s about helping them not keep us stuck.

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