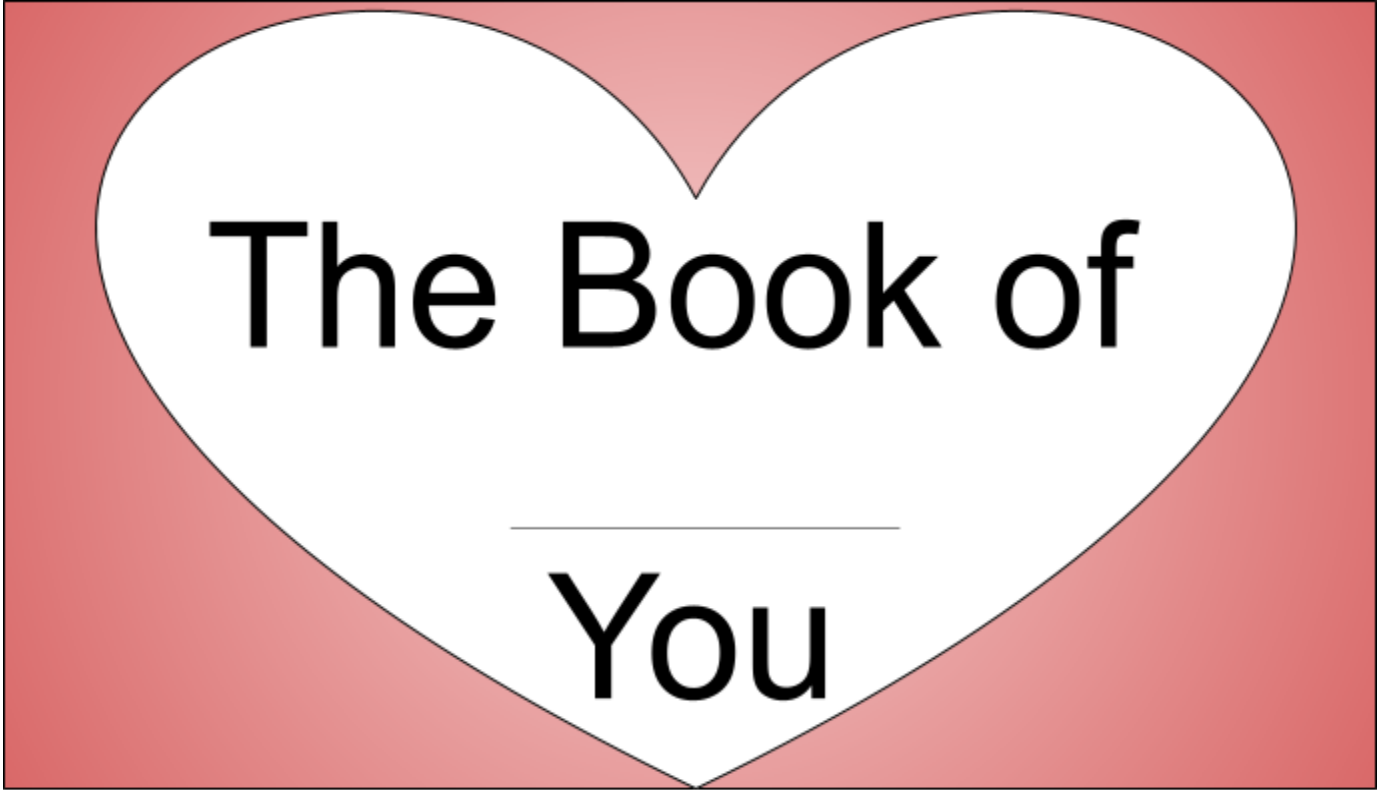




The Book of You

A Social/Emotional Workbook for Adults

When this is over, it will not be just a workbook, it will be a journey. It will be: The Book of You.

If this workbook helped you,

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Version 6(2024). First version. (2021)

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Also, check out my free Emotions for Dummies courses. (Watch [previous classes](#).)

A trauma- informed collection of information and exercises about emotions, questioning beliefs, self-help, mindfulness meditation, and relationship work. Please bring this workbook to every class.

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Author's Notes

If I could give this workbook another title it would be “how to feel” or “how to become a whole human being”. So many of us were never taught how to connect to our inner life. Even after nearly 20 years of education it’s rare to have any acknowledgment about emotional intelligence, despite decades of discussion on the topic. Consequently, many of us are adults today who are living on a fraction of our feelings, but all of our feelings are needed to feel whole, complete, satisfied, and happy.

This collection of self-help activities came about as a result of a 7 year healing journey I have been on. After getting my Ph.D. in 2013 and thinking I was “finally done, so I can relax now,” a flood of difficult feelings and memories began to resurface from my childhood, which up until then I had blocked out because I was so determined to finish my education. Five years into this process, my family of origin had a devastating set of events which unearthed a ton of family secrets, forcing me to confront not only the conscious emotional abuse I endured, but also a host of subconscious fears, hurts, and pains that sent me into what I now know is Complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or CPTSD. This debilitating condition, which for me has been severe agoraphobia and workaholism, has forced me to relearn my basic ability to trust myself and feel safe in the world. This led to a more relentless search for resources, which then became several worksheets, now organized into this workbook. Because of my experience, another title for this workbook would be “how to get your life back.”

I’m definitely still working to get my life back. While Dr. Donny is highly functional, little Donny (my inner child) is still slowly learning to honor his boundaries, acknowledge what happened back then, and cry up all his pain. However, after doing these worksheets regularly for only 2 years, I feel like I am recovering in leaps and bounds compared to the first 5 years of my healing journey. Through this process I have learned several things that I would like to share with you here:

- (1): Thinking and imagination are the same thing. We call it “thinking” when it’s serious, goal oriented, and logical, and “imagination” when it’s light hearted, fun-focused, and emotional. Our conscious thinking is only 20% in control, but our subconscious imagination is 80% in control. Therefore our subconscious, inner child, emotional mind is what’s really in control.
- (2) Give up the need to compare. Comparison is a violent form of judgement. Nature doesn't make anything two things the same. Everyone is in a different place in their personal journey in life. It's not fair to compare your inside life to someone else's outside life, or to see others through a telescope but to view yourself through a microscope. This just makes us hard on ourselves at the very time we need to learn how to be more loving. Some of us have spent our whole lives by comparing and judging everything, and it's no wonder that the end result is that we feel lacking and unhappy. We don't have to be hard on ourselves, ever. It's all thoughts, anyway, and thought ain't real. Even beating ourselves up is all about our ego and imagination. We are socialized to beat ourselves up as children, to feel in control, but it turns you against yourself.
- (3) The three biggest things to understand about people, and thus yourself, are A) everyone is faking it on some level; no one keeps it 100%, we all have to work on our honesty and denial, B) every human is powerful/important, but most of us have been socialized (brainwashed) into thinking we are not, so we have to relearn self-love and self-confidence, and C) everyone is a mess: emotions are hard, people challenge our boundaries, no one always gets it right, we all need space to figure things out, we're all trying our best, and anyone who looks perfect is really just good at faking it.
- (4) Life is a total catastrophic mess too, but ultimately that is a judgment I am putting on life. If I couldn't call it a total mess, life would just be _____. In fact, if I stop everything I am thinking, life is always just _____. (most of life is air moving and ambient noise). In other words, life would just be what it is. And if we totally accepted it for what it is, then technically it would be perfect. So, technically, everyone is perfect, life is perfect, because only our flawed thinking can throw negative judgements onto life. And what is more stress-free, believing that life is a total mess or that life is perfect? It took quite a while for me to see this one, so it's ok to think this is a bit “out there”.
- (5) God, or the Higher Power of your understanding, always hears us and gives us what we want. It just may never come the way we want it, or have the effect we wanted it to have, or it can come with all sorts of unintended consequences. Blaming God or seeing ourselves as victims of the universe is really about childhood wounds, or internal emotional boundary violations, from abusive relationships with our primary caregivers.
- (6) In an ideal world, those who hurt us would wake the "f" up quick, apologize, and make it right. And in the real world that may never happen, or you have no control over when it will happen, which can mean spending a long time stuck in resentment and hurt; energy we could be using to make our lives healthier. Every single relationship we have as adults is a choice. We may even have to let go of our family or best friends if they are not healthy for us.
- (7) Underneath all our abuse is our innocence. Children are born innocent but powerless, so healing is about empowering your inner child back to a state of wholeness. One of the most important exercises for returning back to our child state of emotional health is the Inner Baby Work. I found that in my meditations, allowing myself to return to a womb-like state of total rest, one where I am suspended in safety and love, was crucial to healing my childhood emotional neglect and hypervigilance. Playing Baby Music or heartbeat sounds on Youtube also greatly helped.

About this Workbook

This is a workbook dedicated to examining your thoughts and feelings. In particular, this workbook uses mindfulness meditation, visualizations, and inquiry to create a self-help platform that can aid anyone in need of healing their inner life. Extensive measures were taken to apply this material to a developmental perspective so that the effect of childhood socialization and its role in cognitive distortions could be central to understanding our life history. Equally so, a great effort was made to collect material from a trauma-informed perspective- one that acknowledges the complex after effects of abuse and neglect. Because both of these concerns relate to unhealthy relationships, a third concern was to address the role of healthy boundaries throughout this work.

This is a workbook precisely because emotions need to be experienced in order to learn from them. Each exercise is meant to be read and then to engage in meditation or writing about feelings. Meditation is literally engaging in the experience of ourselves, turning ourselves into knowledge. Free writing allows us to bypass our consciousness and access our subconscious, emotional mind. While I designed this workbook for my college courses, it is my deepest hope that this resource can be used by anyone who is dealing with their feelings, hard times, or troubling thoughts.

Trigger Warnings

Because this workbook is about emotions, expect your feelings to be triggered! All sorts of feelings are going to come up in this process. If any of those feelings are too difficult, it's important to develop your own self-care plan for your emotions (see Self-Care Plan). You can read the worksheets on "Healing from Trauma" and "Inner Baby Work" for ideas on how to develop a self-care plan. If you have been through anything you would define as traumatic, take special care to only take on what you can handle, including if you want to close your eyes or not.

See this workbook as like a toolbox and each exercise is a hammer, a screwdriver, or a saw that can be used to deconstruct and rebuild your inner life. But like all tools, you can also damage yourself if you are not careful. All of these resources are made with the focus of learning how to love ourselves and build our ability to feel, not to just feel bad, beat ourselves up, or retraumatize ourselves. Pick topics that range lower on your trigger scale and save the harder things for when you have practiced these exercises a bit. Please know this may also mean having to learn a great deal of patience.

Finally, this workbook is not a substitution for therapy or crisis care. If you feel you need the long-term help of a licensed professional please access a psychologist, therapist, counselor, or confidant of your choice. If you are in a crisis and in need of help, please access a crisis center who can help you find resources or call emergency services such as the police, a hospital, or dial 911.

Instructions for Students

I will always begin each class by asking, "How are we feeling today?" And I will always wait for an answer. Your response, or no response, is always your choice. Since this is about expressing feelings, I am going to press for an answer as the term progresses.

Each worksheet is designed to be read aloud first, and then to engage in an exercise. We will use the first hour of class for each worksheet. While what you work on is your business, it is expected that you try to engage in the current activity. This is part of your participation grade. Because I want you to dig deep, I will usually read my own examples out loud to everyone. There will be time after each exercise to discuss things.

Because of the difficulty of learning emotions, not to mention also getting your education, after each exercise I will always say, "even if you are not feeling like digging into things today, the take home message is ____". Also, "whether you felt something good, nice, or loving- or if you felt something painful, gross, or depressing- it's ok, because we are learning how to feel. It's good to feel." Hopefully these words help you develop patience and let you know that you are not alone.

Self-Care Plan

This workbook is going to bring up all sorts of feelings, so it's important to create a strong plan for taking care of ourselves. Use the table below and infographics on the next page to help you list what you honestly do and what would be a healthier, realistic option.

Physical/Systemic (honest go to) (healthier options)	Psychological/Emotional (honest go to) (healthier options)	Mental/Cognitive (honest go to) (healthier options)
Relational (honest go to) (healthier options)	Financial (honest go to) (healthier options)	Environmental (honest go to) (healthier options)
Spiritual (honest go to) (healthier options)	Aptitudinal (honest go to) (healthier options)	Luminescent (honest go to) (healthier options)
When I feel something I can't handle, I: (honest go to) (healthier options)		
When I can tell I'm about to cry, I: (honest go to) (healthier options)		
What do you want to work on? What is getting in your way? What triggers you easily? What negative strategies do you want to avoid?		
Any other things important to your self-care? (pick-me-up quotes, affirmations, reminders, doodles) “life will always be as hard as I am hard on me”		



WHEN I AM ANGRY, SAD OR UPSET, I CAN ...

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| | ☐ Read a book | ☐ Play, run with friends |
| | ☐ Drink water | ☐ Make a collage or scrapbook |
| | ☐ Take a nap | ☐ Take a walk |
| | ☐ Listen to music | ☐ Use a stress ball or slime |
| | ☐ Take 20 deep breaths | ☐ Use positive affirmations |
| | ☐ Cry | ☐ Eat a fruit |
| | ☐ Clean or organize | ☐ Play, run with a friends |
| | ☐ Forgive, let go | ☐ Color with a crayon |
| | ☐ Draw or doodle | ☐ Do something kind for others |
| | ☐ Exercise | ☐ Imagine your favorite place |
| | ☐ Talk to a friend | ☐ Meditate |
| | ☐ Talk to a trusted adult | ☐ Chant a hymn or a poem |
| | ☐ Ignore annoying people | ☐ Turn off all gadgets |
| | ☐ Build something | ☐ Watch the sky, or the clouds |
| | ☐ Climb a tree | ☐ Watch something funny |
| | ☐ Do a puzzle | ☐ Hug your parents or siblings |
| | ☐ Throw or kick a ball | ☐ Take a bath |
| | ☐ Get a hug | ☐ Write thank you notes |
| | ☐ Cook or bake | ☐ Write gratitude notes |
| | ☐ Ride a bike or skate | ☐ Write down your feelings |
| | ☐ Learn something new | ☐ Blow bubbles |
| | ☐ Stretch | ☐ Count |
| | ☐ Sing or dance | ☐ Keep your hands to yourself |
| | ☐ Do origami | ☐ Do Gardening |

When I feel upset, sad, or unfocused at school I can:

SELF-REGULATION PRINTABLES FOR KIDS

WHOLEHearted
SCHOOL COUNSELING

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Count to 10 and back in coordination with my breath. | ☐ Think about 3 things am grateful for. |
| ☐ Place my hands over my ears and breathe slowly & deeply, listening to the sound that my breath makes. | ☐ Use 'I-statements' to express how I am feeling, what I need, or what I hope for. |
| ☐ Roll my neck and shoulders. | ☐ Ask to work with a buddy. |
| ☐ Tell my teacher I would like to help or take on a classroom responsibility. | ☐ Give myself an arm and hand massage. |
| ☐ Rest my head on the desk for a moment or two. | ☒ Devise a secret code word or signal with my teacher that means time to get back on track. |
| ☐ Tell my teacher I need help with the assignment or lesson. | ☐ Smile or laugh, even if I have to fake it. |
| ☐ Push my palms together. | ☐ Do an act of kindness. |
| ☐ Give myself or a stuffed animal a great big hug. | ☒ Eat a healthy snack or let my teacher know I am hungry. |
| ☐ Help a classmate or my teacher. | ☐ Rub or tap my temples. |
| ☐ Cross my arms in front of me and do the arm pretzel. | ☐ Talk with my school counselor. |
| ☐ Ask if I can do my work standing up. | ☐ Ask permission to quietly jog in place for a minute or do 20 jumping jacks. |
| ☐ Pretend I am squeezing a lemon in my fist, squeezing as hard as I can to get the lemon juice out. After a few moments, I can relax my hands. | ☐ Go outside during recess and notice the sky, trees & sounds from nature. |

Part 1:

**Discovering Emotions,
Questioning Beliefs**

Mindfulness is about examining your quality of life. Most of the time we are caught up in doing things, but we are not human doings, we are human *beings*. Thus, when we examine our lives with mindfulness, we are moving deeper into our state of being in the world. For example, instead of sending a quick text message, we could take time to examine the things we do, like notice each button we press, each word we use. This is about examining the **quality** of what we are doing, not just the doing of it.

In traditional “old school” meditation, we develop mindfulness by sitting in silence and being with our thoughts. The idea here is that eventually you will learn to let go (or back off) and treat yourself with compassion. The story of the Buddha is that he was a naïve prince who left his palace and saw suffering (or stress) in the world and vowed to end it. After several failed attempts, he sat underneath a tree and began to sink into his thoughts. And from this he came to realize that wanting things, identifying with desire, is what led to suffering. Today, we can expand this to say that (1) the human mind only perceives **thoughts, feelings, sensations, and images**, so, (2) **thoughts/beliefs/concepts shape what we think is reality**, but is not reality itself. If thought is not real, then (3) **thinking and imagination are the same thing**, but the first reduces/represses while the second expresses/unrepresses. If thinking isn’t real, then stress can’t be either or, (4) **all stress must come from believing thoughts that don’t line up with reality**. What happens in life is just information; the stress comes from our unconscious use of the **Five Frustrations of Ego**: our 1)assumptions/expectations, 2)beliefs/attachments, 3)judgments/comparisons, 4)preferences/requirements, and 5)attempts to manipulate/control things beyond our ego.

The human brain is truly amazing. It has two major sections: our frontal lobe (abstract thought, planning, judgment) and our “back brain” (limbic system and amygdala) which processes emotions. This part is also connected to our spinal cord, heart, and stomach (gut), which research shows also have neurons that create our “deep in the heart feelings” and “gut reactions”. In fact, our brains have 100 billion neurons, making 10,000 connections with each other, doing 50 processes at the same time! Unfortunately, that means the human mind can think 80,000 thoughts a day or 1.5 thoughts a second. Worse, 98% of those thoughts are just repeated over and over. Even worse, some argue that 80% of those thoughts are negative. Add to this the fact that only 20% of the brain is conscious (the other 80% is unconscious!) and it’s clear how **our mind can be our worst enemy**. Putting a bunch of unconscious negative thoughts on repeat guarantees you will focus on what you lack, block your ability to listen to yourself, or develop mindfulness. In contrast, Buddhism offers cultivating positive thoughts of gratitude, compassion, and kindness. Genuinely finding the good, and especially the good in what we think is bad, shifts our mind into a friend, or a space of more support and possibility.

These days, modern physics, spiritual people, and hippies all agree that with the creation of the Big Bang came the creation of Consciousness itself. Despite that, many people feel that meditation is boring. Well it is! When we meditate, we are boring into our “inner universe”, which is just as vast as the outer universe. Boredom is the state of having nothing to do, so “mindful boredom” is the very definition of Peace itself! Boredom brings us to the Kingdom (Queendom). **Each person is a total inner universe** of things separate from other people. It is our inner world that shapes how we make sense of our outer world. To help us “make space” for our thoughts and feelings, and to greatly expand our consciousness, in this class we will learn a variety of techniques for developing mindfulness.

How to Meditate:

1. Stop what you’re doing and come to the present moment. No need to think about the past or the future. You can keep your eyes open or closed. If closing your eyes makes you uncomfortable at all, keep them open.
2. Bring mindfulness to your breathing. How are you breathing right now? Fast or slow? Deep or shallow? Slow down and deepen your breath. The breath is the best anchor we have for staying in connection with the present moment.
3. Notice if you are thinking. The mind only perceives thoughts, feelings, sensations, and images. Explore each. Can you release/unclench them and return to stillness, inner silence, and peace? If not, can you bring mindfulness to what you are feeling? Can you locate it in your body, name it, and be with it without placing judgment or trying to change it?
4. How long can you sit in this state of doing nothing (nothingness)? When you are ready you can open your eyes. Now, can you apply this mindfulness to your life? Try with your phone, the commute home, the next argument you have. This is the real practice!

From Teal Swan's "How to tell the truth" <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheSpiritualCatalyst/videos>

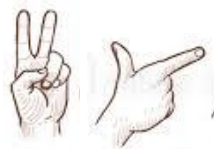
Obviously, telling the truth is an important part of developing a strong, healthy relationship with ourselves and others. For many of us, however, the truth can either be too uncomfortable or scary to embrace, especially when the truth may force us to alter our sense of reality or identity. **We often don't tell the truth when something happens that we can't handle emotionally**, such as 1) when we're in danger (trauma, abuse), 2) risk losing something important (money, love, security), 3) when we don't feel we are good enough to get what we want, or 4) when we are trained (by parents, adults, society, or ourselves) into denial, rejection, rationalizations, and avoidance as coping mechanisms.

While we often treat the truth as something stable, permanent, and objective (Universal Truth), most "truth" is one part what people believe (or all agree is accurate) and one part how your subjective emotional range is reacting to information. Our "personal truth" may be totally different from someone else's or what society says is true. In Buddhism, telling the truth is always balanced against compassion. Saying true things without kindness can be cruel, and saying kind things that are not true (lies) can lead to mistrust and hurt. So, one way to deal with the difficult feelings around the truth is to explore our emotional range from negative to positive. **A full truth involves expressing all of your: 1) anger, 2) hurt, 3) fear, 4) understanding, and 5) love.** (Use the fingers of your hand as a way to remember this.) Find one problem/issue about your life, yourself, or the world that you feel is causing you stress. Start with 1) anger, and for each one, allow yourself to get out all of the thoughts/feelings you are having before you go onto the next one. When you get to 4) understanding, also examine the frustrations of ego: (our assumptions/expectations, beliefs, judgements, preferences/requirements, and attempts to manipulate/control). If you have trouble with anger, try other words like frustrated or bothered. Or try sadness or stress.

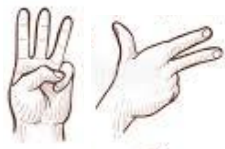
Remember, you can always choose whether you want to tell someone else the truth, because they may or may not wanna hear it, but if you lie to yourself you risk throwing your whole world into confusion and unconscious self-sabotage. Since you don't have all the info you would need to take responsibility and make good decisions, everything you do to address your problems won't work either, which can lead to hopelessness, resentment, and deep insecurities. In contrast, the truth gives us a solid, powerful foundation to build a life based on honesty and integrity, or as they say, **"the truth will set you free"**!



1) Anger _____



2) Hurt _____



3) Fear _____



4) Understanding (assumptions/expectations, judgements/comparison, preferences/requirements, beliefs, manipulation/control) _____



5) Like/Love _____

Emotions List

In this class we are going to learn how fundamental emotions are to life. Despite how important they are, most people only have a few words to describe how they feel (like “FINE” which I learned in the mob movie *The Italian Job* stands for Fucked up, Insecure, Neurotic, and Emotional). Even worse, most of the time, when people ask “how are you doing?”, they often don’t really want an answer, it just becomes something to say to introduce conversation. In this class I will ask you how you are doing every class, and I want you to experience actually going inside and labeling your feelings. Using this emotions list, I will encourage you to move beyond just “good, fine, ok, or bad” and work to develop a more in-depth vocabulary. Also, it is 100% ok to express both negative and positive feelings- you don’t have to ever lie or fake what you feel. As college students, this is also useful for creating more descriptive adjectives for the people you discuss in your writing assignments.

Judge Your Neighbor Worksheet by Byron Katie

If you have tried meditating, you have noticed just how hard it is to actually sit in silence. The mind constantly thinks, and we have so many attachments to those thoughts we feel all sorts of things about them. When the 85% unconscious stuff becomes conscious, it is rarely just good feelings that rise to the surface. Therefore it is important to develop a method for dealing with thoughts as they arise, not just ignoring or dismissing them.

Byron Katie’s story is that she was a wife and mother in southern California who, over time, became increasingly unhappy, depressed, suicidal, overweight, and agoraphobic. She yelled at her children, she wouldn’t shower, and for a decade she stayed in bed, even sleeping with a gun because she became afraid of everything. One day she enrolled in a weight loss live-in program where she was given a room in the attic (because everyone thought she was crazy and didn’t want to sleep next to her). She slept on the floor and one night a roach crawled over her foot. When she woke up, in that instant, all of her depression and painful thoughts were gone, just for a split second. From there she realized that **the roach was real, but her thoughts were not real**. The roach was an actual thing she could put in a bucket, but all the thoughts she had that had given her a decade of hurt, pain, fear, and depression, all that would be nothing in a bucket. In that moment, she lost all identification and attachment to her thoughts and experienced the simple joy of just experience itself, or being with reality, being with what is.

This epiphany didn’t last long, so she would go out into the desert to meditate alone, but she found that the whole world was there in her mind. This led her to realize that the problem wasn’t the world, it was all her thoughts about the world, herself, and others. Since she knew she was so good at judging others, she developed a Judge Your Neighbor Worksheet. Here you write down a series of statements about what bothers you, how do you want them to change, what they should/shouldn’t do, what do you need from them to be happy, what do you think of them, and what do you not want to experience again. And to each of these statements you ask 4 questions: is it true, can you absolutely know it’s true, how do you react when you think that thought, and who would you be without the thought? Finally, after the 4 questions, you take each statement and apply 3 turnarounds, making the statements about yourself (your thinking), the other person, or the opposite of the original statement. So, if I am mad at my mom because she doesn’t listen to me, this process opens me up to how much I don’t listen to myself, how much I don’t listen to her, and all the times she actually did listen but I don’t give her credit. This process of questioning her thoughts is what she calls Inquiry, and it has allowed her to maintain the consciousness she developed that night on the floor with the roach, even creating an organization, The Work, that spreads Inquiry meditation around the world.

Byron Katie has many famous sayings: “There are only 3 kinds of business: mine, yours, and God’s. When you go into someone else’s business you will feel stress”, “When you argue with reality you lose, but only 100% of the time”, “love your thoughts, love the world”, “open mind, open heart”, “The present moment is the only moment there will ever be, the past is over and the future never comes”, “you can’t stop thinking, you can only believe what you think or question it”, “love is who we are, any thought that opposes that feels like stress”, “Judge your Neighbor, write it down, ask 4 questions and turn it around.”

Emotions & Reactions List

Question 3. How do you react when you believe that thought?

ANGRY		DEPRESSED		AFRAID	
irritated enraged hostile insulting annoyed upset hateful unpleasant offensive aggressive bitter frustrated controlling resentful hotheaded malicious infuriated critical mean-spirited violent vindictive sadistic mean spiteful furious agitated antagonistic repulsed mad cross incensed	loud reactive swearing abrupt quarrelsome venomous irate short-tempered stubborn rebellious exasperated impatient contrary condemning seething scornful sarcastic overbearing sharp poisonous insulting disrespectful jealous ticked off hitting yelling screaming revengeful retaliating reprimanding	disappointed discouraged ashamed powerless diminished guilty dissatisfied miserable despicable self-denigrating self-hating sulky low terrible lousy desperate alienated bad pessimistic dejected bummed out self-critical self-deprecating gloomy glum disheartened down despondent cheerless rotten	masochistic stuck contracted tight blocked despairing hopeless grouchy off moody crabby faultfinding resistant punishing morose cranky grumpy burdened negative closed out of sorts no energy in hell shaky touchy haggard drawn slumped slouching achy	fearful terrified suspicious anxious alarmed panicked nervous scared worried frightened timid shaky restless threatened cowardly insecure wary menaced uptight apprehensive aggressive attacking defensive hostile	dreadful guarded troubled self-absorbed rigid phobic intolerant disturbed disrupted intimidated avoiding unwelcoming petrified unbending paranoid inhibited immobile attached prejudiced hateful agoraphobic self-conscious
CONFUSED	HELPLESS	INDIFFERENT	HURT	SAD	JUDGMENTAL
doubtful uncertain indecisive perplexed embarrassed hesitant shy disillusioned distrustful misgiving lost unsure uneasy tense stressed uncomfortable comparing dishonest superior disdainful manipulative judgmental prejudiced argumentative authoritative condescending demanding confounded distracted disoriented off-kilter frenzied blushing awkward	incapable alone paralyzed fatigued useless inferior vulnerable empty distressed pathetic distraught doomed overwhelmed incompetent inept incapacitated shut down cut off trapped weak sick nauseated fidgety trembling craving hungry squirming jittery woozy twitching compulsive	insensitive dull reserved weary bored preoccupied cold lifeless uncaring uninterested unresponsive tired robotic slow sluggish	crushed tormented deprived pained tortured rejected injured offended afflicted aching victimized heartbroken agonized appalled wronged humiliated upset insulted withdrawn miffed indignant suffering distant invaded bulldozed bullied secretive slighted smothered belittled	tearful sorrowful anguished desolate unhappy lonely grieved mournful dismayed downhearted oversensitive dirty remorseful sullen sour self-castigating unworthy fragile disconnected devastated blindsided discontented crying groaning moaning	stony serious stern frowning recoiling glaring disgusted unfair attacked attacking tactless hurtful bossy stilted stiff brutal combative pushy neglectful stonewalling rude ranting scolding shrill hard fake phony shallow taut territorial complaining obsessive blunt

Question #4: Who would you be without that thought?

OPEN	LOVING	HAPPY	INTERESTED	ALIVE
understanding confident easy connected free sympathetic interested satisfied receptive accepting kind harmonious empathetic tolerant friendly approachable outgoing flowing flexible present listening welcoming embracing	considerate affectionate sensitive tender devoted attracted passionate admiring warm touched close loved sweet gentle compassionate caring allowing nonjudgmental appreciative respectful humble gracious patient honoring expansive kindly grateful	blissful joyous delighted overjoyed gleeful thankful festive ecstatic satisfied glad cheerful sunny elated jubilant jovial fun-loving lighthearted easygoing mellow happy-go-lucky glorious innocent child-like gratified euphoric rapturous in good humor in heaven on top of the world	fascinated intrigued absorbed inquisitive engrossed curious amazed involved attentive observant amused thoughtful courteous intent focused	playful courageous energetic liberated optimistic frisky animated spirited thrilled wonderful funny great giving sharing intelligent exhilarated equal excited enjoying communicative active spunky youthful vigorous amused tickled
POSITIVE	PEACEFUL	RELAXED	STRONG	Emotions And Reactions
eager keen earnest inspired excited enthusiastic bold brave daring hopeful upbeat beautiful creative constructive helpful resourceful motivated cooperative productive exuberant in the zone responsive conscientious approving honored privileged adaptable	calm good at ease comfortable pleased encouraged surprised content quiet certain relaxed serene bright blessed assured clear balanced fine okay grateful carefree adequate fulfilled genuine authentic beautiful forgiving sincere uplifted unburdened receptive creative confident self-sufficient	glowing radiant beaming reflective smiling grounded unhurried focused open-minded efficient non-controlling unassuming trusting supported fluid light spontaneous aware healthy meditative still rested waiting laughing graceful natural steady centered placid	reliable sure certain unique dynamic tenacious hardy secure stable honest composed self-affirming truthful supportive excellent perseverant responsible energized sane complete mature Solid	

Judge your neighbor • Write it down • Ask four questions • Turn it around

Think of a recurring stressful situation, a situation that is reliably stressful even though it may have happened only once and recurs only in your mind. As you answer each of the questions below, allow yourself to mentally revisit the time and place of the stressful occurrence. Use short, simple sentences.

1. In this situation, who angers, confuses, saddens, or disappoints you, and why?

I am _____ with _____ because _____
emotion name

Example: I am angry with Paul because he doesn't listen to me.

2. In this situation, how do you want them to change? What do you want them to do?

I want _____ to _____
name

Example: I want Paul to see that he is wrong. I want him to stop lying to me. I want him to see that he is killing himself.

3. In this situation, what advice would you offer to them?

_____ should/shouldn't _____
name

Example: Paul should take a deep breath. He should calm down. He should see that his behavior frightens me. He should know that being right is not worth another heart attack.

4. In order for you to be happy in this situation, what do you need them to think, say, feel, or do?

I need _____ to _____
name

Example: I need Paul to hear me when I talk to him. I need him to take care of himself. I need him to admit that I am right.

5. What do you think of them in this situation? Make a list. (Remember, be petty and judgmental.)

_____ is _____
name

Example: Paul is unfair, arrogant, loud, dishonest, way out of line, and unconscious.

6. What is it about this situation that you don't ever want to experience again?

I don't ever want _____

Example: I don't ever want Paul to lie to me again. I don't ever want to see him ruining his health again.

Now investigate each of the above statements using the four questions. Always give yourself time to let the deeper answers meet the questions. Then turn each thought around. For the turnaround to statement 6, replace the words "I don't ever want to..." with "I am willing to..." and "I look forward to..." Until you can look forward to all aspects of life without fear, your Work is not done.

The four questions

Example: Paul doesn't listen to me.

1. **Is it true?** (Yes or no. If no, move to 3.)
2. **Can you absolutely know that it's true?** (Yes or no.)
3. **How do you react, what happens, when you believe that thought?**
4. **Who would you be without the thought?**

Turn the thought around

- a) **to the self.** (I don't listen to myself.)
- b) **to the other.** (I don't listen to Paul.)
- c) **to the opposite.** (Paul does listen to me.)

Then find at least three specific, genuine examples of how each turnaround is true for you in this situation.

For more information on how to do The Work, visit thework.com

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From: Barbara Sher 2009 (1979). *Wishcraft: how to get what you really want*. Ballantine Book; New York.

We all need our dreams and goals as importantly as we need hands and feet. All of us are born with a unique talent, ability, and way of seeing the world that leads us to choose what feels right for our lives. However, as we are socialized we start to focus on things that give us approval or make us belong to society, like our job, our ethnicity/gender, education, etc. But none of these things are who we are. Who we really are is what we love. Many of us got our childhood dreams straight-up crushed by adults who didn't care or took their own hurt childhoods out on us. Just as a seed needs the right conditions to grow, children need an environment where their unique genius can be nurtured so that we can become adults capable of realizing our dreams and goals. Answer the following 7 questions (and don't be surprised if you say no to all of these). Were you:

- Y__ N__ 1. Treated as though you had a unique genius that was loved and respected?
 Y__ N__ 2. Told that you could do anything and you'd be loved no matter what it was?
 Y__ N__ 3. Given real help and encouragement in finding what you wanted and how to do it?
 Y__ N__ 4. Encouraged to explore all your talents and interests, even if they changed daily?
 Y__ N__ 5. Allowed to complain when it got tough, and given sympathy instead of being told to quit?
 Y__ N__ 6. Bailed out when it got too tough - without condemnation and scorn?
 Y__ N__ 7. Surrounded by positive people who were pleased when you won?

Finding our Child Genius. Using a separate paper, answer the following HUGE questions.

1) Go back to your childhood. Can you remember a moment when you just enjoyed your original experience of the world, when the world was a place of wonder and magic, before someone came and told you you were wrong or ignored you. What attracted/fascinated you? What senses (sight/hearing/touch) did you use most? What did you love to do, or daydream about, or have secret fantasies over? Do you still like some of these things, or what do they show you about yourself today? Who might you be if you stayed connected to these things?

2) What's your favorite color and why? If a detective walked into your life, who would they say you are? How about a best friend or loved one? Imagine an "ideal family" for yourself made of anyone you want alive or dead. List them and what would they say about you?

3) Make a list of all the things you like to do. Try to get to 20, and for each list 1) how long since you last did it?, 2) costs money or free?, 3) alone or with people?, 4) job related?, 5) physical risk?, 6) fast or slow paced, 7) mind, body or spiritual. After that, describe both A) the ideal environment that would allow you to thrive, and B) your ideal day if you had everything you wanted. Go into detail about the who, what, when, where and whys.

4) After this, take note of which elements are must haves, optional, and pure frills. What does it look like if you only focus on the must haves? What parts of your dreams and goals do you have already? What is missing from your life right now? What stands between you and your ideals? Make a list of all the PROBLEMS keeping you from getting there?

Making Goals. A goal is composed of 4 things: a Dream, a Main Feeling, a Role Model, and a Target. Once you identify these things, you can create steps, and baby steps, toward each of your goals. Focus more on getting the Main Feeling than the goal. This will build experience instead of living in a fantasy. You can also build a goal around the Main Feeling itself. Once you have this, you can brainstorm ideas about how to get from one step to another, map it out with a flow chart, and you can organize a personal network of people (friends/associates/people with resources) who are focused on accomplishing each other's goals.

Goal Setting Chart (ex.)

Ultimate Goal/Dream: Go out to a bar by myself and talk to people.						
Main Feelings: To be comfortable and happy						
Role Model/Resources: people who are funny, or look calm in social spaces, my best friend, Oprah, black women						
Target: a bar in the Castro, stay for 2 hours and talk to at least 2 people and do most of the talking						
Timeline: 6 months						
Baby Steps toward Goal.	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
1. Talk to Role Models about my social anxiety and gather advice.						
2. Get info on the best bar that might have the friendliest or open people						
3. Go to a bar with a friend. Work with all the feelings that come up.						
4. Go back to the bar with a friend and try to talk to 2 people.						
5. Go back to the bar alone and try to talk to 2 people. See how much conversation is directed by you. Give yourself a HUGE REWARD.						
6. Revisit your fears, ask how you could improve, encourage yourself.						
7. Go to a different bar, try more people, change up your tactics.						

Notice if you find yourself with lots of complaints and negative thinking. This is good, because often complaining is just our way of dealing with fears and hurts. Always use your fears instead of fighting them. Kick, scream, and cry it out. Letting ourselves totally get out our complaining without judgement (a bitching session) allows us to move into a more open, honest place instead of faking being ok, which is draining. This process can bring up all sorts of fears like asking for help, being responsible for things, or not being able to hide anymore. You may be afraid to give up taking care of others, or to honor taking time for yourself. If you pay your bills regularly, you deserve as much attention as the light bill, if not infinitely more so. If your fear is so extreme it feels like life or death (survival fear), then do not push yourself beyond what you can handle. Imagine your best and worst case scenarios, lower your standards and focus on building your skills, and allow yourself to make a ton of mistakes and love yourself through them. This removes the fear of failure so you can feel the fear and move through it (see Working with Fear in this workbook).

Finally, make sure you get emotional support through your support network for all your goals. Every adult has a scared kid inside them when trying new things. Making life changes can mean shaking up all your relationships. Address those changes by discussing common dreams, needs and priorities. Share your hopes and fears, failures and triumphs. Find new people who will support you. Celebrate, love the journey of your life, take a break or create a new goal, and help others find their dreams and goals.

Goal Setting Chart

Ultimate Goal/Dream:						
Main Feelings:						
Role Model/Resources:						
Target:						
Timeline:						
Baby Steps toward Goal.	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June
1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

Goal Setting Chart

Ultimate Goal/Dream:						
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1.						
2.						
3.						
4.						
5.						
6.						
7.						

From: *Journey through Trauma* by Gretchen Schmelzer, *The Tao of Fully Feeling*, and *Complex CPTSD: from surviving to thriving* by Pete Walker.

Trauma is defined as an experience or event that overwhelms your capacity to depend on or protect yourself, leaving you with feelings of terror, horror, and helplessness. Since the body processes physical and emotional pain the same way, physical trauma and emotional trauma are the same thing; sure a family death or car accident, but also things like road rage on our commute, getting bad news we didn't expect, or suddenly remembering something painful from the past. Other kinds of trauma can be cultural (sexism), historical (transatlantic African slavery), or psychic (being told you would never amount to anything). Trauma can leave us with PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder) where our brain copes by developing flashbacks, easily startled, nightmares, and difficulty concentrating or eating or sleeping. Repeated trauma however, like child abuse, physical/psychological torture, domestic violence, or war is more complicated, so it leads to C-PTSD (complex PTSD) where instead of trying to cope, our brains learn to shut off (go numb) and forget (go unconscious) and put up walls around our feelings so that we don't have to constantly re-experience the pain. Trauma hits the preverbal areas of the brain, leaving us howling in fear or frozen in silence. These symptoms are often misdiagnosed as other things when we don't acknowledge the trauma. While these coping mechanisms may have kept you safe when the trauma was happening, as adults they can keep us stuck in survival mode, afraid of the world, and unable to move on and really live life.

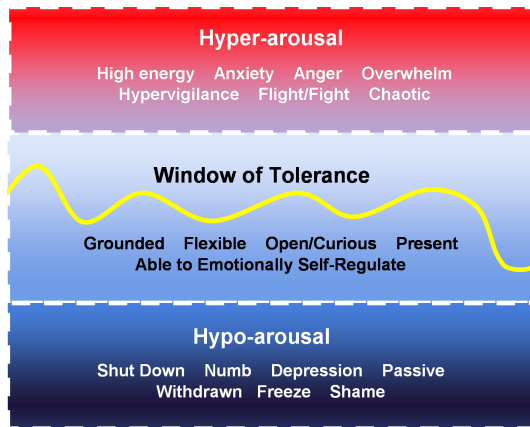
Healing from trauma is literally one of the hardest things to do. These feelings can resurface at any time, and trauma can make it hard to even open to the idea of help altogether. We have to relearn developmental milestones like basic trust, faith in the world, learning self-confidence, self-compassion, healthy boundaries, identity formation, even the ability to relax! After a lifetime of protecting yourself psychologically and physically to survive, you now have to dismantle all the defenses, protections, problematic behaviors and habits in your life. Other people, even friends and loved ones, who haven't been through or don't acknowledge their trauma may be unable to understand or validate what you are going through. Often our trauma is connected to our relationships with people who are supposed to love us, so "people" in itself can be retraumatizing (google #peopleing if you want validation for this, and a laugh).

Healing from trauma is not a linear, one-and-done, process. It takes a lot of time, and a LOT of rest! Also we have to heal as life goes on, so doing this healing work can feel like having a 2nd job. Good news is, we already survived the worst of it: the trauma itself! The key to healing is to acknowledge what happened, what didn't or should have happened, and how did you cope with it all. To heal we move repeatedly through 5 phases: **Preparation, Un-integration, Identification, Integration, and Consolidation.**

Preparation- Develop an awareness of your thoughts and feelings (check-in). Assess and store your internal and external resources (physical, emotional health and safety). What do you really need, or definitely don't need, so that you can handle these feelings? This can take a while, and can make you nervous if your trauma was connected to being silent or staying unaware to stay safe. Showing up for you and finding dependable others teaches us to relearn trust, which lets us feel safe, be willing to explore, have hope and gratitude, and to be patient and persevere- things we might not have gotten in our lives.

Un-integration- To heal, we have to give ourselves permission to TOTALLY FALL APART and regress back to being a child, back to when we were innocent. Find a safe space where you can let down all the walls without the need to pull yourself together. This will move the numbness and bring up all of the broken pieces of pain, fear (and fear of feeling), helplessness, shame, violated boundaries, and attachment wounds. So, straight up, it's gonna feel totally shitty- expect to be caught off guard, irritable, off balance, uncomfortable, and scared. You can even temporarily lose the ability to speak! Children do this very well, but as adults we train ourselves to be in control and keep it together all the time, so we don't give our brain a true chance to reset and relearn. Use trust and safety to see what you can handle, and then slowly learn to handle a little more. This will create a container so that you can heal and still manage your daily life.

Identification- After working with the pure feelings, we can discuss our trauma story and coping mechanisms. Trauma messes with ALL forms of memory. The story of our trauma can be an adult retelling with coherent sentences, or it may be childhood fragments of words, sounds, smells, and emotions. Sometimes it helps to reenact the story, not just speak it, to get the feelings out. Recognize any abuse, self-torture, and neglect. If you can't make sense of a feeling, ask "what would someone listening to me feel?" Focus on what is true for you. Believe you, support you. This takes time and practice so go slowly so you don't feel like your world is falling apart. You can fall back into lots of feelings of grieving, worry, and doom, so it's ok to go back to Un-integration.



A **copied mechanism** is the tactics of fight, flight, freeze or collapse we engage in to feel safe or avoid our feelings. Literally ANYTHING can be a coping mechanism like: disconnecting from feelings or the present moment (dissociation), hypervigilance, extreme rules to keep you safe or extreme emotional walls that let no one in, obsessive or compulsive thinking, constantly fidgeting or checking your phone, living constantly in your imagination, drugs food and sex, constantly staying busy, constantly talking to yourself, codependent relationships, always people pleasing, always feeling helpless, afraid to feel altogether, being super critical to ourselves or others, being stuck on negative and always expecting the worst, extreme narcissism, bullying others, relentlessly hoping things could have been different or better or not really true or as bad as you remember, social isolation, etc. All of these things allow us to stay in

denial about how the abuse we suffered is affecting us now. Allow yourself to identify them and how they make you feel. Remember we developed these habits to survive, so be thankful to yourself, and be kind to any resistance or walls you may have also.

Use this space to list any triggers and coping mechanisms not mentioned above:

Integration- Now we can start to create a new story and find healthier ways to deal with our feelings in life. How can we retell our trauma story in a way that empowers us and acknowledges how we really feel? We can use our imagination to question our assumptions and retell the story but include all the things that we wished would have happened instead so we can give ourselves the love and support we wanted. This is called reparenting ourselves. We can also question our inner voice, or inner critic, that we developed from our caregivers that might not be serving us well. This is also the time to question ALL of those coping mechanisms. What works, what doesn't, what would serve you better? All this takes practice, like baby steps, or moving from a bad first draft toward something better and better, so be patient and understanding and try like a child- without judgment and full of play. Learn to express yourself in all kinds of new ways so you can feel freedom, wonder, and possibility. Take back your right to say no, make mistakes, and change your mind. Listen to other people's trauma stories.

Consolidation- The final phase is mostly one of rest so that all this healing can set and create a new you. All learning/healing requires rest. Do things like sleep, watch TV, focus on your new life, try something new. Get used to feeling just "fine" and doing mundane things without drama and conflict. Being at peace can feel real odd at first. As you build strength you can go back to the Preparation phase for what trauma is left. Again, this is a repeated process. Going through it over and over (and over and over) is how you build up the ability to heal the things you haven't yet addressed. Remember, take it in baby steps that you can handle. "Inch by inch, life is a pinch. Yard by yard, life is hard."

Trauma Releasing Exercises

This is a list of exercises that can help you to regulate as you process your more difficult emotions. While they may feel awkward or silly, they are all based on strong trauma research, so please try them out during your meditation practice. Especially try these if you feel triggered or having a hard time feeling. Start by imagining something mildly traumatic to practice, say, a bad traffic day, or a bad grade.

1. Trauma Informed Breathing

Breathing connects us to the present moment, so it can help free us from past trauma. Notice your breath. How deep or shallow? In the chest or the belly?

- Try: breathing slow (AEIOU), breathing fast, forceful outbreath, consciously hold it in, nostril breathing

2. Trauma Yoga

Trauma makes us shut down and close up. So exercises that open up the body can help (this is only a list of exercises that you can do in a chair)

- Shoulder taps, neck stretches, arm raise, face stretch (smile, lift eyebrows), stick out tongue, hugs, squeezing

3. Trauma Release Exercises (TRE), Dr. David Berceli, <https://traumaprevention.com/>

A series of shaking exercises to mimic how animals deal with trauma (spontaneous shaking)

- Allow yourself to relax, and let yourself shake. Particularly note the psoas muscle which is the muscles that connect the legs to the trunk of your body (a lot of trauma is held there). Start small then get bigger.

4. Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) or “Tapping”, Dr. Gary Craig, <https://www.emofree.com/>

Tapping on the “energy meridians” (Chinese Medicine) in the body loosens up emotions

- Tap in this order: one hand, other hand, forehead, underneath eyes, heart, stomach, knees. Then repeat. (you can tap each one as long as you want. Also you can speed up or slow down as you wish.)
- You can input messages to yourself as well by saying things over and over , like “I feel this pain”, “I let go of this feeling so I can feel peace”
- Sleep tapping- tap the heart fast with alternating hands and say sleep, let the tapping slow down.

5. EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing) Therapy, <http://www.emdr.com/>

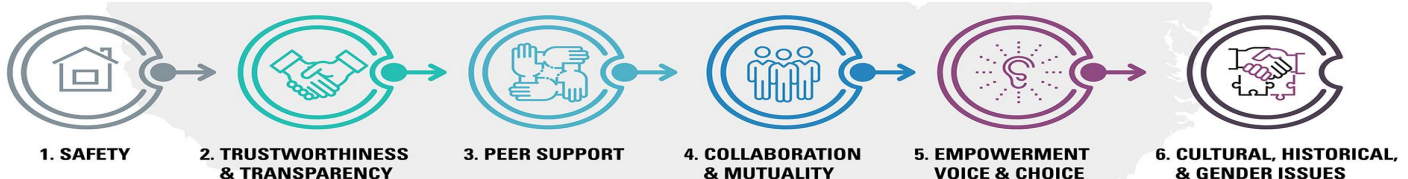
EMDR is basically moving your eyes from one end of the visual field to the other back and forth. Doing this makes your front brain focus on something so your back brain (emotions) can process feelings.

- Using your finger, scan from one end of your visual field to the other, or up and down. (once you are familiar with this you don’t need a finger, you can just keep your eyes closed) You can also tell your messages like with EFT.

6. Crying, Screaming, Babbling, and Whining

Crying and screaming are the body’s natural way to process trauma. Babbling is making soothing sounds while whining is high pitched emotional utterances that let out our feelings of stress and fear. However, many of us are taught “boys don’t cry, “suck it up”, “put a lid on it”, “play cool”, or “be quiet or it’ll get worse” instead of letting it out.

- To cry, find a place where you feel super safe (bedroom, into a pillow, in your car, under a blanket), put on sad music or remember something sad, put your hands on your heart and sink into the energy there. Let yourself sink down to the bottom of the pain; don’t cry for 2 seconds and go back to normal. It’s not pleasant but it will help your body process the feelings. Screaming pushes out the feelings so that you can cry them up. It also teaches you to use your voice if you have ever been forced to be silent.
- Babbling is just making meaningless sounds that feel soothing. Whining is emoting sounds of frustration. It’s more about feelings than rational complaints, so instead of "School is stupid and stressful" it's actually more productive emotionally to say "I'm IRRRR-III-TAAAA-TTED-DDD!!!" or just a straight-up babble/gibberish- "ahh,iiee,whyyy,owww"
- “Losing It!” - tap your head, move your eyes, breathe fast, scream and whine all at the same time!



Many of us struggle with loving ourselves. Luckily however, according to modern physics, spiritual people, and hippies, Love has been found to be the energy of the Universe itself! With the origins of the Big Bang came the beginnings of Consciousness and Love. So Self-Love is about developing a deep consciousness and unconditional appreciation of yourself, your past, your role in the universe! This is why meditation can be so healing. Also, **if love is the essence of the universe, then no one can give love or receive love** from someone else. Love is just what's left when we are not attached to the judgments of our negative thoughts and feelings (the 5 frustrations of ego). When we do not feel love, it is not because it isn't there, it is because we are actively thinking and believing things that block us from experiencing our true inner nature. In religious terms, this is what is meant by "God is Love" (or the Higher Power of your understanding).

Most of us have learned a definition of love that is radically different than this. We learn from infancy that we have to love someone (family/community), or get someone to love us (bf/gf), and that we have to show it by doing the right things or saying the right words. If we went through anything abusive we may learn that love comes with fear and pain. However, these things are conditional love- they are more about acting/manipulating/controlling to get someone's approval, which (unlike real love) can lead to self-abandonment, denial, superficial relationships, and repressed feelings. Unlike our ego's desire to get what we want, **unconditional love is about accepting something as it is, for what it is and for what it isn't**. So, the key to developing self-love is through self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is about accepting the reality of what is happening inside of us. It is about moving away from our judgements and positive/negative feelings about right/wrong, good/bad, success/failure, and embracing a larger acceptance of who we actually are- not who we (or others) think we should be. Allowing our self-talk to be more accepting increases our ability to love others and the world as it is, too.

We develop self-acceptance through internal validation. We have been taught our whole lives to seek validation through external things like money, grades, clothes, degrees, or through other people like our friends or romantic partners, through people pleasing behavior, faking it to blend in, or needing people to like us or think of us as good. However, healthy validation means being able to validate our own feelings for what they are, as they are, without needing approval from anything or anyone else. Anything you feel is valid, because you feel it. **You can be totally wrong about why you feel that way, and your feeling is still 100% completely valid**. This teaches us to honor our emotional boundaries and helps to build healthier relationships with ourselves and others.

Human beings are all doing the best that they can, so our ability to love can only move at the level of our consciousness. If "God is Love" then we move away from unconditional love every time we judge and put conditions on life. While being unconditionally loving (like Jesus) is not easy, **if you don't give yourself unconditional love you will always feel something painful, wounded, negative, bad, wrong, stuck, missing, or empty**. This exercise will offer you an opportunity to work on your limiting beliefs about love by feeling through your emotional range and offering statements to help you validate your feelings. Since negative judgment is one of our greatest coping mechanisms, validating yourself at first can feel like speaking a foreign language, so practice, practice, practice. Examining how we talk to ourselves creates space for our unconscious, child parts to feel internal validation. Whatever the problem, if Love is the essence of the Universe, then making space for more love will always be part of the solution.

Part 1: Unconditional Love Meditation

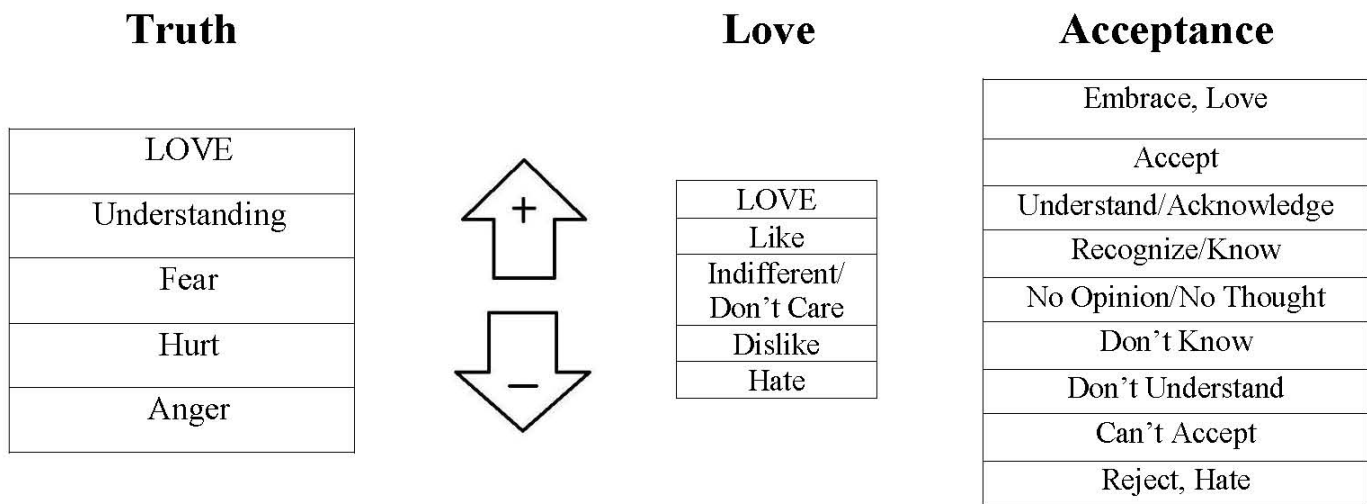
Start by just being still, and imagining what "God's love" is for you. If you could imagine someone who was in total control of everything, and never judged anyone ever, what would that look and feel like? Open up and receive everything you are feeling about this love. Honor both any positive and negative feelings that come up.

Part 2: Questioning Beliefs

Next, name all the ways that you seek external validation. It's just good to know. Ask yourself why you seek each one? What do you get out of it? What are you giving up internally so that you can have it externally?

Part 3: Self-Talk Meditation on Judgment and Feelings

Our judgments and feelings are strongly correlated. Using our “How to tell the Truth” exercise, we can line up both our feelings and judgements from positive to negative, or love to hate. We can arrange this in steps that gradually move from one to the other, or expand the number of categories:



Note in the middle of both there is a Neutral feeling. We often move from positive to negative quickly, so it is important to know what neutral, or no thought, would feel like. We can also use neutral to examine the 5 frustrations of ego: our 1)assumption/expectations, 2)preferences/requirements, 3)beliefs/attachments, 4)judgements/comparisons, and 5)attempts to manipulate/control).

1. Practice this first by naming and feeling through something you have no opinion/indifferent about. Imagine something that bothers you, get an image of it, then find something in that image you have no opinion about (dust on the floor, crack in the sidewalk, the fire sprinkler, ANYTHING).
2. **Next**, pick something that you know you do like/love (or at least accept) about you or the world and feel through each step of the positive side of this scale. Give 3 reasons why you know it, understand it, accept it, and love it.
3. **Now, for the real challenge**, pick something you reject/hate and take it from the bottom of the scale all the way to the top. Give yourself a lot of time on each step, especially as you move from neutral on up.

Part 4: Validation Statements

This process starts new neural pathways in your brain that will overcome negative beliefs and self-talk. To further develop self-love, you can validate your feelings with the following statements, or come up with your own. Keep it simple, even “you got you, boo.” can get you really far!

Love

Acceptance

I love myself even when.....	I accept that I (can't accept)...	I can't accept....but I know/recognize/understand....
Love is always here, even when.....	I have every right to feel (the way I feel about).....	It is perfectly understandable to feel....because....
Under this (feeling) is love. Love is always under every feeling...	Anyone who went through...(what I went through) would feel that way.	I don't totally understand how I feel about....and I don't need to right now. I can give it time and space and rest.
I let go of (everything) because love is letting go	I'm worthy enough to feel... because my feelings matter to me.	I don't need anyone's approval/acceptance to be ok with.....
	I will be kind to ... because I deserve to treat myself with kindness.	I will not be hard on myself about... because life will always be as hard as I am hard on me.

Emotions are a fundamental part of how we develop knowledge to understand ourselves and the world. They determine the quality of our lives. Some people call emotions the guideposts of life because they teach us what our boundaries are. In fact, you could say that every day, every moment, **we live in an emotional universe** that uses how we feel to guide us through life. We know this because we feel an emotional communication always taking place alongside any verbal or other communication. There is always what is said and what is felt, or, as the late great Maya Angelou used to say, “People may forget what you said, they may even forget what you did, but they will never forget how you made them feel.”

Emotions are part of the deeper, “back brain” of your limbic system, amygdala, and most importantly the heart. The heart is actually surrounded by several neurons that control your heartbeat and your feelings. These are the parts of you that were around when you were a tiny baby and did not have a developed prefrontal cortex. As a baby, you are born completely helpless yet highly emotionally developed, so as babies we all struggle to deal with intense emotions even when we can barely think or control our bodies. Thus, **emotional recognition and connection is fundamental to life**. This is why babies need loving touch in order to survive and why love is a deep need for all of us.

Because our brain only perceives thoughts, feelings, sensations, and images, **our emotional system can only respond to our thoughts**, giving them a corresponding emotional weight we perceive as reality. This means, fundamentally, emotions are always the byproduct of something you are thinking- our beliefs shape what feels real for us. I didn’t believe this until I tested it out, and it appears to be true. We have a thought about something, and then we produce a feeling in relation to that thought. So, we think “I hate broccoli”, then we see broccoli and feel sick. Without the thought happening first, there could not be an emotional reaction. Even if you get a sudden emotional reaction like curiosity, or “a bad vibe”, even if you are totally right about the person or situation, your reaction is still in response to the thoughts you had, even if the thoughts were unconscious (some of our most powerful emotional reactions are from our unconscious thoughts). We produce a feeling so that we are prompted into action, like saying “I won’t eat it” or running away. Since feelings determine our quality of life, it’s always: **think, feel, act, have**.

Many of us, and especially if you were born male, are taught not to feel in our society. All of us on some level have been taught to suppress, deny, or evade emotions because they are inconvenient, too difficult, or secondary to our other life responsibilities. When we don’t feel our emotions they build up under the surface or hide behind walls, meaning **a little on top can be a lot underneath**. Since our feelings are our connection to our true self, not listening to your feelings is a kind of self-abandonment. Your own feelings may not trust you and go into denial or develop secondary emotions to cover up the emotions you can’t handle, like getting angry when you are hurt or want sympathy, or afraid when you are vulnerable. You may also become extremely judgemental, feel numb all the time, develop addictions, or pursue unhealthy relationships. Becoming an adult involves taking responsibility for yourself: being financially independent, making your own mistakes, letting go of other people’s responsibilities, and taking responsibility (making space) for our own feelings.

If you have been through anything traumatic or your boundaries were ever majorly violated, your **emotional guidance system can go haywire**. Trauma disrupts how the two parts of your brain interact and can lead to some parts of you feeling hyperarousal/obsessive thinking, memory/emotional flashbacks, and other parts feeling numb or blocked up, which can severely disrupt your sense of reality. You may be extra sensitive to others’ emotions (empath, rescuer) or identify with an emotion (an angry person, a victimized person). Abuse (emotional boundary violations) can teach us to accept self-boundaries that leave us hurt, afraid, codependent, helpless, or empty. If we were not taught how to deal with our feelings, then you may be sitting on a lifetime of

pain, emotional scars/burns, and brokenness which can damage our attempts at healthy adult boundaries. Emotions all come from the same place. It's not like some come from the heart and some come from your butt. So, when you repress all your pain into the back of your brain to survive mentally and socially, you block yourself from feeling all your other emotions fully too. Instead of judging our emotions as good/bad, right/wrong, it may be better to see our emotions as an infinite palate of different colors, and each experience of our emotional universe brings us closer to a full painting of life. All feelings get a right to flow, come and go. Or, **“we have to feel all our feels so that we can heal”**.

Since feelings come from thoughts, and thoughts are not real, we can question if any feeling is real as well. In Buddhism, sitting with our feelings, whatever they are, without trying to fight, change, or deny them, is called the **practice of equanimity**. For example, if I feel angry but couldn't call it anger, it might be called hurt. If I couldn't call it hurt, it might be fear. If I kept digging like this it would become stuck, then uncomfortable, just a feeling I don't like, a feeling, just what is, then _____ (nothingness). This works great, however, this “old school” approach leads many “spiritual people” to detach from thoughts and feelings as a way to avoid or invalidate others (spiritual bypassing). Since **feelings come from the heart not the brain** we can stop using thoughts to analyze our feelings and instead bring them into our heart and process them directly through our body. This is called emotional meditation, or emotional vipassana.

Our emotional universe works generally in terms of negative and positive. So, while there are many emotions, all emotions have their opposite. Feeling through the emotion and its opposite can retrain your emotional guidance system by breaking up old or distorted thought/feeling patterns. If we have been through abuse/trauma, just sitting in silence can trigger you so please practice your trauma exercises. Simply building our capacity to feel can greatly help us to take responsibility for our lives and give us space to love ourselves.

Emotional Meditation

1. Name an emotion. Or name a thought you are having and ask “what is the emotion underneath it?”
2. Let go and let yourself feel the emotion. If it helps, imagine a situation where you would experience this emotion. Where do you feel this emotion in your body? If you couldn't label or put a story around this feeling, and just sit with it as it is, what does it feel like? If this is too intense, try mentally putting the feeling into a “safe room”.
3. Slow down the emotion. Then, bring the feeling into your heart. Feel it inside the heart. Breathe it through.
4. Now, what is the opposite of that emotion? Like, if you said calm, the opposite is frantic. Or if you said angry, the opposite may be happy. Pick an opposite word that works for you. Feel that emotion. (repeat part 2 and 3)
5. Give yourself some Validation statements “I have every right to feel _____. Anyone who went through what I went through would feel that way.” Validating our emotions strengthens our ability to listen to and honor our feelings. Most importantly, give validation to anything painful you went through.
6. More advanced options include: 1) asking yourself when did you feel this feeling as a child, 2) finding something good about the negative emotion and something bad about the positive emotion. So if it's angry/happy, what's a good thing about being angry, and what's a bad thing about being happy? 3) Further use your imagination to describe or talk to the feeling and then respond to what it needs, like letting an emotional wall fall down or explode, or fully playing through a repeating scene in your mind (there are an infinite number of emotional landscapes your imagination can play with). Or 4) see the Body Scan exercise.

From Edmund Bourne (2015) **Anxiety & Phobia Workbook**, and Teal Swan's video- How to Change Your Negative Associations Using Mind Conditioning- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvZS_0F5ktU

Fear is the body's natural response to threats of physical or emotional harm. Also known as panic, dread, anxiety, worry, and phobias, fear is a highly charged emotion that stimulates our flight or fight responses so that we can regain a sense of control. Our bodies were conditioned to use fear for brief moments of distress, such as when being chased by a wild animal, but in our modern world stress can come from a million different places. Our childhood circumstances, life changes, and ongoing social stress can be so full of anxiety that we can actually lose the ability to feel safe. Then, our subconscious tries to protect us by replaying the fear (loss, failure, hurt, rejection) over and over in our mind. However, this can become so crippling that it can lead to unhealthy avoidant behavior like drug addictions, obsessive/compulsive behavior, faking it and being inauthentic, social isolation to the point of being too afraid to go out (agoraphobia), panic attacks, and hella negative thoughts that keep you stuck, kill your self-confidence, fill you with shame, and build more fear. We have so many mechanisms to run from fear that this makes fear one of the hardest emotions to feel though.

A comprehensive approach to addressing our fears happens on several levels: physical (shallow breath, body tension, cumulative stress effects, poor nutrition), emotional (recognizing and expressing suppressed feelings), behavioral (avoidance strategies, panic attacks), mental (countering worry, criticism, perfectionism, mistaken beliefs), interpersonal (communicating assertively with others), self-worth (self-esteem, inner child, assertiveness), and spiritual (purpose in life, connection with Higher Power). While there are many fears, treatment for most involve relaxation training (deep breathing, massage, exercise, meditation), cognitive therapy (exposure through imagery, coping strategies, time management, healthy mantras), a specific focus on building self-esteem and being assertive, and/or nutrition (no caffeine, eating too fast) and medication (Zoloft, Xanax). Use this list to identify your concerns.

Working with fear is about tolerating uncomfortable feelings in baby steps (titration), so start with 1) defining your ultimate goal, then steps to reach that goal, then micro-steps to reach those steps, 2) imagery exposure where we use our imagination to run through those steps before we do them in reality, and 3) real-life exposure, often first with a support person. This allows us to address our difficult feelings in a really deliberate, consistent, safe way. You can use a Weekly Practice Record to record your progress every week, update your micro-goals, and hold yourself accountable (see below). Let your feelings of motivation and risk taking determine your progress and practice visualizing your ultimate goal.

Weekly Practice Record (ex.)

Ultimate Goal: Go out to a bar by myself and talk to people and be comfortable and happy							
Steps: 1) work on my anxiety, 2) find a bar I want to go to, 3) work on talking to people							
Micro-goals for Week 1	m	t	w	th	f	s	s
1. Look up some kind of event listing each day. Pick one thing you would really, actually go to, day or night							
2. Imagine going to it. Driving, walking in, sitting, being there for 20 minutes.							
3. Practice (notice) all the steps of your fear response, pain in chest, need to run, fast thinking.							
4. Practice deep breathing, feeling safe, and getting angry							
5. Build self-esteem by finding 3 non assertive situations a day and practice assertive responses							
6. Go to any real event (day or night) and practice 3 and 4.							
7. Meditate on being a worrier, critic, victim, and perfectionist							

A key part to healing is building self-esteem by learning assertiveness. Assertive people strike a balance between being aggressive or submissive. It involves standing up for yourself without apologizing or disrespecting others, or taking responsibility for getting your needs met in a way that takes others into consideration. It is about developing self-confidence, looking people in the eye, being open, honoring when you say yes and no, and standing your ground calmly. Another part is addressing your feelings about anger. Anger and fear cannot exist in the same place in your mind at the same time, and we often experience one of these emotions as a cover for the other one. Expressing anger about your fears in a healthy way stops them from building up, while not expressing anger can lead to constantly cycling through angry thoughts that will make you shut down. When you are ready for real life situations, build your confidence by desensitizing yourself with small, realistic, baby steps toward your goal. Have a plan for when things get too intense (cause they will, eventually). Focus on trusting your own pace. These things will build your self-esteem. Eventually you will go from not coping to coping to comfortable.

Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt is known for saying, “there is nothing to fear but fear itself.” This is a very true statement. If our emotions are always in response to our thoughts, then our fears ultimately come from our fearful thoughts and beliefs (which are often unconscious and therefore very powerful). It turns out that fear and excitement are actually the same thing; we move into fear when our ego thinks it can’t handle what’s happening. As real as a panic attack feels, for example, they come ultimately from the catastrophic, negative thoughts that make up our self-talk. Often we identify with these thoughts so much we abandon our true selves to become a “worrier”, critic, victim, or perfectionist. To counter these, we can take our negative statements and ask “Is it really true?”, turn them around, and find positive statements like, “This feels horrible, but I can handle this”, “I’m going to wait and let my body do its thing”, “I don’t like this, and I’m doing my best”, or just think of positive things like hugs and candy when you triggered. These tactics teach us to accept our reactions, build confidence, and may even move you one day from fear into pleasure or excitement or joy!

In one sentence, what are you afraid of? Sit with the fear for a bit, see where you feel it in your body. Ask yourself, is it true? Will this really happen?

Imagine your fear was a separate person. Take a walk with your fear. Ask what do they need to feel safe.

What’s the story about this fear, what happened? What’s the worst case scenario that could happen?

List all the negative associations in your story. (e.g., mom=rejection, phone call=bad news)

Create a positive association from each negative one (mom=acceptance, phone call=good news). Take the positive association and find something that you personally have a strong connection with (mom always accepted my style of clothing, a phone call from her could be to share something good going on in her life). Pick something very real for you.

Now, imagine the fear situation again, but this time the positive thing happens. See how you feel. Repeat this a few more times. Do this for every word in your negative associations list. See how you feel. Practice.

Weekly Practice Record

Ultimate Goal: teach my ADHD and autism to work together							
Steps: learn about autism, learn about ADHD, how they work together, what would work for me							
Micro-goals for Week __	m	t	w	th	f	s	s
1.notice how much ADHD is running my life everyday							
2. notice how autism affects my life daily							
3. treat you autism/ADHD as a person, what do they need???							
4. ask each one how can they help the other?							
5. how can we work together on our big problems, being social							
6. start doing social things as an AuDHD person, small things							
7.big time congratulate your small successes every day!!!!							

Weekly Practice Record

Ultimate Goal:							
Steps:							
Micro-goals for Week __	m	t	w	th	f	s	s
1.							
2.							
3.							
4.							
5.							
6.							
7.							

One universal principle of life is that things change, therefore **no one can truly control anything**. Despite this, “how do I let go?” is one of the most frequently asked questions in dealing with emotions and healing. This is because people often decide to finally deal with their emotions only when a great loss or frustration has occurred, forcing them to accept change. In life, we are taught to have things and get what we want, so consequently we are not taught how to deal with loss, be ok with not getting what we want, and letting go. While holding on can clearly create a great deal of hurt and pain, letting go can cut to the core of who we think we are. When our ego is built on needing to be right or having it our way, holding grudges, refusing to accept change, or strong fears and prejudices, then letting go can feel like a threat to our sense of identity, so we choose to hold on. In order to let go, we have to examine what it is we are thinking/believing about the person or situation, feel it through, and make space for new thoughts that can accept things for what they are and look for ways to grow from it.

The “ego” is really a way of speaking of our childhood consciousness. As babies/children, we do not have the abilities to be a surviving, independent self, so **we are hardwired by nature to get our needs met by using our thinking/imagination to make external situations about our identity**. For example, if I wanted my mom’s attention, but she wasn’t there, I may make it mean that I’m not worth being around, get sad, cry, and then mom will pay attention to me. If someone hits me and no one helps, I may make it mean it’s my job to stand up for others as a way to get the justice I initially wanted. While our ego has both conscious and unconscious methods, generally we consciously hold on to ideas of ourselves as good, right, or winning, so our ego goes unconscious to avoid being bad, wrong, or losing. (Consciously seeing ourselves as a “bad boy” or a “loser” is still an oppositional way of feeling right). Trauma ruptures our childhood ego, leading to developmental arrest. Our unconscious parts may stay stuck in childhood dysfunction while conscious parts may mature and succeed. Our ego may be so caught up in holding on to old goals, being right, being tough/blaming ourselves, or avoiding pain that it will blame others, forever rationalize/accommodate/avoid, or stay in denial or reaction-mode instead of change in order to maintain its own sense of what’s familiar. Life has no goal and doesn’t blame or rationalize, so holding onto these childhood tactics just make it impossible to understand others and move on with life. A healthy adult’s ego is one that is willing to look beyond the limited view of our wants/needs/desires to see the larger picture and accept the limitations of the present moment. Or, one that can “back off” and live in reality. Since the human mind only deals with thoughts, not reality, our ego can only hold our thoughts, not the actual thing. Ego-arguing with reality turns the expectations/assumptions and the other 5 frustrations of ego into stress. It doesn’t even matter if you “keep positive” or stay “stuck on negative”, the stress only comes when your thoughts don’t line up with reality. That being said, holding onto a lot of negative thoughts is far more limiting and wastes more energy than positive thinking. **Moving beyond our ego’s fantasies can lead us toward a life of greater acceptance, or as I like to say, “love is letting go”.**

If it helps, remember: **control is entirely an illusion**. If we add up all the actions we engage in versus all the possible actions that could happen at any moment, at best our actions average out to less than 1% control over anything, anyone, our lives, the world, the past/future, life/death, justice/injustice, truth/lies, etc. Who would you be if you let go of all control? Can you control your breath or your next thought? The moment we move outside our 1%, we begin to feel some kind of stress, then fear, anger, sadness, and pain. **These emotions are here to teach us how to let go**, because they show us how our boundaries are not lining up with what’s best for us, giving us an opportunity to examine what we can do with that 1%. Finally, know that if you can’t really control things, then you can’t really have anything either –ownership is another illusion. At some point, whatever it is, you will have to give it back, even if it’s when you die, so technically everything is borrowed or on-loan from the Higher Power. Also, if you can’t have anything, you can’t want anything either. The only thing we have is experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and since thought isn’t real, we use wanting as a coping mechanism for our feelings. This guarantees our thoughts(ego) will stay stuck on what we lack and will make us feel worse. In contrast to this, research has shown that the best way to retrain our ego to let go is to engage in sharing and giving to others. Giving others what we wanted to feel not only increases our own happiness, it also increases the odds that the universe will hear us.

(1)What is it you can't let go of? What is the stressful situation/problem?

(2)What is it you wanted, wanted them to do, or really wanted to experience/feel?

(3)Why do you think you can't let go? What do you not want to feel? What assumptions/expectations etc. are you making about the person/situation? Think of ANYTHING. Feel it in your body. How are these assumptions really about YOU? Can you admit to anything you may have wrong about this person/situation?

MEDITATE. Imagine your part 1 situation, but this time, you get what you want. And the other person (or God) tells you, "I know you want to let go of (read part 1), so I am going to give it to you -even though I don't agree or want it- because I know you need to feel (read part 2), so you can have/keep/deal with (read part 3)." Write it out here. It's ok to simplify but don't change your words or the meaning.

I know you want to let go of-
so I am going to give it to you, even though I don't agree or want it,
because I know you need to feel -
so that you can have/keep/deal with-

How do you feel? Are they still wrong? Do you still want it?

If yes, then give 3 deep, honest, real reasons why you are better off NOT getting what you wanted? Sit with it.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Then, give 3 deep, honest, real reasons why the other person/situation is better off if you don't get what you wanted? Blow your ego up! Sit with that, see how you feel. Give yourself some validation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Finally, take the things you said you wanted to feel/experience and ask how you could give these things to yourself or share them with the other person/situation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Bessel Van Der Kolk (2014). **The body keeps the score**, H. Cloud and J. Townsend (1992). **Boundaries**, and Psalm Isadora- Tantra-the art of sacred sexuality- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5EO3mnb0BY>

Our feelings make up our emotional universe, but feeling is not just an emotional state, it is also our bodily sensations. I can activate the feelings in my right toe by just thinking about it. I can describe what I feel as a feeling (calm, hurt, inspired) or as a sensation (burning, soreness, tight). I can go further and describe the feeling in terms of size, movement, shape or any other quality. I can go from my right toe all the way up to my head, taking in each body part. This is known as a body scan meditation, which comes from the school of Tantra, a philosophy that is about seeing the body as a spiritual place of energy transference. **Our Higher Power gave us a body so we can take in and give out the energy of the universe, fulfilling our life's purpose.** By doing a body scan we can greatly examine our emotions through the brain/body connection.

In terms of evolution, human beings have the same basic senses, emotions, and physical reactions as all the other mammals (hairs stand up when afraid, snarling when enraged), but a larger frontal lobe and so a greater capacity to think. However, since we are 99.9% the same as chimpanzees (and our brain is 80% emotional and unconscious) **our animal nature will always win out over our willpower 4 out of 5 times.** Modern psychology has found that while the body cannot think, it does “keep score” by holding both emotional energy and memories. A frightening incident can make you lose your voice, or a pain in your back can be from years of not getting the support you needed. While your rational brain can analyze, justify, and/or dissociate from your painful experiences, your emotional body cannot. This is why you can't just rationally talk yourself out of your true feelings or from what you really want. We often use knowledge to fight our body limitations, but as animals we will always end up compromising between our ideals and what our body can actually handle.

Our body is an important part of understanding our physical and emotional boundaries. A healthy boundary is like a building with doors or a fence with gates- most of it strongly keeps bad things out but part of it can deliberately let good things in. Boundaries denote ownership, or what is mine and what is yours. How our bodies were treated as babies and children shape our first emotional boundaries and what to expect from others. Since research has shown that the brain processes emotional pain in the same manner as physical pain, **abuse and trauma are, by default, internal emotional boundary violations.** Not feeling accepted or loved can feel like a literal stab in the heart. Our bodies remember the fear/shame of a spanking even if our brain does not. Since the body will remember the trauma and keep reacting to it, you may lose the ability to distinguish between safety and danger, always assume danger, and then stay stuck in anger or fear. A lack of safety in our primary relationships can make us into adults who “keep score” by having an impaired sense of inner reality, feeling places of deadness/numbness inside or chronic pain/inflammation, gravitate toward unhealthy situations, and treating ourselves poorly by engaging in risky, self-damaging behavior; making us feel unsafe in our own bodies. Long term, all this can lead to migraines, asthma, back pain, headaches, weight gain, poor sleep, and perhaps even irritable bowel syndrome.

A body scan meditation heals the brain-body connection by engaging the self-observing, body-based system which speaks through sensations, tone of voice, and body tensions. We can learn to pendulate, or move in and out of our body sensations. We start by establishing an inner place of safety, or a place where you can ground yourself when you feel uncomfortable (focus on breath, clench hands/feet, tapping). This teaches us to overcome any dissociation we have with our body memories. **Making friends with your body** also means examining our body narratives (the ways we talk about our body and our body memories) and examining our

feelings. Our bodies' feelings shift constantly. If we let ourselves fully experience the feelings, it will eventually shift into something else. It may take you back to a memory or a thought that you are holding onto that is not serving you well. Other safe ways of learning how to reconnect to your body are meditation and yoga because these techniques calm us down and let us check in on our breath and heart rate.

While every area of the body is important, there are three key areas to really focus on: **the stomach, the heart, and the head**. Our stomach or “gut brain” has been found to hold neurons that not only control the movement of food but also our instantaneous bodily responses to fear and safety. Our “heart brain” has neurons that control heartbeat and regulate our emotions- our happiness and sadness. And our head area, including the neck and shoulders, is where thought happens and where we store anger, frustration, and tension.

Like it or not, this body is the only one you are ever going to have, and you have little control over what’s going to happen to it. If we are 99.9% the same as chimps, then there is indeed a lot we all have to learn to let go of. Feeling our emotional body teaches us to care for ourselves in an immediate and intrinsic way, makes spaces for us to heal our emotional boundary violations, and develops our internal wisdom in harmony with the universe.

The following prompts are written by level of intensity, you are never required to do all of them.

Body Scan Meditation

1. Get comfortable and take in your entire emotional universe, from head to toe. Anything you can feel (**KEEP SCORE**). If anything is too intense, always try putting the feeling into a mental “safe room” where you can observe and talk to it first.
2. Next, bring your conscious awareness to your toes (**CURIOUS**). What do you feel there? Warm or cold, large or small, stillness or movement? Whatever you feel, if you are willing, I invite you to :

A. CALM- Relax: Sink in (like sinking into a jacuzzi)

Slow down (to stillness, to boredom)
Drop your defenses (give up the fight)
Follow the feeling (notice where it travels)

B. KIND- Unrepress: Let go (of control, faking it, of expectations/judgment)

Give yourself permission to totally fall apart.
Let it release on it’s own (uncoil, bubble up, break apart, back off)
Ride the wave (back/forth, up/down, in/out)
Feel/fill this space with soothing compassion

C. CARE- Digest: Bring the feeling into the heart (let it drip like honey)

Acknowledge any pain (honor your aches and pains)
Give this feeling unconditional love, be loving, kind
Drop it into the gut (and continue to let go)

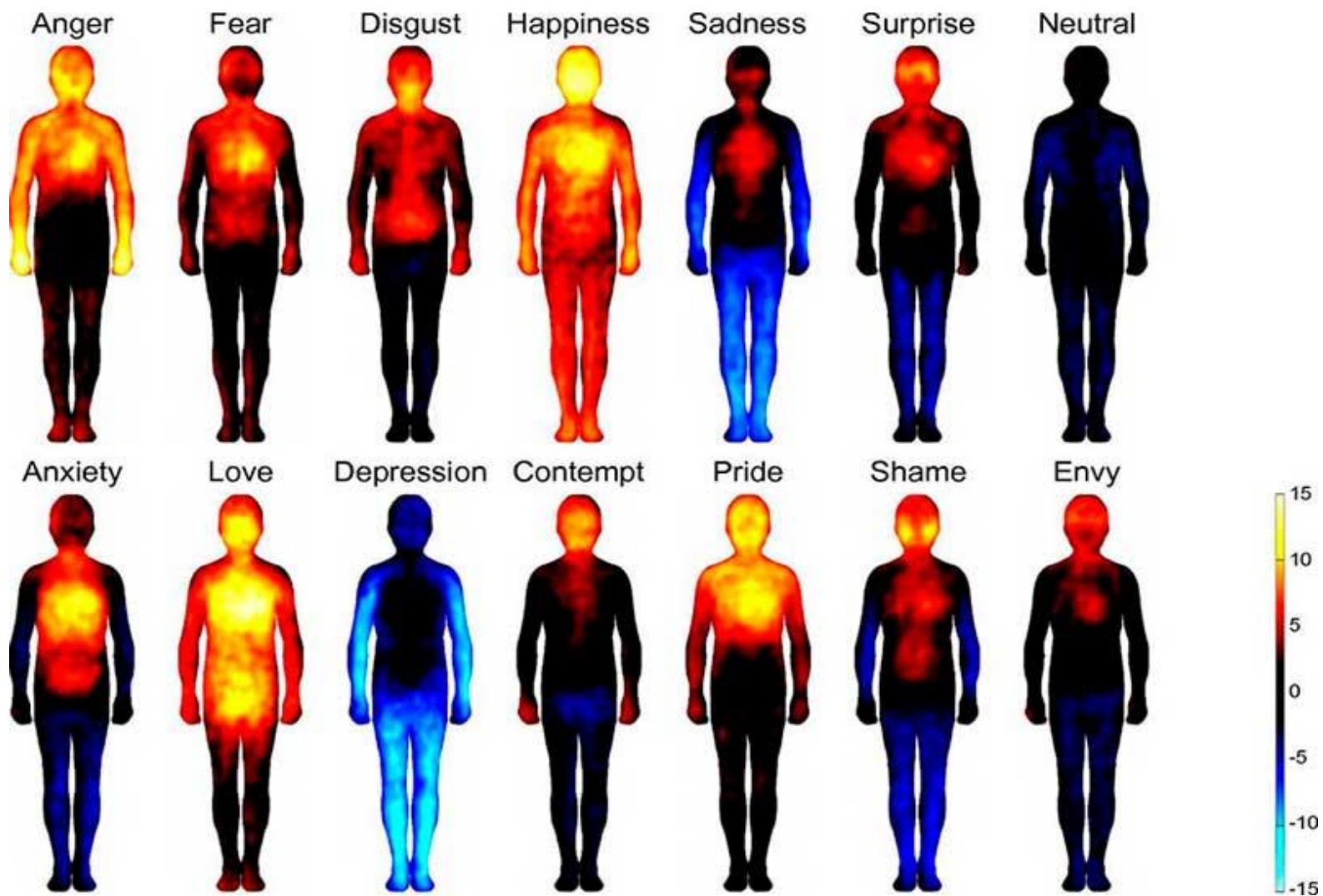
D. COMPLETE/CAREFREE- Release: Sink the feeling even deeper (into the big muscles of your hips and thighs, your seat muscles)

Let the feeling bubble up (expand all over your body)
Push out the feeling (like you can’t take it anymore)
And in its place, may this space be filled with love.

3. Move to the bottom of the feet, then work from ankles, calves, knees, etc., all the way to the head, and repeat step 2 for each body part. Be sure to take extra time for your gut, heart, and head. Take in your whole self again when you get to the head at the end. If this is more than you can handle, always back up to 2A or step 1.
4. Another technique is to build energy up. Start with your seat muscles, build energy, then move that energy to your gut, then heart, then head. Repeat. This is good for purging up stuck feelings.
5. More advanced techniques are 1) to connect your sensations to your life experiences. When was the first time you felt this feeling? 2) Using a mantra, like: pick a body part (or a thought), feel any weight or stress that is connected to it, and say “Please rest. You deserve rest.” over and over. 3) Focus on **PLEASURE**. Start with your genitals (or your hands in your lap), and just feel any pleasure there, then move to other areas/thoughts, and sit

with any pleasure you can find there. Use your imagination to speak to your body and come up with other creative ways to play with your sensations.

Emotion Body Map



To test your ability to use the preceding social/emotional material well, I have created the following exercise that combines them together in an effective way. It works well, so I am calling it “The Ego Killer”, but don’t worry, it’s more of an “ego corrector” or stress reliever. It does work well, however, so please take much self-care both during and after this exercise.

1. Write a **Judge your Neighbor worksheet** about anything that stresses you out.
2. When you get to the end of the worksheet, **identify 1-2 emotions that came up as difficult** to feel through. Write them at the top of the page. (Note: these emotions may be what you wrote in number 6, but it may not. Scan over the worksheet to find 1-2 feelings that were hard to feel or even acknowledge.)
3. Pick one of those emotions, or just combine them, and do the **Emotional Vipassana** exercise. Feel it through with the **Body Scan**. Then find the opposite of that emotion and Body Scan that one too.
4. Run your emotion through the hate/love range of the **Self-Love, Acceptance, Validation** exercise. Be sure to use neutral to examine each of the 5 frustrations of ego.
5. Then do the **Judge your Neighbor worksheet**, in full, from start to finish. Allow yourself to rest!!

Part 2:

Inner Child Work, Relationship Work

After about 9 months of being in our mother's womb, we are born. However, babies are born emotionally complete, but physically completely helpless. So helpless, they are even born without the ability to make themselves feel better when they get upset, or what's called **self-soothing**. Aside from thumb sucking, which can happen in the womb, the first 6 months of a baby's life requires their parents to look at them lovingly, touch them, hold them, nurse them, and rock them to sleep. Babies are born with "mirror neurons" that are trained to mimic the actions of what they see. So, at the age of 6-9 months, with the role modeling of parents, babies begin to soothe their own pain. This forms the basis for developing a healthy or **secure attachment style** that builds self-care and self-esteem as babies develop into children.

Examples of self-soothing for babies are babbling, grabbing a soft object (teddy bear), patting and rubbing themselves, soft music or muffled (womb) sounds, or even looking into a mirror (babies have no self-judgment). As they get older, babies with secure attachments develop interdependence, where they are willing to explore fear and danger in the world because they know that they can return home to a safe place. If you did not get this level of assured safety as a baby, or if you were abused or neglected back then, you may have attached to caregivers that left you feeling some combination of anxious, avoidant, disorganized, or reactive- feelings which we take into our adulthood and form the basis of our adult attachment style.

Ongoing or major episodes of stress and trauma can disrupt a baby's emotional system. However, because these feelings occurred when you were a baby, you may have had no choice but to block them out, leaving just fragments of a scary or sad experience and not whole memories which can lead to confusing, overwhelming emotions and flashbacks, irrational/neurotic inner voices, hyper-vigilance (constantly on the lookout for danger), infant depression, negative thinking, and a host of health problems like migraines, allergies, and chronic pain in adulthood. Self-soothing is critical because it resets the **amygdala** (a-Mig-dala), the part of the brain that deals with emotions and flight or fight responses, and it teaches us **distress tolerance**- the ability to get through a crisis that you can't manage or solve. These things work better than unhealthy skills like constantly fidgeting, binge eating, drugs and other addictions, sex, social isolation, or lashing out at other people. Self-soothing teaches us to treat ourselves with compassion, kindness, and care.

Self-soothing involves **reconnecting to the senses**. Find pleasurable things to see, hear, smell, touch, taste, or move to (kinesthetic). Healthy adult versions of self-soothing are hugging, wrapping in a blanket, a warm bath, brushing your hair, nature walks, calming music, sipping tea, rain/ocean/cricket sounds (ASMR videos), sucking a lollipop, petting animals, cooking food, scented candles, coloring books, fidget toys, and journaling. The list will be different for everyone, but in general soothing things are warm, dark, quiet, mellow, sweet, soft, rhythmic, or cuddly. Also, many of these things are similar to "grounding" techniques, like walking barefoot on grass, eating slowly, focusing on the breath, or stretching.

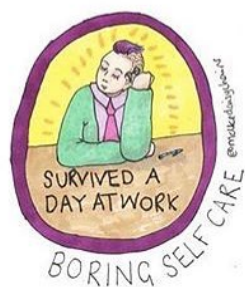
Many people have a hard time with self-soothing. Not getting this from our parents leads us to be adults who are chronically hard on or abandon ourselves. Also, these exercises can bring up deep-seated repressed baby-irritations, or feelings of guilt/shame/fear we usually avoid, or judgements about being childish. It's important to note that **we are healing our emotional connection with the inner baby**. Self-soothing may not make any sense to the rational part of the brain, but it's the emotional part that's the most important. We don't make fun of babies for doing these things, so don't make fun of the part of you that will always be a baby. Babies need constant, unconditional soothing- **AND SO DO YOU!** Imagine walking into a room and hearing a crying baby. You pick up the baby and see it's you, as a baby. What would you do to soothe that baby? At least practice talking to yourself and holding yourself in a soothing, loving way- **EVERYDAY!**

Inner Baby Meditation:

Allow yourself to rest. Imagine yourself going down a long staircase. Each breath down a step, slowly. When you get to the bottom, you see a door. When you walk through the door, you see a crib, look in, and it's you- as a baby. Your inner baby begins to cry. How do you soothe your inner baby? You can pick up the baby, rock them, say kind words "It's ok, you are safe, I am here", or sing them a song. Allow yourself to go back to the womb. More advanced options are to imagine yourself as the baby, to think of soothing things (hugs, smiles, pizza), to think about releasing your coping mechanisms, or to play some soothing baby music.

#BoringSelfCare

The best definition of self-care I ever heard was, "living in such a way that you never feel the need to take a vacation from your life." Well, #BoringSelfCare is an Instagram meme that is about celebrating the everyday things we do to take care of ourselves and our lives. So many of us struggle to accomplish basic self care, and then we beat ourselves up for not doing them. Use the space here to draw your own Boring Self Care picture (art therapy).



Instructions: When completing this questionnaire, please focus on one significant relationship – ideally a current or past partner as the focus here is on adult relationships. This does not *necessarily* need to be a romantic relationship but *must* be the individual with whom you feel the most connection. Who is your primary “go to” person if you’re sick, in trouble, want to celebrate, call with news, etc.? This questionnaire is designed to be an interactive learning tool. Please highlight, circle, or comment on any statements that are particularly relevant to you or that you’d like to revisit for exploration at a later time. When responding, consider how strongly you identify with each statement. Using the scale below, respond in the space provided.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS NOT MEANT TO BE A DIAGNOSTIC TOOL, but it’s a good starting point to begin your personal exploration into your attachment styles.

		Disagree	Sometimes Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
		0	1	2	3
1.	I feel relaxed with my partner most of the time.				
2.	I find it easy to flow between being close and connected with my partner to being on my own.				
3.	If my partner and I hit a glitch, it is relatively easy for me to apologize, brainstorm a win-win solution, or repair the misattunement or disharmony.				
4.	People are essentially good at heart.				
5.	It is a priority to keep agreements with my partner.				
6.	I attempt to discover and meet the needs of my partner whenever possible and I feel comfortable expressing my own needs.				
7.	I actively protect my partner from others and from harm and attempt to maintain safety in our relationship.				
8.	I look at my partner with kindness and caring and look forward to our time together.				
9.	I am comfortable being affectionate with my partner.				
10.	I can keep secrets, protect my partner’s privacy, and respect boundaries.				
Section Total					

		Disagree	Sometimes Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
		0	1	2	3
1.	When my partner arrives home or approaches me, I feel inexplicably stressed – especially when he or she wants to connect.				
2.	I find myself minimizing the importance of close relationships in my life.				
3.	I insist on self-reliance; I have difficulty reaching out when I need help, and I do many of life’s tasks or my hobbies, alone.				
4.	I sometimes feel superior in not needing others and wish others were more self-sufficient.				
5.	I feel like my partner is always there but would often prefer to have my own space unless I invite the connection.				
6.	Sometimes I prefer casual sex instead of a committed relationship.				
7.	I usually prefer relationships with things or animals instead of people.				
8.	I often find eye contact uncomfortable and particularly difficult to maintain.				
9.	It is easier for me to think things through than to express myself emotionally.				
10.	When I lose a relationship, at first I might experience separation elation and then become depressed.				
Section Total					

Scoring:

For each section, add up your responses and record your total number. The section with the highest number will likely correspond to your unique attachment style. You may discover a dominant style or a mix of styles. This questionnaire is not meant to be a label or diagnosis. It is only intended to indicate tendencies and prompt more useful, precise personal exploration.

EARLY ATTACHMENT AND LATER OUTCOMES

The attachment bond – a child’s earliest relationship with his or her primary caregiver (usually mother) – affects relationships throughout life.

- **Secure** attachment occurs when the primary caregiver is attuned to the non-verbal messages sent by baby, when mother “reads” and responds appropriately to baby’s cries, joyfulness and fears.
- **Insecure** attachment results when caregiver is emotionally unavailable to infant for any reason: overly stressed, anxious or depressed, rejecting, abusive, abandoning, physically or mentally ill, alcoholic, or even unintentionally neglectful. Insecure attachment may also occur if a child is ill, hospitalized, or has a painful, undiagnosed medical problem.

The outcome of secure and insecure attachments is likely to be reflected as below.

To understand someone’s early life, look at the right hand (shaded) columns for some clues.

ATTACHMENT STYLE	PARENTAL STYLE	LATER ADULT RELATIONSHIPS	
Secure	Aligned/attuned with child	• able to create meaningful, trusting, lasting relationships • empathetic; comfortable sharing feelings • recognizes and maintains appropriate boundaries • self-confident; good self-esteem; feels wanted • takes responsibility for actions	• resilient; copes well with stress/anxiety • has conscience and remorse • seeks and maintains social support • tends to believe that romantic love is enduring • believes life is worth living
Avoidant	Unavailable or rejecting; neglectful	• avoids closeness or emotional connection • unable or unwilling to share thoughts and feelings • shows little or no emotion or empathy • needy, yet distant; may be whiny or bullying • critical; rigid; intolerant; blaming; vengeful	• feels unlovable; creates excuses to avoid intimacy • casual sex; fantasizes about others during sex • sees love as rare and temporary • little distress when relationship ends • may use alcohol to be in social situations
Anxious/Ambivalent	Inconsistent and sometimes intrusive parent communication; unavailable	• anxious and insecure; feels helpless • controlling; blaming • erratic, impulsive, unpredictable • superficially charming and engaging • falls in love often; clingy	• manipulates to gain closeness; then sabotages to create distance • worries partner does not love them; frequent break-ups • distraught when relationship ends • often uses alcohol/drugs to reduce anxiety in relationship
Disorganized	Ignores or doesn’t see child’s needs; behavior is frightening or traumatizing; may be adopted or in foster care	• chaotic; insensitive; explosive; abusive • untrusting even while craving security • feels worthless, unwanted and unlovable • depressed; anxious	• erratic – may seek relationship, cut it off, and then try to re-establish it • underachieving; lies, steals or cheats • alcohol/drugs increase negative behaviors
Reactive	Extremely unattached or dysregulated; abandonment; multiple caregivers; foster or adoptive homes	• cannot establish positive relationships • lacks eye contact • lacks guilt or remorse • lacks cause/effect thinking	• often misdiagnosed as other conditions (ADHD, Conduct Disorder, Oppositional Defiant Disorder, Antisocial Personality Disorder, etc) • may become addicted to alcohol or other drugs

This material comes from the [nomore shameproject.com](https://www.nomore shameproject.com), and the Youtube page Trauma Recovery University (#CPTSDchat) by Athena Moberg-https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC_pxd6gjX2Dd5amM_uboiRA

- About 80% of 21-year-olds who were abused as children meet criteria for at least one psychological disorder.
- 50% of those abused as children will develop PTSD (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) or CPTSD (Complex-PTSD) as a child or later in adulthood.
- 50% of people with eating disorders were sexually abused as children.
- 2/3rds of people in drug abuse treatment reported being abused or neglected as children.
- More than 50% of people abused as children experience domestic abuse in later life.
- Over one billion people around the world report being abused as children. A report of child abuse is made every 10 seconds.
- 5 children a day in the US die as a result of child abuse. 80% of them are younger than the age of 5.
- 90% of children abused knew their abuser (usually a family member or friend of family). 40% were abused by an older child.
- Females are 5 times more likely than men, black children are twice as likely than whites, and poor children are 3x more likely to be abused as children.
- 10- 20% of all young people engage in self-harm (cutting, binge drinking, anorexia, starting fights, hitting oneself, extreme rules or pressure or social isolation). 50% of people engaged in self-harm have been sexually abused.

Answer this: If my wounds were visible _____

Often we struggle to recognize forms of abuse and call them for what they are. Many of us don't get external validation for what we went through or people outright refuse to believe us. **We often minimize or deny the abuse from childhood**, especially if we were told to "get over it" or "just be grateful". Often we blame ourselves or avoid the reality of our feelings because it's hard to accept that those we love or were supposed to protect us failed and/or betrayed us. Many of us only get help because after years of nothing else working to heal or feel better, we just want the pain to stop.

Emotional neglect is one of the most silent and painful forms of childhood abuse. Unlike physical abuse or maltreatment, **it is mostly invisible and may show no symptoms until later in adulthood** once you have survived the abuse and are struggling to have a "normal" life. Because an emotional bruise can last a lifetime if not examined, this can often mean years or even decades of "normal" functioning until something occurs to jar those memories open later in life.

Parenting Styles of Emotional Neglect: authoritarian (strict/don't listen), permissive (no boundaries), narcissistic (focus on their own needs), perfectionistic (unrealistically high expectations that make you feel never good enough), absent (physically there but no emotional connection/children raise themselves into overly responsible "little adults"). All these parenting styles invalidate the child's experience to the point that they can't trust themselves. Often our parents pretended everything was ok instead of recognizing our feelings. Without honest or positive reflection, children struggle to develop a positive sense of self or reality. Many children believe the lies of their abuser and develop "learned helplessness" where, after years of not exercising personal power (where saying "no" didn't solve anything), we develop the belief that we can't do anything right and we shouldn't even bother trying. These tactics create cognitive dissonance in children, forcing our consciousness(ego) to split/break into separate parts, setting us up for significant emotional distress and developing the idea that we are bad and responsible for the abuse.

Symptoms of Emotional Neglect: numbing out, feeling empty or like there's something missing, feeling like you're a fake(imposter) or you don't belong in the world or no one loves you, being easily overwhelmed or discouraged, living through chronic goal setting, feeling like your going crazy, and thoughts of suicide. C-PTSD may mean you have hard wired unhealthy thinking patterns that were reinforced during early critical brain stages as children and may not appear until adulthood. You may have PTSD emotional flashbacks, anxiety, triggers, extreme sensitivity to rejection, hypervigilant about safety, major sleep

problems, and obsessive/negative thinking. You may be an expert at putting up walls against other people or your feelings. You may be afraid of feeling happy or afraid to feel altogether (emotaphobia). Other symptoms are difficulty attaching to others (social isolation), poor impulse control, excessive shame, perfectionism, and a poor self-concept (body image problems, low self-worth, self-esteem). A history of abuse, emotional pain, shame, and disconnection from love leads us to unhealthy attachments or an addiction to pleasure seeking (food, porn, shopping, exercise, love, work, people pleasing, video games). You may have dissociated as a child to stay safe during the abuse, but as an adult you can't stay in the present moment, or live on auto-pilot, struggle to be in your body, or stay stuck in fantasies. Many survivors of abuse used hypervigilance and perfectionism as a way to stay safe as a child. This makes you into an adult who is gifted at handling extreme situations or complicated tasks but struggles emotionally on a day to day level or has no ability to just relax! These tactics can make you feel good/safe in the short term or lessen the pain and anxiety, but are really examples of self-sabotage and self-harm. Survivors often struggle with keeping jobs due to emotional instability, low self esteem, or burn out. Self-care is especially hard, even maintaining daily habits (brushing teeth, eating) is a challenge because focusing on your body can bring up feelings of worthlessness. Even procrastination can be tied to abuse, because low self-worth and high anxiety can lead to chronic avoidance. Underneath all these symptoms is the idea that we are afraid, ashamed, and not worthy of love, so we unconsciously destroy our efforts to do better in life.

Studies even show that **those abused in childhood have actual brain damage** on the same level as those who have been to war. Constantly living in fear and stress soaks the executive functions of our brain (the parts that make decisions) in a toxic amount of cortisol and adrenaline. The prefrontal cortex is less able to deal with changing habits or long range planning and consequences. The amygdala has a hard time managing emotional responses and overreacts. Our hippocampus shrinks and damages how we store memories. These impairments create intrusive, obsessive thinking, leaving us in a state of hyperarousal and chronically fatigued. And it potentially even leads to the creation of auto-immune diseases and other physical ailments in the body.

Another major issue is social isolation and attachment. Abused children attach to their primary caregiver in unhealthy ways. Many were forced to be alone as part of how your abuser controlled you. This means we may not have learned key social skills, or adopted unhealthy social skills, making it very difficult to navigate social situations and build friendships. Because we loved the person that abused us, **we learned to reach out and to fear getting hurt at the same time**, creating conflicting feelings like driving with the parking brake on. This leads us to not trust our intuition and choose unhealthy relationships in adulthood. Abuse survivors, coming from extreme relationships as children, are often obsessively clingy or completely aloof, overly logical or crazy emotional, overshare everything too fast or never open up at all, terrified of arguing or a rageaholic. Just the thought of people might send you into survival mode. You may prefer to just stick with pornography, or be around animals instead of people (cat lady). While you may be able to avoid certain people that trigger you (family), you may not be able to avoid others (coworkers).

Words can be perceived entirely differently by a person who has survived this trauma. For example, our internal dialogue, our self-talk, can be filled with the negative language of our abuser. We can even hear them in our heads, reinforcing all of the put downs, criticisms, and disgust thrown onto us. This can lead us to think every situation is a catastrophe, regardless of what actually happens. Even compliments can be hard for people who have been abused, because compliments often happened as grooming before the abuse happened. If you went through any kind of pre-verbal abuse (before age 3) you may have only flashes of feelings or a snapshot of the abuse. Survivors of abuse are often passive-aggressive because of unresolved fear and anger from childhood. Regularly never getting your needs met may teach you to hide or shut down from fear of disappointment or disapproval. Your abuse may even have been so bad, you may shut down and forget whole sections of your childhood, segregating your inner child from your everyday present reality. Having normalized living life in extremes, **it can be hard to develop a middle way, so we call it “the scary middle”**.

Tips for Healing from Emotional Abuse

Develop Radical Acceptance- Reread this information and just let yourself cry. Meditate on which parts are most true for you. Know that all abused children have thick repressed layers of rage, resentment and denial. Allow yourself to fully acknowledge what happened to you, how it's affecting you now, and be willing to make space to feel it through. This overcomes the need to protect ourselves through numbing, stuffing, avoiding, minimizing, and disengaging. Definitely go to the #CPTSDchat (Trauma Recovery University) Youtube page and watch the hundreds of videos they have on this topic (especially the ones with both Bobbi Parish and Athena Moberg are very informative).

Become aware of positive and negative emotions- Healing happens on 2 levels. The first is moving from feeling bad to feeling better. “We have to feel all our feels so that we can heal.” When we deny the truth of our feelings we cannot heal. Develop your emotional intelligence. Honor what your inner child self feels. Recognize any chronic extreme feelings of anxiety, anger, or shame. Take responsibility for your emotions. Commit to your own recovery because you are worth it.

Identify your needs and take steps to meet them- recognize that your caregivers may not have taught you to meet all of your own needs and that you can step by step learn how to do that as an adult. Work on becoming a responsible adult (#adulting). Learn to communicate your personal boundaries clearly and unapologetically. Notice how people touch and speak to you, what is acceptable conversation. Learn to breathe and relax. Validate your experiences and feelings. Question any situation where love equals abuse.

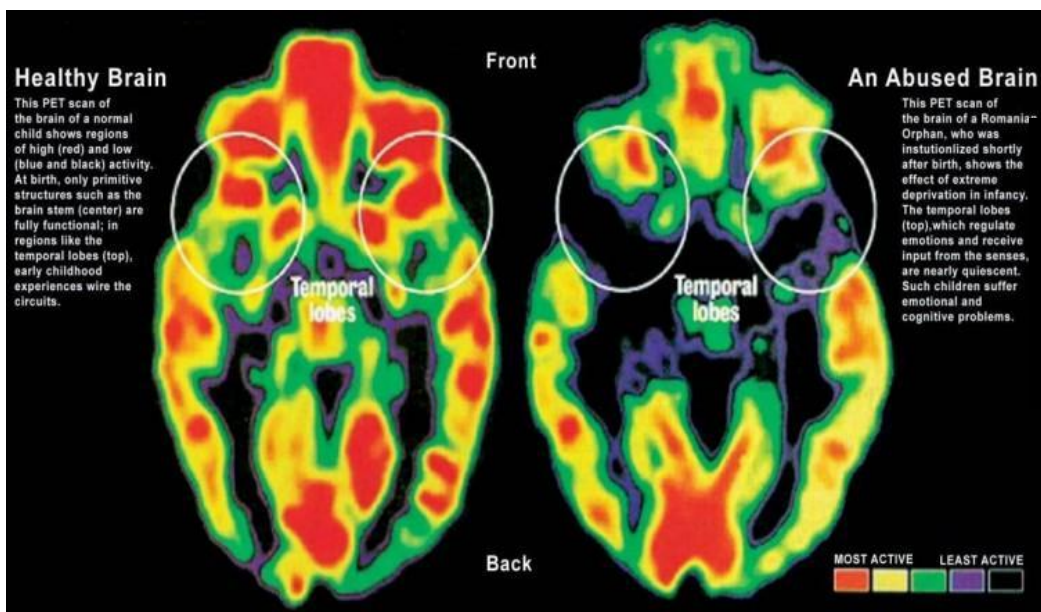
Deconstruct your old negative beliefs- The second level of healing is to realize that ultimately your feeling bad was based on the thoughts/beliefs/concepts you were holding. Recognize that you may have been told things that were abusive, or you needed to believe them in order to survive, and as adults we have to question if those beliefs still serve our best interests. Examine how you talk to yourself (self-talk), be less judgemental. Talk to and stand up for the parts of you that need a voice or compassion! See the Deconstructing Beliefs and Common Thought Distortions worksheets.

Be gentle and start developing good self care- kindness and compassion are key! Observe yourself and notice when and how you judge. Take away the judgment you give to your emotions. This takes PRACTICE!! Develop healthy body acceptance, eating behaviors. Find ways to sleep well at night. Realize you were set up by others to not be healthy. Your problems are not your inherent fault. There is nothing fundamentally wrong with you, so don't beat yourself up, even when you struggle or don't succeed. Develop self-compassion, patience, kindness. Build on your existing strengths instead of focusing on your weaknesses.

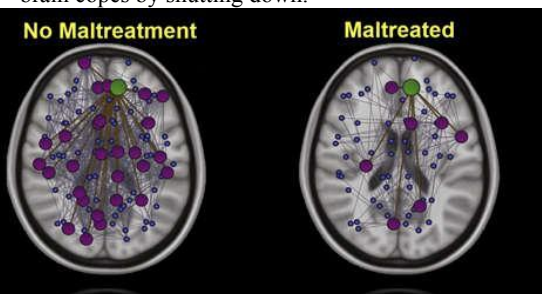
Develop a realistic Crisis Management Plan- for the day when nothing goes right or you just can't handle anything, have a set of super accessible, realistic tools on hand to help ground yourself. Examples are a special smell (candle, oil, food), something to hold, positive affirmations/mantras, a safe place to go (car, under a blanket). Take time out to see how you deal with stress and ways you could be healthier.

Find safe community for validation. Recognize and find spaces where you feel you can truly be yourself or explore what that is. Learn to deal with people in small steps that you can handle (#peopleling). This can be large like making new friends or doing new things or small like finding your favorite food or time of day. Talk to others about your experiences and your feelings. Develop self-respect and learn to honor your limitations (honor your yes's and no's). Develop your capacity for emotional intimacy. Acknowledge and protect yourself against those who are not healthy, or narcissistic, and will not or will never change. Decide what boundaries are best between you and your abusers (low contact, no contact). Focus on healthy friends for family support (Framily). Reclaim your power in one aspect of your life at a time. Also, consider getting a pet or safety animal.

Know that everyone's recovery/healing journey is different. Moving from victim to survivor to thriver is not a linear process. Give yourself space to BE! Connect to your inner child. Don't judge what he/she says, remember, they went through the worst of the abuse. Engage in the play you didn't get as a child. Read and educate yourself about trauma, psychology, self-help/spirituality.



As you can see, the abused brain has far less activity and connections. Years of abuse creates CPTSD, where your brain copes by shutting down.



The good news here is, we know that the brain continues growing throughout your life (neuroplasticity), so even childhood emotional abuse and neglect can be overcome with living and eating healthy, learning about emotions, meditation, positive supportive friends, and living in a loving and safe environment.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) Survey

From the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente- <https://acestoohigh.com/got-your-ace-score/>

The CDC's ACE's study uncovered a stunning link between childhood trauma and chronic disease and social/emotional problems, and that this trauma is far more widespread than people acknowledge. As your ACE score increases, so does the risk of disease, social and emotional problems. With an ACE score of 4 or more, the likelihood of chronic pulmonary lung disease increases 390 percent; hepatitis, 240 percent; depression 460 percent; attempted suicide, 1,220 percent.

Prior to your 18th birthday:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
5. Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
7. Was your mother or stepmother: Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___
10. Did a household member go to prison? No ___ If Yes, enter 1 ___

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____ **This is your ACE Score.**

While a high ACE's score is important to know, also know that it's not the only measure of your health outcomes. Other researchers have focused on the role of positive things in childhood that may have offered resilience against traumatic events.

To determine your **level of resilience**, ask yourself the following questions:

Definitely true Probably true Not sure Probably Not True Definitely Not True

1. I believe that my mother loved me when I was little.
2. I believe that my father loved me when I was little.
3. When I was little, other people helped my mother and father take care of me and they seemed to love me.
4. I've heard that when I was an infant someone in my family enjoyed playing with me, and I enjoyed it, too.
5. When I was a child, there were relatives in my family who made me feel better if I was sad or worried.
6. When I was a child, neighbors or my friends' parents seemed to like me.
7. When I was a child, teachers, coaches, youth leaders or ministers were there to help me.
8. Someone in my family cared about how I was doing in school.
9. My family, neighbors and friends talked often about making our lives better.
10. We had rules in our house and were expected to keep them.
11. When I felt really bad, I could almost always find someone I trusted to talk to.
12. As a youth, people noticed that I was capable and could get things done.
13. I was independent and a go-getter.
14. I believed that life is what you make it.

How many of these 14 protective factors did I have as a child and youth? (How many of the 14 were circled "Definitely True" or "Probably True"?) _____

Abuse List

Because our abuse is something that is so painful we would rather avoid, it's important to take time and actually write down what we remember going through. Use this space to make a list of anything from childhood you would consider to be traumatic/abusive (physical, emotional, financial, relationship, verbal, pre-verbal - ANYTHING!) Also include neglect (what should have been there but wasn't, things not said or done, information withheld). Note if these things were ongoing or one-time, interconnected to other issues, resolved or still in conflict. Don't do this in one sitting. Just know that you have a list here you can turn to if you need it.

[illegible]

This material comes from healer/psychic Teal Swan's YouTube page - <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheSpiritualCatalyst/videos>
and **Healing the Shame that Binds You** by John Bradshaw

To a Child- by Christopher Marley

The greatest poem ever known is one all poets have outgrown.
The poetry innate, untold, of being only four years old.
Still young enough to be a part of nature's great impulsive heart.
Born comrade of bird and bee, and unselfconscious as the tree.
And yet with lovely reason skilled, each day new paradise to build.

A late explorer of each sense, without dismay, without pretense.
In your unstrained, transparent eyes, there is no conscience, no surprise.
Life's queer conundrums you accept, your strange divinity still kept.
And life that sets all things in rhyme, may make you poet too in time.
But there were days, oh tender elf, when you were poetry itself.

As babies we are born with a complete, unique, innate sense of being, but also innocent and powerless. Then, we are socialized into a family and a society that teaches us that certain thoughts, actions, and desires are good/acceptable and others are bad; or in other words **we learn to judge/compare which leads to shame and guilt**. Guilt is feeling bad about going against your morals. Shame is the recognition of one's limitations. Shame and guilt can be either healthy or toxic. Feeling guilty about something you did promotes thinking about how to do it differently, and feeling shame prompts you to question your beliefs. Ideally, shame teaches us to value our connection to God and appreciate our limited part in the larger picture. However, when we have guilt/shame about a core part of our identity, like our race/class/gender/sexuality, or if your parents made you feel wrong for just being alive or wanting anything, then we develop toxic shame and start to deny and hide who we are so we can be accepted by others. As kids, our parents were our role models and only friends for many years, and so they literally made up our whole sense of life/universe. We are not born with a developed sense of "I" yet, so we trust caregivers to model for us both how to be a person and what to expect from others. By teaching us to eat, bathe, ride a bike, and learn we start to internalize how we should care for and love ourselves. Shame is so deep that by the age of 3, children have already ingrained in them a model of how to process their shame by watching their caregivers. So not only is the shame we feel ours, it is also the shame we inherited from our caregivers (or even ancestors), which can outright crush our childhood ego. If our parents gave us good enough support, we grow up feeling the universe is on our side. However, if our parents violated our boundaries, then we feel the universe is against us. If we can call the "light" the conscious, open, and healthy parts of ourselves, then the "shadow" is our childhood wounds (deep emotional boundary violations) buried by shame into our subconscious. These parts are in resistance to the light, so addressing them is called "Shadow Work". Because this shadow often begins in childhood, this is also known as "Inner Child Work"

In a healthy adult/child relationship, the adult demonstrates healthy shame by recognizing their limitations, taking responsibility for how they deal with their feelings, and admitting to their faults. However, in a toxic shame-based environment, we learn to ignore our feelings, blame/guilt/shame others, take things personally, and never admit to being wrong, ever. This teaches children that they are responsible for the abuse that happens to them and the traumatic things they are feeling. **To survive this soul murder, we learn to repress. Repress everything. Shame is considered a master emotion because it represses everything it touches.** Healthy shame can teach you balance and boundaries, but toxic shame teaches you to hide all your feelings. Even if you feel happy or do something good, toxic shame will tell you that your feeling is wrong, you are bad for feeling it, and you need to fight/repress it. There are a million things you may have been toxic shamed over as an innocent child- your body and it's changes, behavior at mealtimes or bathing, asserting your individuality and choices to your parents/family, religion and cultural norms, expectations/judgements/comparisons by other adults/teachers/friends/school/media, even your basic needs for love/attention/support. Your own inner voice may be filled with the shame-yelling and pessimism of those who raised you. Your childhood may have had so much shame you just gave up, dissociated, went numb/silent/bitter, and just became someone else to please everyone or survive the soul murder.

This ego split means that the two parts of our brain, the frontal rational part and the back emotional part, do not develop together. You can use logic and willpower to change yourself, but your repressed natural emotional self can only react from experience. Consequently, **your adult identity may figure out how to be free and assertive while your inner child self continues to feel two decades of poisonous core shaming.** After being someone else for so long to survive, parts of you may be hypersensitive and prone to outbursts of hidden rage, terror, or depression/suicide. You may overcompensate for the loss by becoming a superficial "nice guy" or a caretaker or people pleaser, which hides your needs through enabling/rescuing/using others. We all want to fill that core badness/emptiness so much we will engage in anything to feel love. So all unhealthy behaviors- addictions to drugs/food/sex, obsessive compulsive thinking/worrying/judging, codependency, extreme individualism or loneliness, perfectionism/idealism, being superficial/narcissistic, workaholism/keeping busy, constant procrastination, etc., are tied to repressed core shame. Additionally, the trauma of this shame stops the developmental process, keeping a part of ourselves stuck in childhood

thinking/fantasies/roles. We then are set up to hide our issues, never mature, and deflect/blame others. Navigating basic adult situations- boundaries, standing up for yourself, talking to parents/authority figures, new relationships, success, compliments, criticism, and rejection- may be excruciatingly difficult. You may have huge intimacy/vulnerability problems, or relationships that are centered on enmeshment, fear of abandonment, or control. You may pick a partner who is the embodiment of all the parts you abandoned (or just like mom/dad), but since we judge people to avoid our own shame, this will make you feel both attracted and repulsed. Shame may affect every single thing you think and feel. You may automatically treat anything/anyone new with fear and judgment or regularly feel that "life is too hard". While you may over time construct an adult mental definition of love that's about flowers and candy and the perfect family like the show *Full House/Family Matters*, **our childhood, embodied feeling of love is whatever you actually went through as a kid.** If that was disrespect, neglect, or abuse, then you may have taken it to your core that love feels like shame and abuse. This is why people constantly beat themselves up, or stay stuck on negative, or stay in abusive relationships even though it doesn't logically make sense. Your whole way of dealing with life can be touched by so much shame in your core/heart/love tank, you may be a "shame based person", have no idea of what healthy would even be, and no example of it anywhere ever in your life.

As adults, we often avoid/deny our emotional reality by judging our "inner child woo woo" as something silly or not really important; much like the adultist ways we view children. However, if we made a graph of our lives, the adult part of us is pretty recent, while the childhood part has been around for much, much longer. This means, ironically, that **our inner child is actually the oldest part of who we are.** And, if the mind is 80% unconscious, there's a strong bet that your unconscious child mind is going to get its way 4 out of 5 times. As the oldest part, it is the most authentic, natural expression of yourself before you were socialized. It is the part that is closest to your heart.

A key part of healing our inner child is acknowledging, externalizing and legitimizing any shame you have taken on, including our caregivers own shame, and to teach ourselves self- vulnerability by making a non-judgemental space of unconditional loving care and uber baby-soft sensitivity to slowly let up all those repressed rage/hate/painful feelings. Meditating on the innocent parts of ourselves we hated, hyperpoliced, "went crazy" or avoided (or felt worthless, stupid, a failure, disgusting, etc.) allows us to validate and heal, reshape our negative inner voices, and reexamine the roles we used to hide our shame. Once we can handle it, we can open up to new experiences our inner child needs to heal, stand up for ourselves, and express our shame with safe others. Inner child work often involves play therapy or imagination. The following exercises will help you address shame and repression to give your inner child the power you wish you had then.

How to Heal from Shame

Get Hella Good at Unrepression. Everything you repress comes back up eventually, so while repression can always be an option, it should NEVER be your first, automatic one. This is why expressing ANY of our emotions is healthy, because it's a start to unlearning the toxic core shame repression process. You may have been holding onto shame from your parents since you were 3, so allow yourself to breathe/rest/meditate/imagine and unrepress everything! Every thought, feeling, relationship, habit, assumption, like/dislike, smell, animal/vegetable/mineral...**LITERALLY EVERYTHING!!** Good/bad/otherwise, if it arises in any way, and especially if you know you hide yourself behind it, let yourself unrepress it. Even on a physical level, unclench everything. Aim for total self-vulnerability.

Discuss Healthy Shame. A kid who feels limitations (is not good, because kids need their imagination), but an adult who doesn't feel their limitations is not a healthy adult. So, get comfortable with acknowledging ALL of your limitations. Start small. 1) just name something of low importance that you can't do right now, and say " I can't (go take a walk) because ____" and think of one reason why you can't do it, and just sit with the feeling of your limitations. More advanced is to say, "I'm not good enough to ____," Find one good thing about the shame you just felt.

If your limitations point to core shame, meditate on the parts of yourself you hate. Then try one of the following:

Labeled wrong. Go through this worksheet and name something that you struggle with. Why are you that way, what happened? What did you have to label wrong about you to become that way? Imagine what you wish would have happened instead.

Hiding shame. Or Make a list of "all the things you don't really want everyone/anyone to know about you" and tell yourself the story about what happened and identify the shame you are still holding onto. Is there anything healthy about your boundaries/limitations/humanness that you can learn from the situation now?

Inner Child Meditation

Imagine yourself descending down an escalator until you come to the bottom, where there is a door from your childhood. You walk through the door and see yourself as a child. What do you want to say to him/her? What do they think of you? Have a conversation with your inner child.

Since our boundaries may have been totally violated as children, as an inner child meditation, I want you to think of a “Power Word”. This is a word you would have yelled as a child if you had 100% all of the power in your young life. What would you have said to the adults in your world if you had the power? Some examples are “Stop!”, “Enough!”, “Listen!”, “Leave Me Alone!”, “I can do it!”, “I can’t do it!”, or even “You took your anger out on me! I was only a child!” Practice yelling this word in your head when you feel powerless or when those memories resurface.

Inner Child Work - Shadow Work

Finding the Suppressed Self

1. Who do you judge or don’t like? What bugs the crap out of you? Write down everything you don’t like about it/them. (You can also do a part of a person “my mother’s anger”)
2. What would that person think about you?
3. What would the worst case scenario be for the people/thing in no. 1? Imagine the worst happening.
4. What’s the worst case scenario they would think of you?
5. What would happen if you were just a little like the person/thing in no.1? How would your life improve?
6. What words in no. 5 resonate to you? That is your suppressed self.
7. What are some ways in which you suppress your suppressed self?
8. How could you support your suppressed self?

Inner Child Work

Parts Work

from Schwartz, Richard. 2021. No Bad Parts: Healing Trauma and Restoring Wholeness with the Internal Family Systems Model

When our whole self was denied/fractured/wounded during our childhood socialization or other traumatic experiences, we began to split our whole self into different parts. It is pretty common to be a person whose sense of self is made of different or opposing parts. One part of us wants ice cream but another part says we should eat healthy. One part is angry at your partner, another part is sad or scared or completely indifferent. By acting these parts out (like a family therapy session) so we can openly resolve our internal problems (unblending) is called parts work. Here are some parts work instructions and exercises.

1. Find a part of you in conflict or that is bothered by something. This can be many things: feelings (the part that's angry, happy, hungry, sweaty, etc), wants (the part that wants a nap or doesn't want to argue), habits (the part that likes watching TV), and/or beliefs or issues (the part that is against the death penalty or the part that thinks you can't succeed). You may feel several conflicting parts. Pick the one that has the most emotional grip on you.
2. Allow yourself to fully act and play out this part. If this part was a person, how would this part talk, behave, think, feel?" Give yourself a lot of time here and act this part out, really get into it as much as you can.
3. After you have given this part full expression, we can ask this part some questions. When did this part begin? When did you change? What is this part's purpose? How do you keep me safe? What do you need to be happy or feel appreciated? Who would you be if you were not burdened with stress? How do you feel about me?
4. Allow yourself to return back to the normal you and look at that part like it was a person sitting next to you. What do you think of this part? How are they different than what you perceived before? More scary, less? Younger, older? What did you learn about yourself?
5. Now find the opposite part. Often our parts come with a recognition that there is an opposite part. So if a part of you wants a nap, find the part that wants to keep working. If part of you is nervous and lonely, find the part that is calm and engaged. If you don't know what the opposite part is, ask yourself what is this part's feelings and find the opposite feeling. Repeat 2 and 3- play it out and then ask questions. Then do 4- be your normal self and examine that part.
6. Ask yourself how do these two parts connect? Can the first part help the other part or vice versa? Use your imagination to give each part what they need. If it needs friends or to feel important, imagine a party. If it needs safety, imagine a body guard or a door you can lock. Remind these two parts that we are connected, we have to get along because we are in the same body. Notice if anything changes within you. This exercise can be very intense. Practice really good self-care!! Remember, it's just a part of you, not who you are! All parts are welcome!

Exercises

Safe Room/Fire Drill- place your difficult parts into a room that separates them safely from you (one with a door, or a lock and you have the key, soundproof walls, whatever works for you). Observe that part through the window. Let them know you care. Ask all the above questions. Try to see life through their point of view.

Parts Mapping- Focus on one part. Draw or scribble out what that part looks like for you. Keep tracking it until you feel it shift into something else. Draw that part. Continue until you map out a system of parts. How do they relate?

The Path- meditate and tell your parts to meet you at the beginning of a path, and then ask them to stay there while you go further down the path alone. Let them know it's only for a moment and you will be back. If new parts arise as you walk down the path, send them to the base with the others. Feel pure awareness, Self energy.

Self through Unblending- asking all your parts to relax, make space, without the need to "jump back to attention"

Alternative Inner Child Meditation

Meditation on Shame and Forgiveness

adapted from Marianne Williamson's *Meditation on Forgiveness of Self and Others-*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xGimLKkfYtA>

And now we pray that our Higher Power reveals to us our true identity, so that we may know who we truly are.

That we may waken to the truth and original innocence in us.

And now with your eyes closed, knowing you needn't go anywhere, you needn't do anything.

God is as close to us now as They will ever be, for God is Love and we in our limited mind are only beginning to see.

Here in this holy place is the strength and power we have been hiding.

Here in this holy place is the health, faith, and purity from which we have been hiding.

Here in this holy place is the forgiveness of self and others which we have been denying but now we are ready to grant.

Here in this holy place is the self-confidence we have never claimed but now we are ready to claim.

Here in this holy place is our free eternal self which we may have repressed but in this moment we are ready to perceive.

Willingly and consciously we pull from our core to release into the hands of our Higher Power all the painful repressed memories of our childhood shame.

We unrepess the beliefs that made us feel small, we unrepess feeling broken, smashed up, or defective.

we unrepess our inner critic that judges ourselves, we release the jealousy, envy, that we hold against others,

we unrepess the times our uniqueness wasn't valued, we let go of playing a role or having to fit in no matter what,

we unrepess all our beliefs about who we should be, we open up to the wounds we feel in our core,

we unrepess chronic worrying, clutching, hoping, and holding on, we release our core stress, panic, fear, anger, and defeat,

we unrepess thinking we could save them, we release any core feelings of being all alone,

we unrepess from any notion of perfectionism, we forgive the little kid that thought it was all their fault,

we unrepess all our self-abandonment, we unrepess all our approval seeking, we unrepess from everything to make space for God's love.

And now allow our Higher Power to guide us into the space of our true identity.

Where we feared our childhood sensitivity, we shall embrace the innocence that always made us special,

where our parents filled us with their criticism and disrespect, we give ourselves the apology we always wanted, so we may give it to God,

where we were pushed without support or fought for love we shall care for our inner child like a newborn baby,

where we lived in drama and survived through extremes, we shall learn balance and open to the boringness of life.

where we were repressed through unwanted gifts or told to "just be grateful" we open to the gift of pure, simple, honest goodness God put in all of us,

where we remember our deepest fears, we release them so we may feel comfort,

where our longing for love led to spankings instead, we now open our sorrow to God's unconditional love,

where we have held on to blame and victimization we now forgive ourselves by putting it back into His hands,

where our voice was silenced with secrets we shall speak with a Higher Authority,

where we made plans we now pray that God make Her plans for us,

where we struggled to just serve ourselves alone the world shall be served through our natural gifts,

where we played like daddy's girl we shall now be a woman, where we acted like mommy's boy we shall now be a man.

Here within the core of your mind and heart is your communion with your Higher Power.

Everyday open up to this most innocent of sacred places. Hear what God is saying to you. Feel Their hand upon you.

Allow Them to unrepess your mind, heal your body, heal your heart. Allow Them to release your subconscious shame.

In silence and sound, hear Them remind you who you are, in your mind and heart know that you do not walk alone.

Taking this moment before we open our physical eyes to send our blessing to each other, to the world, past and future, to send our goodwill to every inner child joined with us, knowing that having been touched by the divine hand of God we shall not be who we were. With humility, gratitude, and with praise together we say,

Amen.

From the book *The Grief Recovery Handbook*, by John James and Russell Friedman (2009)

Grief is the conflicting feelings caused by the end of, or change in, a familiar pattern of behavior. While it is the most normal and natural thing to feel grief after a loss/change of any kind it is also the most neglected and misunderstood experience, often by both griever and those around them. This is because we are taught how to acquire things, but not taught what to do when we lose them. We avoid feelings of grief because we are taught to avoid feeling sorry for ourselves and others.

All sorts of experiences come with conflicting feelings. Sure, death, but also divorce, moving, starting school, ending school, marriage, holidays, financial gains and losses, etc. Also, we could include the loss of an identity, loss of trust, loss of control, and loss of safety.

7 Stages of Grief

(Modified Kubler-Ross Model)

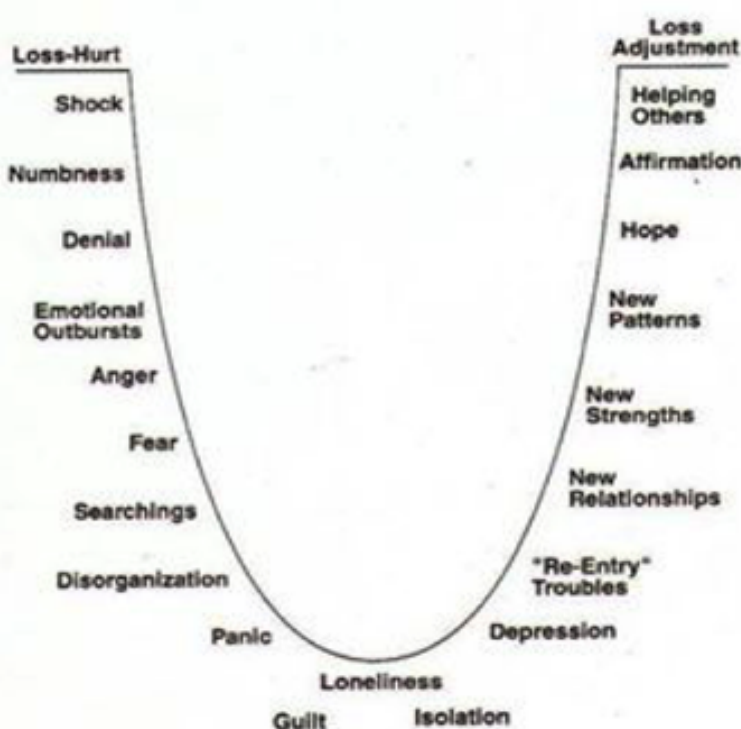
Shock*	• Initial paralysis at hearing the bad news.
Denial	• Trying to avoid the inevitable.
Anger	• Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion.
Bargaining	• Seeking in vain for a way out.
Depression	• Final realization of the inevitable.
Testing*	• Seeking realistic solutions.
Acceptance	• Finally finding the way forward.

*This model is extended slightly from the original Kubler-Ross model, which does not explicitly include the Shock and Testing stages. These stages however are often useful to understand and to facilitate change.

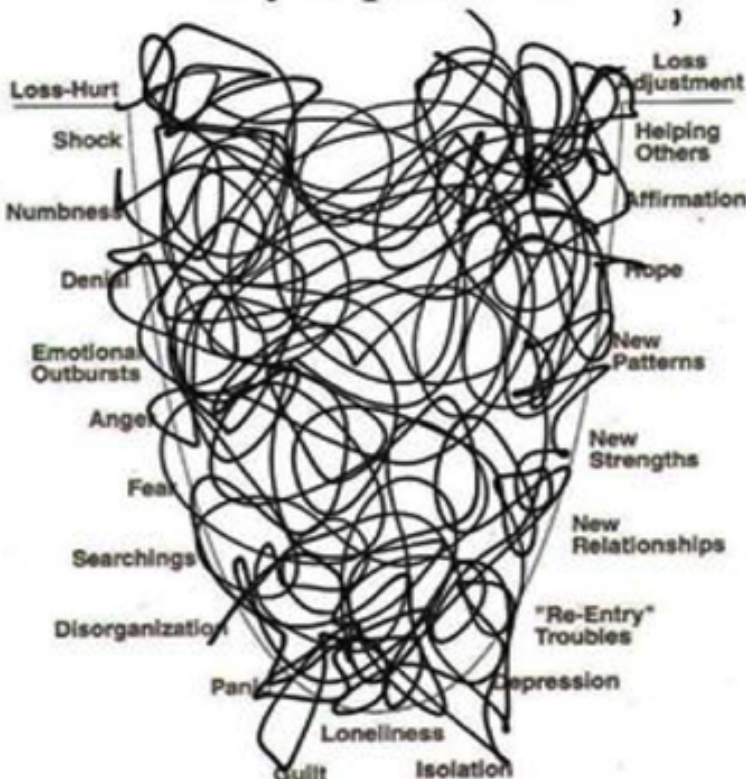
Most of us are taught that grief happens in an orderly set of stages that look like this:

However, research has shown that people are often NOT in denial, or get angry while grieving. What they do often report is reduced concentration, a sense of numbness, disrupted sleep patterns, changed eating habits, and a roller coaster of emotional energy. This has led to the conclusion that **THERE ARE NO STAGES OF GRIEF!!** All relationships are unique, so every grief process is unique. Or, drawn out, it really looks like this:

STAGES OF GRIEF



My experience



Grief is about a broken heart, not a broken brain. It is about dealing with feelings, not intellectual rationalizations. So, often when people are grieving, we say something like “Don’t feel bad, it’ll be better next time.” These statements are intellectually true, but emotionally bankrupt. In fact, our society teaches us 6 unhealthy things about grieving:

1. Don’t feel bad.	3. Grieve alone (go be by yourself with your unpleasant feelings)	5. Be strong for others
2. Replace the loss.	4. Just give it time.	6. Just keep busy.

All of these ideas teach us to avoid and hide our true feelings, so we can’t get sympathy from others and never learn to develop sympathy for ourselves, leaving us feeling unheard, invalidated, even judged and criticized. Consequently, many grievers opt to be just left alone (social isolation), or become unsympathetic/tough (“stiff upper lip”), or “fake it” in recovery by pretending to be fine and “putting on a happy face”. Additionally, the pain of unresolved grief is cumulative, so any future losses can retrigger past hurtful experiences. A lifetime of unresolved grief can be absolutely debilitating.

Recovery happens through a series of small and correct choices we make about our thoughts and feelings. It means acknowledging that everything you are feeling is important and perfectly understandable (even if you don’t understand it right now) and that this is part of what it takes to claim your life back. Often it means developing skills we should have learned in childhood. Recovery can happen at any time when the griever is ready to talk about and review what happened. It does not happen if you “just give it time”, and there is no loss that a person cannot recover from. We would never tell a person who broke their leg to “just give it time”. The same goes for emotional pain.

We must accept that while help can come from others, or we can pay someone \$150 an hour, only we will know how we truly feel. So, (1) start with acknowledging that all grieving is about wishing for something *different, better, or more*. It’s fighting an acceptance of what is over what you want. You can use the How to Let Go exercise to help your ego deal with the loss and disappointment.

(2), only you are responsible for your feelings. We often say “You made me angry”, but in reality, things happen and we choose how we respond (I reacted to what you said with anger). We may absolutely not be responsible for the past, and we must take responsibility for how we react currently if we want to take our power back and heal.

(3), think about doing grieving work with someone you can trust. You can do it alone, but since social isolation is such a big issue in grieving, it can help to reach out to friends and people you trust. Also, focus on YOU addressing your feelings, not reaching out to those who hurt you. They may not or may never be in a place to grieve and it’s their business. If it happens, it will happen for them in their way on their time.

(4), go back to that list of 6 bad social beliefs about grief and see which ones you have believed in and question them. All responses to grief are normal and natural, no matter how wrong or crazy (Crazy behavior is a good time to question how someone is grieving). Also, meditate on all those grief emotions, especially shock (which is often repressed and ignored).

(5) finally, acknowledge that people all mean well when they attempt to offer help to others. Sympathy, or feeling sorry for ourselves and others, is the beginning of grieving. All of these 6 bad social beliefs can be heard as a kind way to offer healthy sympathy for people’s pain. So instead of saying those things to others (or ourselves) we could say:

Don’t feel bad.	“Your pain is so strong, please also take notice of the positive things in your life.”
Replace the loss.	“Losing something hurts so much, if you get something that fills the hole it will help with slowly working through the pain.”
Grieve alone	“It can hurt so much to discuss these feelings, that you may want to prioritize taking time for yourself, so you are not stuck in a triggering story.”
Just give it time.	“The suddenness of things makes everything hard to deal with, we all need time to process our feelings.”

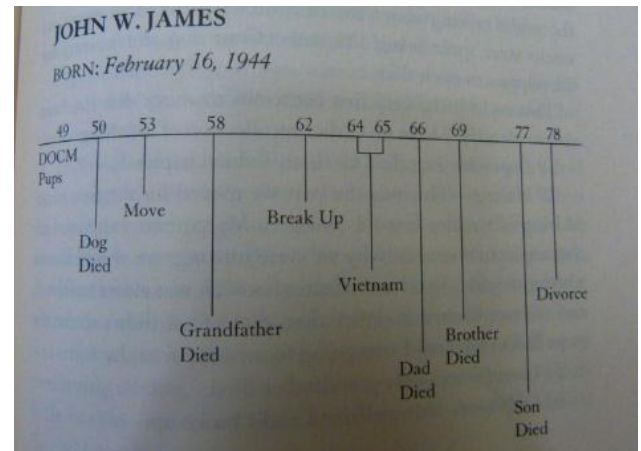
The following exercise will help you to learn your own processes of grieving. We will write out our life history, focus on a particular relationship, find statements that we need to apologize or forgive, and write a grief letter.

1) Loss History Graph

Using the line below, illustrate every loss or disappointment you ever had in your life. The example here has years and events but you can just use your age. (ex. Age 16- came out of the closet)

Start with the year of your birth (or age 0), your first earliest memory, and then everything up until today. If you don't have that kinda time or you've done this before, just focus on a part of your life. Be sure to include the loss of any dreams/fantasies you had.

Take care of yourself, this can be triggering.



|(0- birth)-_

Age
memory

(today)|

Next, take one or two of your experiences and write it out in detail below.

--

2) Relationship Graph

Here, you get to dig deep and get honest about a particular moment you need to grieve. First, for the experience you wrote in detail, illustrate every important moment in your relationship with that person(things/events/or whatever), including any feelings after they died or the event that happened. Put positive things above the line, and negative things below. Note all of your hopes, dreams, and expectations that went along with each event.

Relationship with _____

|(0- birth)-_

Age	+
memory	-

(today)|

Here is some space to write out your thoughts about a few events.

--

3) Now, take what you wrote in your relationship graph and sort the statements into

Things to APOLOGIZE for

--

Things that need FORGIVENESS

--

Other Significant Emotional Statements (I want/need you to know..., I wish..., I still feel..., I need...from you)

--

- 4) Finally, write a **Grief Recovery Completion Letter** for each statement. This letter is a short response to what you have been feeling so that you can complete the feelings. It is not a farewell letter or even a forgiveness letter for the other person. It is more of an apology letter for you to complete the sense of closure you need so you can heal.

It can be written from you to another person or from another person to you. Writing the apology of the people who harmed you can be very liberating. Like all of this, focus on your feelings and your heart, even if things seem silly or awkward in your mind.

Example

Dear (person's name/thing to grieve),

*(As your _____), I have been reviewing our relationship and have discovered something I want to say.
(acknowledge the need to grieve)*

I apologize for (I'm sorry for...)

I forgive you for.....(I forgive me for....)

I want you to know..... (other statements)

I love you, I have to go, I am ready to let go of this hurt, (some kind of closing)

Good-Bye.

Write your Grief Recovery Completion Letter here.

From Byron Katie's "Santa Fe Weekend 2005" on YouTube channel "Always in the Now" - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9JVHFjqft6o>
 Cheri Huber and A. Narayanan. 2013. *I Don't Want To, I Don't Feel Like It: how resistance controls your life and what to do about it*.
 Laozi, and Mitchell, S.(trans) 1988. *Tao te ching: A new English version*.

(note: feel free to exchange the word God for any other terms that work for you)

While all religions preach a Universal Truth (called God, Mohammad, the Universe, Tao, Love, etc.), in our everyday lives, our "everyday religion" is the beliefs we place onto everything; beliefs we give so much meaning we begin to see them as who we are, or how the world works, or what is just true about life. However, strong beliefs are not reality. A belief is just a thought that you have put on repeat so often you insist its meaning must be true, provable, and universal, which strengthens a mental pathway that blocks out or fights things that run counter to the belief. Since the human mind can't perceive actual reality, only the meanings we give to thoughts/feelings, then **our entire sense of reality is all of our beliefs**. Without a belief about classrooms, this might be called a "space", but without a belief about space, then this is called _____. If I couldn't call this piece of paper in my hand "paper" it would be _____. In fact, if you drop all the meanings, everything you are thinking, life is just _____ (most of life is air moving and ambient noise). So, beyond belief, reality is both nameless and all inclusive, reality is nothing (no-thing), it's just what is.

Our strong beliefs about ourselves and the world often come from our childhood socialization. As we are socialized in childhood our ability to think crystallizes into learning meanings, beliefs, and concepts. **From our beliefs we shape judgements**, or an ability to compare and evaluate, and then identifying with those judgements becomes our personality and worldview. Once our mind shapes our sense of reality, our feelings kick in so that we can act to protect our boundaries (think-feel-act). For example, it turns out that shame is related to our beliefs. When we acknowledge our faults/limitations/humanness, shame is actually healthy. When we feel the need to lie and hide our true self, shame becomes toxic. **All our stressful beliefs come from the 5 frustrations of ego: assumptions, preferences, attachments, comparisons, control**. We get so caught up in our thinking we'd rather blame others or reality when things don't work out. However, by backing off so much thinking and being willing to question beliefs we can allow ourselves to stop filling our ego with confusion and allow it to support our heart/inner child in a healthy way.

Some of our strongest ego beliefs are about our identity. "I think, therefore I am." However, if beliefs are thoughts and thoughts are not real, then our ego-identity is not real either, it's just the byproduct (coping mechanism) of our socialization and thought patterns. Beliefs give the ego a false sense of realness, like in "*The Emperor has no Clothes*", so to keep that power we use the 5 frustrations of ego to make everything about ourselves. Once we believe it's about us, we have no choice but to judge/react from that position, even if it confuses us or feels bad. Each judgment is a post-it note or memo (literally a "me" mo) that creates the ego's sense of world/reality, so it is guaranteed that it will resist change, maturity, and do the opposite of what is best for us, because to do otherwise would mean releasing the control. This is why we can't just fix ourselves, that is ego fixing ego, or why the biggest belief worth questioning is if there is even an "I", or a "You" in the first place. Beyond belief (beyond the "me"mos), who we are, who anyone is, is nothingness (no-thing, no thinking) or infinite possibility, like the space in a bowl or the hole in a doorway/window. No more inner or outer arguments/stress, just being present with life as it is. A living state of total rest and peace, like Jesus. Or one of no attachment, repression, judgment, or meanings, just love and innocence, like a child.

Byron Katie often says that another word for reality is God itself, because both are "what is" and beyond our ability to comprehend with beliefs. In fact, beliefs only get in the way of the real experience of reality/God itself. Beyond belief, "God" can only be a symbol which represents both everything and nothing at the same time. Omnipotent Perfection. An all encompassing Meaning or Oneness. Connecting this to childhood socialization, if our parents shape our sense of the universe, and a negative parental relationship means a negative belief in the universe, then we can expand this to say **all of our negative beliefs about life are ultimately distorted meanings about our connection to this Oneness, our "Heavenly Father"**. We use (abuse) our ego by using beliefs to separate from and act as God, which is the Original Sin- impossible, shameful and hopeless. Arguing with people's beliefs is exactly like arguing with the rain: it won't help manage your feelings and that Oneness isn't going to change- AT ALL! If God itself is beyond belief, and beliefs are repressive, then perhaps we shouldn't have any beliefs at all! According to this logic, by giving up beliefs altogether you are free; living God's purpose for you by just being fully open to the present moment. Or as Ms. BK says, "only the ego speaks, and nothing it says is true, so therefore, a mind is a wonderful thing to lose!"

We like to praise God when we get what we want but often wonder why does God allow bad things to happen? If winning a Grammy is God's will, then so must be all the poverty, violence, and other injustices. If God is everything, then the Higher Power must always hear us and give us what we want- it just may never come the way we wanted it, have the effect we wanted it to have, and it may come with all sorts of unexpected consequences. And this is so because of the role that our negative beliefs or

judgements play in directing our lives. Being consciously critical can help make you a great student or professor, but since our reality is our thoughts and the mind is 80% unconscious, this makes **judgment a very powerful tool that actually turns you into the thing you judge**. If I judge you as mean or hurtful, I become resentful and hurt me. If I judge myself as not good enough, the mind will find all the reasons why I am right, feel bad, won't try in life, and then won't be good enough. Often, negative beliefs are just a way to manage our feelings of hurt/abuse/trauma. So, if we examine our complaining and defensive behaviors, we can see how our unconscious resentments and regrets cause confusion in our lives. Ultimately, whatever awful thing happened, awful is a judgment. Without being able to call it "awful", its meaning would just be _____ (this is why "*awe-full*" can mean both bad and inspiring). If we open our minds to the good, or the God, of the situation, we can use even the bitter, sour lemons of life as potential for sweet lemonade.

All this might sound *really* out there, but what is clear is that if we "unlearn" by deconstructing our beliefs we can live more in harmony with the world the way things are instead of fighting about how they should be. And if all this is true, then dropping all our "I know" judgments and moving to a permanent "don't know" open mindedness is the quickest way to fall in love with life, free ourselves from codependent thinking, and strengthen our faith. **A "don't know" mind is the demonstration of totally healthy shame**, because a person who realizes the limitations of all their beliefs can only live in present moment reality (thisherenow)ok?, or literally "follow in the steps of God." This exercise will help you deconstruct any beliefs you are holding by finding their opposite or making positive affirmations (google Louise Hay). Particularly focus on any beliefs you have held from childhood to today. Also, no belief is too simple. Even "the sky is blue" is worth questioning and feeling through. Finding your internal truth may not be what the world would say is true, and it may or may not change what you do in life, but inquiring will help build a healthier belief system- that is, one more in line with reality.

What is a behavior that bothers you?

Why do you do it? What do you get out of it? Play the "why would it be so bad?" game. If the negative thing (or worse case or opposite of what you wanted) happened, why would it be so bad? Keep digging down about 1-3 more times. What is the core belief you have here?

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What's the story or supporting ideas about this belief? Why do you have it? Take the story and simplify it by writing it out into basic associations (eg. School= stress, hope for future. Debt= worry).

Flip the associations into opposites (School=stress free, no future hope. Debt= carefree. No school= stress, hope.

Then, go to each one of those flipped opposites, get still and sink in, and find a reason why it is TRUE.

Next, find a reason why it is GOOD that each one of those flipped opposites is true. You may feel your ego explode.

Finally, ask yourself: when did this behavior begin? Does it connect to your childhood or relationship with your primary caregivers? Is there anything you believed then that isn't serving you now? Is the story and supporting ideas still true? Take your core belief, flip it around, and find supporting ideas. When you are ready, you can tackle those other beliefs too!

COMMON THOUGHT DISTORTIONS

Focusing On the Negative (or Negative Filtering):

We often miss, reject and/or don't attend to positive experiences or feedback and focus on the negative/harder/difficult events or interactions.

All or Nothing Thinking:

We over-generalize our experience; the tell tale signs are words like "never" and "always."

Believing that Feelings are Facts:

Don't believe everything you feel! Just because you may feel that things won't get better doesn't mean it's true!

Mindreading:

Often we make assumptions about the intent behind what someone has said or done without recognizing that we don't actually know what was going on for that person.

Catastrophizing:

A tendency to think in "worst case" scenarios. ""My headache *is* probably a brain tumor."

Feeling Overly Responsible: This often is behind the feeling that we can't take the time to take care of ourselves or we feel responsible for situations that we have little control over. "No matter how hard I work, I just can't save all the children."

Waiting for Heaven's Reward:

We expect our sacrifice and self denial to pay off , as if someone is keeping score. We feel bitter when the reward doesn't come.

Predicting the Future (and it's not good):

We often don't realize we have made up a whole storyline of how things will unfold, and if depression and burnout are added in, we usually assume bad outcomes.

Human beings just love to tell stories and for good reason. Stories are the main way we organize our sense of identity/reality and communicate it to others. We have a “life story”, a “love story”, a “story about my childhood”, a “story about what happened at work” etc. Stories allow us to quickly enter a bunch of information into an easily identifiable format so we can exchange it with others for our emotional benefit.

Stories are just as much about emotional information as they are about facts, description, or a plot line. Stories about our past, or the historical past of “your people” (whatever that means for you) allow us to hold onto what we feel are important events that shaped us. However, because they are so helpful, stories can also be a great crutch. We not only use stories to make sense of who we are and what happened, we also use stories to justify our beliefs, prejudices, hold grudges, or otherwise stay stuck in a limited way of seeing things. The stories we shape about our pain, trauma, and fear can be some of the greatest coping mechanisms we have that keep our ego from letting go and flowing with life. You could essentially say this entire workbook is about examining all of our stories, down to even our story of reality, the history of our feelings, the analysis of ourselves and others. Byron Katie often says “who would you be without your story?” And the answer is, beyond all the thoughts/beliefs/concepts/stories we hold, we are nothingness, or infinite possibility. Not held back by the past or afraid of the future. Open to the present.

The following information is from a group that focuses on telling stories to advance a political message. You can use this to break down any story and reexamine it for ways to empower yourself (narrative analysis/therapy). Our different parts of ourselves may have different elements of the story to tell us, so you can use this exercise to also write out a story from a child part or as a feeling (my angry side). All stories have a few basic elements: a conflict, characters, imagery, foreshadowing, and underlying assumptions. Most important, note how many times in your story that your characters are Heroes, Villains, and Victims. Very often, our ego makes us the victims of our own stories as a way to stay in power. Just remember, your story is your interpretation of what you went through; it's not who you are.

Use the following space to write one of the stories you have about yourself. Use your Grief Timeline to help you. Then, turn to the next page and examine your story using the “Check it and Change it” process.

I had a crush on a journalist and through asking him to talk to my class, I realized that my dad has autism. I was pretty devastated about this information, and i'm still dealing with that information. It makes me have to rethink all sorts of things i accepted as normal about what i thought about my dad and how he treated his family. He was often more focused on work than being physically present, rarely talked about his feelings, and often justified arguments with real simplistic logic and got real aggressive when we disagreed, and refused to ever admit he was wrong. Anyway, after sitting with this over the week I realized that I have been with no less than 5 other guys that all were high functioning autistic people. I feel like I don't want this pattern to continue in my life. My mother married a high functioning autistic man who rarely ever said I love you to her. I couldn't even begin to imagine how frustrated my mother must have been in her marriage at times. That being said, I also feel that this experience is here to teach me unconditional love, not only for perhaps Kit, or autistic people, but also for me, and perhaps for my father as well. Kit didn't respond well to my request, but that doesn't mean he won't in the future.

After you check it and change it, use that information to try rewriting your story here in a way that is more empowering.

Recently, I chose to listen to my heart and honor that even at my age I developed a crush on someone I have seen bravely stand up to the rich and powerful and corrupt for over a decade. It was a bit of silly flirting for quite a while and I honestly even had a month when I clicked "show fewer posts" because I just couldn't stop flirting and I felt it was obsessive even for me. But I decided to listen to my heart and keep doing it anyway, and even ask this person to speak to my class about his amazing research skills. In the process of getting the courage to ask him, and watching his show with my heart, I realized that he has autism, which scared me, because I'm so big on healing and getting in touch with my feelings deeply. Then, shortly after, I realized my father has autism. I do suppose that this is a great revelation, because it means so many things that I thought were Dad's being rude or mean or short sighted or uncaring were not that. They are now opportunities to reflect on what I could not see before, my dad's autism and his struggling to do the best he could with who he was. I have to admit, I feel a deep sense of dread, shame, but also deep compassion and even hope, as I have uncovered that I have dated no less than 6 men in my lifetime who were high functioning autistic people. And that is ok. I judged this condition in some negative ways, and no doubt also because of my childhood frustrations with my father specifically. So, this is all an opportunity: to build some courage, to tell my father thank you and I can grow from here, to hopefully get to know Kit better, and to keep my heart open and growing.

conflict- well, no, my dad's perspective isn't there. nor is Kit's. I only attempt to imagine my mom's. I do feel bits of all or nothing, like they were never happy because it was all a lie, this moment is all about unconditional love, I didn't say every guy I dated had autism but you'd kinda feel that way reading this tho. I could frame the problem certainly in a more positive and inclusive of other's experience sorta way

characters= the power is in my dad, the autism, Kit. I def am the victim here, autism is a villain really, I do feel overly responsible for my father, for my parents relationship, for Kit, for healing an unhealthy pattern. My power would be that I took my painful experiences seriously and got help and healing, I learned my own way. I'm learning to open to loving who my heart speaks to instead of snuffing that out because I don't wanna get hurt.

imagery= cold family, me devastated, angry dad frustrated mom, yea negative, this is largely true in this situation, but no, not the whole story. I could include that my parents decided to love each other through their limitations, that they built a family that stayed together lovingly for 40 years, that's not nothing.

foreshadowing= not much foreshadowing...unless I assume Kit would act like my dad and then I become my mom. that is pretty psychoanalytically laden in this story. is this catastrophe...eh yea, pretty much. will it come to that end, no because if I was really that frustrated I would leave Kit fast, I would NEVER put up with what my mother put up with. My vision, honestly, is that Kit turns out to be a wonderful person and that we could date and that I could be a great help to his life, and comfort, and he to mine, and that he could help me build a family. Whether that's a new family and/or healing this autistic Father Wound. So end the end, I end up a more loving, self loving too, person.

assumptions... I assume Kit even has autism, or my father, I assume my mother was nuts frustrated, but she was also angry for other reasons too, I assume that I have a pattern just because I identified 6 guys I dated that had autism, but maybe there's something else to it...it's just high in the population or something. I do suppose all of this is rooted in me having a neurotypical privilege. I don't have autism, and to be honest, until I became a counselor and studied it, it scared me because I'm so big on developing my emotional resources. eh, fuck it still scares me right na.

MINDFUL ELEMENTS OF AN INTERNAL STORY

Element	Check It (Investigate)	Change It (Explore & Try Alternate)
CONFLICT	- Is this the complete conflict? - Am I in the thought distortion of "All or Nothing" in this story? - Is there another way to frame the problem?	
CHARACTERS	- Who has the power in my story? Do I have too much and am feeling Overly Responsible? Do I not have enough? Can I find agency /my own power? - Are there other characters/allies I could bring into this that could change the story? Is it all about me? - Who have I cast as Hero, Victim, and Villain?	
IMAGERY SHOW DON'T TELL	- Is all of the imagery negative? - What imagery are my feelings showing me? Are they true? - Are there other senses/evidence to include? - Is there any positive imagery?	
FORESHADOWING	- Is the ending a foregone conclusion? - Am I catastrophizing? Will the story really come to that end? - What is my vision for how this story could end?	
ASSUMPTIONS	- What are the assumptions holding up this story? - Are the assumptions true? - Are there assumptions that match stereotypes from systemic oppression? - Are there assumptions I have rooted in my own privilege?	

STORY-BASED STRATEGY 101



ELEMENTS OF STORY

Story-based strategy (SBS) is a way to think about our words and actions as two parts of a whole. This is more than just "good messaging".

We use five **Elements of Story** to analyze our opposition's stories and to write our own.



Conflict

This is the backbone of narrative, what defines the drama, point of view, and makes the story interesting



Characters

Subjects, protagonists, and narrators of stories



Imagery

Words to capture imagination with metaphor, anecdote, and descriptions that speak to the senses and make the story tangible



Foreshadowing

The ways that a story provides hints to its outcome



Underlying Assumptions

Unstated parts of the story that must be accepted in order to believe the narrative is true

1 BREAK DOWN THE POWER

Start by getting specific about goals, audiences, targets and constituencies to ensure that the stories and strategy we develop are grounded in the day-to-day realities of power around our issues. The **Cornerstones** of our work:



- **Goal:** What specific change are you trying to achieve?
- **Audience:** Who are the specific groups of people that you most need to reach and persuade?
- **Target:** Who is the decision-maker that can make this desired change happen?
- **Constituency:** Who is your base? The organized groups of people or communities who you already work with, represent or share common interests with.

2 BREAK DOWN THE OPPOSITION'S STORY*

Break down the opposition's story into its component five **elements of story**. Understand the story you are aiming to change:

- How does the story make existing outcomes possible or inevitable?
- How does conflict in the opposition story prevent us from talking about our desired solutions?
- What do we have to believe, in order to believe their story is true?
- What foundational myths are being activated by this story? (i.e. American exceptionalism or the "invisible hand" of the market.)

* Often the opposition's story is really just the **Status Quo** story, the one widely-accepted as reality.

3 PUT YOUR AUDIENCE IN THE FRONT ROW

Who are the people that you need to reach and persuade? Hint: the answer is *never* "the general public".

- **Imagine the audience(s) for your story as specifically as possible.** Who are they? What kinds of jobs do they work? Education? What hopes, dreams, fears, and biases do they hold? What movies, shows, books and entertainment do they consume?
- **See your work through the eyes of your audience.** The meaning of words and images are determined NOT through your eyes, but through the eyes and hearts of your audience.
- **Is your audience INSIDE our movements?** Sometimes we take action to help move our movement organizations and communities on an issue. The questions above still apply.

4 CRAFT YOUR STORY

The point of SBS is not to simply tell a good story.

You take serious risks when you tell an entirely new story instead of changing the story. If the story is too radically different from where people are now, you can come off as arrogantly handing out answers. People can only go somewhere that they have already been in their minds, so take them there.

Our Story has to meet your audience where they are. It must challenge the opposition story's underlying assumptions – taking care to never accidentally reinforce them. Your story must uplift your underlying assumptions and reflect your values and the future you envision.

- Which **conflict** allows you to move your audience to a clear decision/choice?
- Who needs to be introduced, explained away, taken out, renamed, subsumed or broken out, amongst our field of **characters** in order to reinforce your conflict frame?
- What is the **imagery** (props, settings and vignettes) that support your conflict frame and reinforce your assumptions?

- What negative **foreshadowing**, can illustrate the cost of not siding with you?
 - Cost to a constituency (agitational)
 - Or cost to a target (threat)
- What **assumptions** can you uplift and claim that close the window on policies and outcomes you are against and open the window to outcomes you desire?

TO #CHANGETHESTORY, YOU'LL NEED TO DECIDE HOW TO INTERVENE IN THE OPPOSITION STORY.

From Iyanla Vanzant's YouTube Page "The R Spot" - "The Relationship Inventory"-<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FagIqVwsLxU> and "The Relationship Autopsy" -<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqQYAfGZHD4>, and Hemfelt, Minirth, and Meier (1989) **Love is a Choice**: the definitive book on letting go of unhealthy relationships.

Relationships are a foundational part of life. Everything we do with other people involves starting, continuing, or ending a relationship. We often form relationships due to similarity and proximity (same neighborhood, race/class/gender, hobbies, etc). It is said that you are most influenced by the five people you have spent the most time with, however, every relationship has an effect on us. We sacrifice, fight for, and agonize over relationships. Relationships are the places where we learn commitment, how to negotiate and respect boundaries, sex and money, how to give and receive care and criticism, and to be loved for who we are. This means that our relationship history is both all of the good times we had with others and all of the bad times too.

Relationships are also a central place where we can be traumatized, exploited, abused, and bullied. In relationships we get groomed, gaslighted, brainwashed, judged and blamed for things that are not our responsibility. If we had unhealthy things happen in our relationships, especially our relationship with our parents or primary caregivers, we may have been taught that love comes with shame, obligation, and guilt. If we were taught that we have to do something or be a certain way to deserve love, we may also have learned that love comes with self-denial and rejection. This emotional abuse leaves us feeling starved for love, crushes our self-esteem, and sets us up for unhealthy boundaries in future relationships. You may develop a huge fear of abandonment, or feelings of emptiness/loneliness/hopelessness even when you are in a relationship, or an addiction to people-pleasing to feel good/safe, or total denial about parts of your relationship or your personality. You may be great at fitting yourself into crappy situations, but realize as an adult that you have no model of what a healthy relationship even looks like. Your sense of trust may be so broken you may be afraid of relationships or hate "people" altogether, all of which will make you feel isolated, inauthentic, and hollow.

Every relationship is different, but they can all be examined for 6 basic healthy things: 1) **Love**- unconditional positive regard, acceptance. Is it present, do you feel it, do you both have the same definition of it? 2) **Trust**- can you trust them, how do you manage trust violations, 3) **Loyalty**- commitment, do they have your back, do you have theirs? 4) **Support**- do they value you and the relationship, do they encourage you? 5) **Respect**- how do you judge others and yourself? do you honor each other's yes's and no's, is there loving care, kindness, and empathy?, and 6) **Honesty**- what is the truth and do you tell each other the truth or do you avoid and deny? Obviously a high rating on these means a healthier relationship. This list can help direct a conversation about what exactly is and isn't working in your relationship. Other factors are: patience, safety, reliability, patience, consistent kindness, care, empathy, patience, a lack of manipulation or aggressiveness, and **Patience**!

A major concern in relationships is **codependency**, defined as managing our feelings of emotional emptiness by controlling people, things, and events. It is using the outside world to validate our inside feelings. Signs of codependency are 1) feeling driven by compulsion (to save people) 2) ongoing hurt from childhood wounds, 3) low self-esteem, 4) basing your happiness on others approval, 5) feeling inordinately responsible for others, 6) significant relationships marked by extreme dependence and/or independence, 7) being a master of denial and repression, 8) constantly trying to control things, 9) a life punctuated by extremes in mood, and 10) constantly looking for something lacking or missing in life. All children have a love tank that needs to be filled by healthy adults. If we did not get our love tank filled, if we are running on empty because of abuse, shame, or neglect, we live with a love hunger that we try to fill by enmeshing our identity with things outside. If this was in your primary relationships, then you may have never developed a full independent sense of self (or healthy boundaries) and instead played a role such as the victim, good boy/girl, or rescuer/hero. Our subconscious child parts then recreate our bad family experiences as a way to resolve them, but with the limited, fantasy thinking of a child that is impossible, so instead it erodes all of your conscious logical efforts to do better in life. Codependency is the root issue underlying all drug addiction, workaholism, cycling through toxic relationships (rescuing people, turning people into projects), depression, and suicide. It is considered as addictive and damaging as heroin or cocaine and is so deeply embedded in us that if two people who are codependent are in a room of 100, there is a

99% chance that they will find each other! The key to healing codependency is to develop **interdependent relationships**-relationships where you act by freedom of choice, preserve your individual identity, build strength through embracing reality, and maintain healthy boundaries, accountability, consistency, trust, broad support, and openness to the future.

To build better relationships, we need to bring more consciousness into how and why we form relationships. **All adult relationships are voluntary.** Don't just settle for people because they are around or they have known you for a long time (including family). Also, remove any need to pressure others and notice when certain relationship aspects are being neglected. Recognize past unhealthy boundaries and build healthy support. **Always honor your boundaries!** Be aware of what is and isn't your business. Fights are a healthy part of all relationships as long as you know how to fight fair, talk with respect, and give healthy criticism and support. Focus on understanding each other more than being right or expecting anyone to change, and focus on the issue, not blaming the person. Remember, you are both on the same team. These tactics build trust so your relationship can grow. Overall, your relationships will improve if you get better at dealing with people in general, surround yourself with people you admire and appreciate, work on honest communication, and develop emotional intelligence. Finally, be clear about what you shouldn't sacrifice for a relationship (non-negotiables): your sense of freedom, happiness, goals, dreams, feelings, sanity, or self-respect. Keep yourself open to new experiences and to having fun.

Most importantly, the central factor in all of your relationships is YOU. If the mind only perceives thoughts, then every relationship is your collection of thoughts about that person. So, every relationship we have with others is built on the ongoing relationship we have with ourselves, so **relationships will always bring up our inner issues!** Healing your relationship with yourself means acknowledging our own emotional disabilities, being willing to grieve and change so we can remove unhealthy patterns, recognize codependency, and build a new self. People come into our lives for a reason or a season, but our self-relationship (and our relationship with the Higher Power) is the only one that is with us for a lifetime. We have no control over how others choose to love us, we can only decide if we accept it or not, so focus on understanding you, build your own ability to be emotionally sensitive, maintain your integrity, and discover your happiness. Even if your relationship history looks more like a series of dumpster trucks on fire driving off a cliff instead of anything remotely healthy, your self-relationship is always ongoing and the next relationship with someone else is around the corner, so there is still hope. Even if you like spending all of your time alone, eventually you will still need people, so people are always the final frontier.

If your relationship with others isn't working, then it's time to take an inventory of what is and isn't working for you. Examining who we are and how we behave in relationships can teach us so much about how to heal from old wounds, bad boundaries, and develop healthier future relationships. You can answer the following questions with any relationship in mind (intimate relationships, friends, strangers, coworkers, with yourself). Finally, remember that it's ok to outgrow people, even people you love. We all grow and change. When we don't acknowledge that we hold ourselves and others back just to keep things comfortable on the surface, robbing us of meaningful relationships and our real life.

1. Make a short list of past people in your relationships. List one good and one bad thing about each relationship.

2. What childhood issues do you feel most affect your current relationships? What triggers you? Make a list, rate the severity of trigger 1-10, and explain how it affects things.

3. What is your attachment style? (fast/slow, strong/weak, secure/insecure, whatever words work for you) How do you benefit from this style? How does it not benefit you?

4. What do you like about relationships? What are your strengths in relationships? What kind of support do you give others?

5. What do you think you need to work on in relationships? What kind of support do you not give? What things did you not articulate in your relationships?

6. What don't you like in relationships? What happened in relationships that hurt you? (bad patterns) What should have happened in relationships (but didn't) that hurt you (ex. Didn't say I love you enough)?

7. What did each of your parents teach you about how to handle relationships/love/life?

8. What happened that did not hurt in your relationships (the good stuff)?

9. How do you show up for you and articulate your needs in relationships? (self-support, engaged in your own life)
Who would you be if you were a 100% completely loving person? (unconditional love)

10. How do you show up for others in relationships? How do you treat others (your partner, their friends)?

11. What judgements have people put on you in relationships? How did you deal (or not deal) with those judgements?

12. What do you need to grieve or forgive? What is your “exit strategy” when your relationships end?

The Five Love Languages Test By Dr. Gary Chapman

Research has found that we give and receive love in 5 different ways: A) through **Words of Affirmation**, B) spending **Quality Time** with others, C) giving and **Receiving Gifts**, D) doing **Acts of Service** for others, and E) engaging in **Physical Touch**. It's important to know what your particular "love language" is so that you can receive and give love in ways that work for both you and the person you love.

Read each pair of statements and circle the one that best describes you.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. A. I like to receive notes of affirmation from you.
 E. I like it when you hug me.</p> <p>2. B. I like to spend one-on-one time with you.
 D. I feel loved when you give me practical help.</p> <p>3. C. I like it when you give me gifts.
 B. I like taking long walks with you.</p> <p>4. D. I feel loved when you do things to help me.
 E. I feel loved when you hug or touch me.</p> <p>5. E. I feel loved when you hold me in your arms.
 C. I feel loved when I receive a gift from you.</p> <p>6. B. I like to go places with you.
 E. I like to hold hands with you.</p> <p>7. A. I feel loved when you acknowledge me.
 C. Visible symbols of love (gifts) are very important to me.</p> <p>8. E. I like to sit close to you.
 A. I like it when you tell me that I am attractive.</p> <p>9. B. I like to spend time with you.
 C. I like to receive little gifts from you.</p> <p>10. D. I know you love me when you help me.
 A. Your words of acceptance are important to me.</p> <p>11. B. I like to be together when we do things.
 A. I like the kind words you say to me.</p> <p>12. E. I feel whole when we hug.
 D. What you do affects me more than what you say.</p> <p>13. A. I value your praise and try to avoid your criticism.
 C. Several inexpensive gifts mean more to me than one large expensive gift.</p> <p>14. E. I feel closer to you when you touch me.
 B. I feel close when we are talking or doing something together.</p> <p>15. A. I like you to compliment my achievements.
 D. I know you love me when you do things for me that you don't enjoy doing.</p> | <p>16. E. I like for you to touch me when you walk by.
 B. I like when you listen to me sympathetically.</p> <p>17. C. I really enjoy receiving gifts from you.
 D. I feel loved when you help me with my home projects.</p> <p>18. A. I like when you compliment my appearance.
 B. I feel loved when you take the time to understand my feelings.</p> <p>19. E. I feel secure when you are touching me.
 D. Your acts of service make me feel loved.</p> <p>20. D. I appreciate the many things you do for me.
 C. I like receiving gifts that you make.</p> <p>21. B. I really enjoy the feeling I get when you give me your undivided attention.
 D. I really enjoy the feeling I get when you do some act of service for me.</p> <p>22. C. I feel loved when you celebrate my birthday with a gift.
 A. I feel loved when you celebrate my birthday with meaningful words (written or spoken.)</p> <p>23. D. I feel loved when you help me out with my chores.
 C. I know you are thinking of me when you give me a gift.</p> <p>24. C. I appreciate it when you remember special days with a gift.
 B. I appreciate it when you listen patiently and don't interrupt me.</p> <p>25. B. I enjoy extended trips with you.
 D. I like to know that you are concerned enough to help me with my daily task.</p> <p>26. E. Kissing me unexpectedly makes me feel loved.
 C. Giving me a gift for no occasion makes me feel loved.</p> <p>27. A. I like to be told that you appreciate me.
 B. I like for you to look at me when we are talking.</p> <p>28. C. Your gifts are always special to me.
 E. I feel loved when you kiss me.</p> <p>29. A. I feel loved when you tell me how much you appreciate me.
 D. I feel loved when you enthusiastically do a task I have requested.</p> <p>30. E. I need to be hugged by you every day.
 A. I need your words of affirmation daily.</p> |
|--|--|

Add Total Number of Answers Here:

A. _____ Words of Affirmation

B. _____ Quality Time

C. _____ Receiving Gifts

D. _____ Acts of Service

E. _____ Physical Touch

As a final exercise to test your ability to dig into the feelings of self-soothing and deconstructing beliefs, I have created the following exercises that combine those skills together in an effective way. Since the Midterm was “The Ego Killer”, I am going to call this one “The Ego Healer”, because all the exercises are focused on letting go of stress and building our capacity to love, which is what all this feelings stuff is all about! Like the Midterm, it is a mind blow, so please take much self-care both during and after this exercise.

For either exercise, begin with an **Inner Baby (self-soothing)** exercise. (put on rain sounds)

1. Do a **Body Scan** using the **5 Frustrations of Ego (expectations/assumptions, preferences/requirements, beliefs/judgments, manipulation/control)**. First, sit with each one, then use each category to examine the others (eg, all of your expectations about assumptions/preferences/beliefs/control, etc.). End with examining their opposites, the “pleasures of ego” namely, **love/appreciation, acceptance/respect, open-mindedness, and freedom**.
2. Using the **Emotional Vipassana/Body Scan** and the **Self-Love, Acceptance, Validation** exercise to run through a series of beliefs that our ego attaches onto strongly (and their opposites):

Strong Ego Attachment Beliefs	Emotional Vipassana/Body Scan (shortened)
1. Know(conscious)/ don't know 2. Win(have, fight)/ lose 3. Right(smart, should, good)/wrong 4. Want(need, pleasure)/don't want 5. Can(will, must, gotta)/can't (never) 6. Do(make, work, fix)/ undo (don't do) 7. Care(important, dramatic, pain)/don't care 8. Me(mine, inner)/ you(not me) 9. Present/past(longing, future, planning) 10. Life (living, movement)/ Death (loss, still) (feel free to add any other opposites you like. Also, try any part of your identity or your coping mechanisms. Especially try: thoughts, feelings, bodily sensations, and images)	Self-Love, Acceptance, Validation (shortened)
	Love (total embrace/let go)
	Understand, (acceptance, respect)
	Find Neutral , then assumptions/expectations and attempts to control
	Fear (projecting future)
	Hurt, Sad (comparison)
	Anger, Hate (defense)

3. Finally, end with a **Love Meditation** (pleasure, delight, enjoyment). Think of something you love- a person/place/thing/activity/idea, something you would say “Yes, def, I love that”). Really imagine it, really see/feel yourself engaged with that thing you love. Then, go to where you feel the opposite and fill it with this positive feeling. Then **Body Scan** it through. Do this for the following words:

Success (abundance, prosperity, wealth)	Happiness (peace, comfort, goodness, safety)
Freedom (openness, space, expansion)	Joy (inspiration, surprise, excitement, anticipation)

The Joy Final

Enjoy!!

Joy is not meant to be a crumb- Mary Oliver

If I was going to define joy it would be “a feeling of euphoria about something”. An immediate antonym would be “sorrow” or sadness. It’s a very open feeling, perhaps the opposite of defensive. I would like to say that joy “feels” easy, but for me it feels very intimidating. Like I can’t hide, I can’t ride on anger or judgment or stress or worrying about the future. It also feels light, much lighter than all those things. Given that, maybe I could also say that joy is the opposite of trauma. I also noticed that when I’m triggered, if I think of something/anything joyful it helps with managing and releasing the feelings. And that a lot of soothing things have joy built into them, like hugging people you love, stroking the pet cat/dog, or slowly eating popcorn.

If we want to increase joy, we have to take note that opening up to joy will also mean releasing whatever unpleasant feelings are underneath. So, we want to slowly build our ability to feel joy. When stimuli are unpredictable, severe and prolonged it leads to greater vulnerability. Given how vulnerable joy already is, perhaps it is better to develop its opposite- resilience. Meaning start small, develop some ability to control and maintain steady joy, develop resilience.

Connecting joy to love, Byron Katie has a famous saying, “If I had a prayer, it would be this: God spare me from the desire for love, approval, and appreciation.” A love built on such a desire is conditional love, so getting to a place where you don’t need love is moving toward unconditional love. Wanting love from others can lead to a lot of hurt and misdirected feelings. A person who was filled with joy would have no need to want love from others. Perhaps joy is the state we all had before we became burdened with trauma, or adult life, or life period. Maybe it’s what we were all born into, it is our birthright, and the state we will all return to when the stress of life is over. It may be hard to see personally, because we all stress out a lot, but if you got really good at meditation, if you sank into the boredom long enough that nothing bothered you anymore, you would just feel appreciation for just being here (thisherenowok), and if you sank into that long enough that you appreciated everything, truly everything, then the only thing left to feel is joy. There wouldn’t be “good” and “bad” anymore, just “it’s all good” (it’s all gravy), just experiences from a joyful life, being experienced from a universe of unconditional love. Just living in joy.

(Note: if you are not feeling any joy right now, or if you are hurt/angry, consider doing these exercises in reverse from the last one on up)

Step 1: Soul Opening Meditation

Take some time and do an **Emotional Meditation**, **Body Scan**, and **Self-Love** meditation on your soul (or spirit, or even life-purpose/higher mission). This can go to some pretty deep places. Be with whatever comes up. Feel free to really embrace your spirituality here (pray, talk to God). The goal is to feel into whatever comes up around these ideas that may have not yet been addressed. If soul isn’t your thing, feel free to do this about your ego instead.

Step 2: Get Your Joy On!

Developing Joy Resilience

The more we can build predictable, moderate, and controlled thoughts and activities into our day, the more we can build an ability to control and maintain at least a steady low level of joy

- 1) Joy list - Make a list of what gives you joy. Think of ANYTHING. Save this list and build it over time
- 2) Everyday Joy- Make a list of what brings you joy in your daily life. Same thing. Save and build over time.
- 3) Stretching Micro-joy- pick one item on either of your Joy lists and break up a memory of it into several “micro-joy” moments. If it was eating candy it might be: seeing the candy store, holding the candy, buying the candy, unwrapping, and tasting the candy. Let yourself feel into each of those moments- stretch it out.
- 4) Living in Joy- Imagine your daily routine, or a fantasy day, where you actually go from one joyous activity to another that you have on your lists. Lower any resistance you may have to any joy you are experiencing.

Once our ability to experience joy is something that we can handle, we can then build our sensitivity and vulnerability to joy, in order to be...as receptive to joy as possible. The more that we can handle unpredictable, severe, and prolonged experiences of joy, the more we will become more vulnerable, or sensitive and open, to experience more joy

Developing Joy Vulnerability

- 1) Joy in the world- Go out somewhere and take notice of things that bring joy to you. Perhaps a couple kissing, or maybe a flower in full bloom. Maybe a couple fighting, or a store discount. Allow yourself to experiment with familiar and unfamiliar places (and you can also do this as an imaginative exercise as well). Allow yourself to find, feel joy, and find new ideas to add to your Joy lists.
- 2) Actually Living in Joy- Make the fantasy real. Take what you imagined about your micro-joy and living in joy exercises and go and do those things. At least take time to do one thing on your joy lists- and really stretch it out. See what works out, what doesn't. What can you do to weather through the moments when things don't work out?
- 3) Joy in Pain (Schadenfreude)- not exactly kind, but this could also be called Joy through the Back Door. Focus on your stress, hurt, pain, or fear and find something/anything joyful about it. If you can't find anything, then imagine your situation happening to someone else, either someone you don't care about or don't like, and find something joyful (or at least very humorous) about their situation.
- 4) Mad Joy- ever get excited about someone else getting “an ass beating” (or “a good talking too”)? Much like the last exercise, unrepressing our unpleasant feelings of anger can feel joyous. Give yourself a “mad day” or mad moment. Think of something that would launch you into “tick, tick BOOM” mode and let yourself argue and scream it out in your mind (or act it out safely). Allow yourself to just feel the joy of letting out your anger without judgment or hurting others.

Step 3: Releasing Soul into Joy

End this final with the **Inner Baby/ Self- Soothing** exercise. Put on your most soothing music. Imagine you walk into a room and hear a crying baby. You pick it up and see that it's you- you as a baby. See how you feel about this after doing these joy exercises. Next, imagine yourself as the baby- just being held, being loved, without having to do ANYTHING in return.

Finally, end with the **Unconditional Love Meditation** in the **Self-Love** exercise. After all these joy exercises, see what it feels like to experience “God's love for you”. That Higher Power that gave rise to that baby, to you, to everything. A

larger presence in total control that never judges, never worries, never gets hurt because you can always see the larger picture. Unconditional love. Be with whatever feelings come up.

Finally, have some gratitude for making it through this workbook!!! You have learned several exercises that can help you with your life. You now can use those skills to help others, and you can turn this workbook right back to page 1 and start all over! Nothing is a “one-and-done”. Until you can look forward to your life, whatever it is, with joy, your work is not done!