

## How to Stop Your Constant Anxiety and Worry

By Katharina Star, PhD | Updated on December 04, 2023

✓ Medically reviewed by Akeem Marsh, MD

If you experience feelings of anxiety, you probably know firsthand what it is like to live with constant anxiety or worry. Such symptoms can be distressing and disruptive. In some cases, constant anxiety or worry may be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

This article explores some of the signs of constant anxiety and worry as well as strategies that you can use to cope. By practicing some of these new coping skills, you may find yourself better able to deal with feelings of worry and anxiety.

### Symptoms of Constant Anxiety and Worry

Many people who struggle with anxiety-related conditions are negatively affected by their worrisome thoughts. However, worry is just one aspect of anxiety. Worry is that feeling of uneasiness that occurs when your thoughts are focused on current difficulties in your life or potential problems that have not actually occurred.

For example, these feelings can range from worrying about an upcoming evaluation at work to feeling worried about the safety of family members even when they all seem to be out of harm's way.

Some common symptoms of constant anxiety include:

- Avoiding social situations
- Difficulty concentrating
- Excessive worry
- Feeling tense
- Irritability
- Physical symptoms such as muscle tension, headaches, and fatigue



- Problems sleeping
- Restlessness

Constant anxiety and worry can be exhausting and often increases your feelings of fear and anxiety. Worry can make it difficult to unwind and relax, even contributing to sleep disturbances, such as insomnia.

## **Mindful Moment**

Need a breather? Take this free 5-minute meditation focused on relieving anxiety—or choose from our guided meditation library to find another one that will help you feel your best.

## **How to Deal With Worry**

Given its link to anxiety, it is no surprise that worry is common among those diagnosed with panic disorder. Constant anxiety that seems to occur without any specific source may be a sign of generalized anxiety disorder.

There are certain worries that are frequently experienced by those with this condition. For example, people with panic disorder often worry about when they will experience their next panic attack. Those with agoraphobia worry so much about their physical symptoms that they are often prone to engaging in avoidance behaviors, finding it difficult at times to engage in their regular activities.

## **Exercise**

Engaging in physical activity may help prevent or treat anxiety. Studies have found that getting regular physical activity can help protect against feelings of anxiety. Even brief periods of exercise can be a great way to relieve feelings of anxiety and take your mind off of your worry.

## **Focus on What You Can Control**

Worrying about the things you have no control over only adds to feelings of stress and anxiety. Focusing your attention on the things that are under your control, on the other hand, can help you feel more empowered and may help you better cope with your worries.



## Practice Gratitude

Experiencing gratitude has been shown to have a number of positive health effects, including reducing feelings of anxiety. Spending a few moments writing in a gratitude journal each day may help you better manage feelings of constant anxiety and worry.

## Get Enough Sleep

Sleep has a complex relationship with mental health. People who are worried or anxious tend to sleep less, but poor sleep can also contribute to problems with anxiety. A bad night's sleep might leave you feeling irritable and moody the next day, but prolonged periods of sleep problems can actually increase your likelihood of developing an anxiety disorder.

## How to Deal With Constant Anxiety

In addition to taking preventative measures to help manage feelings of worry, there are also strategies that may be helpful for relieving feelings of constant anxiety. These methods can be effective for combatting anxiety in the moment.

### Put Your Mind Elsewhere

This tip may sound easy, but it does require some effort to distract yourself from worrying. To get your mind off your worries, try to get busy on something else. For example, you can try walking, watching television, or reading a good book.

To prepare yourself for future worrying, make a list of activities that you can do. Label the list "What I can do instead of worrying" and then underneath write down activities that will put your mind elsewhere.

Try to come up with a long list of your own. Consider what activities you can do when in different situations, such as when you are at home, traveling, or at work. Having many options listed will increase the chance of you using them when you need them the most.

## How to Distract Yourself

- Do some chores inside or around the house, such as laundry or gardening
- Exercise or engage in a physical activity
- Read a book, magazine, or newspaper



- Organize your home or office
- Watch a funny movie
- Engage in a creative activity, such as drawing or writing

## Get Support

Talking with a trusted friend or family member can help you feel more relaxed and supported. Sometimes hearing the perspective of another person can help change your view of your worries.

You may want to spend a few minutes sharing your worries with someone, but it is best to not let that be the only subject that you talk about. A good friend can help you get your mind off of your worries and onto something else. Building a support network for panic disorder can take some time and effort. However, having others to lean on may help reduce your worry.

Many people with panic disorder, panic attacks, and agoraphobia feel isolated and often find it difficult to reach out to others. If you are experiencing loneliness or are uncomfortable talking to others, try exploring your problem on your own through writing.

Get a journal or simply a pen and some paper and write out your worries. When you have it all written down, you may be able to better see the big picture.

Try writing down some potential solutions to your problems. Also, try to balance out your worries by writing down what you are grateful for. Sometimes when we are worried, we overlook the more positive aspects of our lives.

## Practice Relaxation and Self-Care Techniques

Learning to relax is a proactive way to work towards overcoming your worries. People with panic disorder tend to have an overactive flight-or-fight response, meaning that they often approach life with a lot of fear and anxiety. Relaxation techniques serve the purpose of improving one's relaxation response and minimizing anxious thoughts.

There are many ways to elicit the relaxation response, including progressive muscle relaxation, yoga, and meditation. These techniques can be learned on your own and can help you feel calmer.





Decide which strategies work best for you and make an effort to practice your relaxation techniques for at least 10 to 20 minutes per day.

Other self-care practices include physical fitness and nutrition, expressing our creativity, tending to our spiritual needs, and developing healthy relationships. Determine which activities you need to practice more in your life. Practicing self-care for anxiety can help you live and feel healthier, which may help defeat some of your worrying.

## **Press Play For Advice On Dealing With Worry**

Hosted by therapist Amy Morin, LCSW, this episode of The Verywell Mind Podcast shares a technique that can help you worry less.

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## **Face Your Fears**

Sometimes our worries are caused by procrastination or an inability to make a decision. If you are putting something off, worry can serve as a way to avoid facing the issue head-on. However, in the long run, worry and anticipation can actually make you feel much more anxious than if you would just take care of your issue.

Stop worrying by taking the steps you need to deal with the problem. You may find that by tackling your problems or projects actually decrease your feelings of worry and stress.

## **When to Get Professional Help**

If your feelings of constant worry and anxiety persist and you cannot find adequate relief using self-help strategies. Consider talking to your doctor or a mental health professional. You may be experiencing some type of anxiety disorder.

A professional can evaluate your symptoms, provide an appropriate diagnosis, and recommend treatments that can help. Treatments for anxiety disorders often involve psychotherapy, medications, or a combination of the two.



# THE TOP TEN TYPES OF STINKIN' THINKIN'

By David Burns

One of the most common types of skills learned in psychotherapy today focuses on our thinking. Unbeknownst to many of us, we often engage in internal conversations with ourselves throughout the day. Unless we're trained to examine these conversations, however, many of us don't even realize we're having them! For instance, imagine looking in the mirror at yourself. What's the first thing you think when you look at yourself? That thought is a part of our internal conversation.

Having these kinds of conversations with yourself is perfectly normal and in fact, everybody does it. Where we mess up in our lives is when we let these conversations take on a life of their own. If we answer ourselves in the above example with something like, "I'm fat and ugly and nobody loves me," that's an example of "stinkin' thinkin'." Our thoughts have taken on an unhealthy attitude, one that is working **against us** instead of for us.

Psychologists would call these thoughts "irrational," because they have little or no basis in reality. For instance, the reality is that most everyone is loved by someone (even if they're no longer with us), and that a lot of our beauty springs from inside us — our personality.

It is exactly these kinds of thoughts that you can learn to identify as you go through your day. Often times it will be helpful to keep a little journal of the thoughts, writing down the day and time you had it, the thought itself, and the type of irrational thought — or stinkin' thinkin' — from the list below. As you learn to better identify them, you can then learn how to start answering them back with rational arguments. In this manner, you can work to turn your internal conversation back to being a positive in your life, instead of a running negative commentary.

**1. All-or-nothing thinking** – You see things in black-or-white categories. If a situation falls short of perfect, you see it as a total failure. When a young woman on a diet ate a spoonful of ice cream, she told herself, "I've blown my diet completely." This thought upset her so much that she gobbled down an entire quart of ice cream.

**2. Overgeneralization** – You see a single negative event, such as a romantic rejection or a career reversal, as a never-ending pattern of defeat by using words such as "always" or "never" when you think about it. A depressed salesman became terribly upset when he noticed bird dung on

the window of his car. He told himself, "Just my luck! Birds are always crapping on my car!"

**3. Mental Filter** – You pick out a single negative detail and dwell on it exclusively, so that your vision of reality becomes darkened, like the drop of ink that discolors a beaker of water. Example: You receive many positive comments about your presentation to a group of associates at work, but one of them says something mildly critical. You obsess about his reaction for days and ignore all the positive feedback.

**4. Discounting the positive** – You reject positive experiences by insisting that they "don't count." If you do a good job, you may tell yourself that it wasn't good enough or that anyone could have done as well. Discounting the positives takes the joy out of life and makes you feel inadequate and unrewarded.

**5. Jumping to conclusions** – You interpret things negatively when there are no facts to support your conclusion.

Mind Reading : Without checking it out, you arbitrarily conclude that someone is reacting negatively to you.

Fortune-telling : You predict that things will turn out badly. Before a test you may tell yourself, "I'm really going to blow it. What if I flunk?" If you're depressed you may tell yourself, "I'll never get better."

**6. Magnification** – You exaggerate the importance of your problems and shortcomings, or you minimize the importance of your desirable qualities. This is also called the "binocular trick."

**7. Emotional Reasoning** – You assume that your negative emotions necessarily reflect the way things really are: "I feel terrified about going on airplanes. It must be very dangerous to fly." Or, "I feel guilty. I must be a rotten person." Or, "I feel angry. This proves that I'm being treated unfairly." Or, "I feel so inferior. This means I'm a second rate person." Or, "I feel hopeless. I must really be hopeless."

**8. "Should" statements** – You tell yourself that things should be the way you hoped or expected them to be. After playing a difficult piece on the piano, a gifted pianist told herself, "I shouldn't have made so many mistakes." This made her feel so disgusted that she quit practicing for several days. "Musts," "oughts" and "have tos" are similar offenders.

"Should statements" that are directed against yourself lead to guilt and frustration. Should statements that are directed against other people or the world in general, lead to anger and frustration: "He shouldn't be so stubborn and argumentative!"

Many people try to motivate themselves with shoulds and shouldn'ts, as if they were delinquents who had to be punished before they could be expected to do anything. "I shouldn't eat that doughnut." This usually doesn't work because all these shoulds and musts make you feel rebellious and you get the urge to do just the opposite. Dr. Albert Ellis has called this "musturbation." I call it the "shouldy" approach to life.

**9. Labeling** – Labeling is an extreme form of all-or-nothing thinking. Instead of saying "I made a mistake," you attach a negative label to yourself: "I'm a loser." You might also label yourself "a fool" or "a failure" or "a jerk." Labeling is quite irrational because you are not the same as what you do. Human beings exist, but "fools," "losers" and "jerks" do not. These labels are just useless abstractions that lead to anger, anxiety, frustration and low self-esteem.

You may also label others. When someone does something that rubs you the wrong way, you may tell yourself: "He's an S.O.B." Then you feel that the problem is with that person's "character" or "essence" instead of with their thinking or behavior. You see them as totally bad. This makes you feel hostile and hopeless about improving things and leaves very little room for constructive communication.

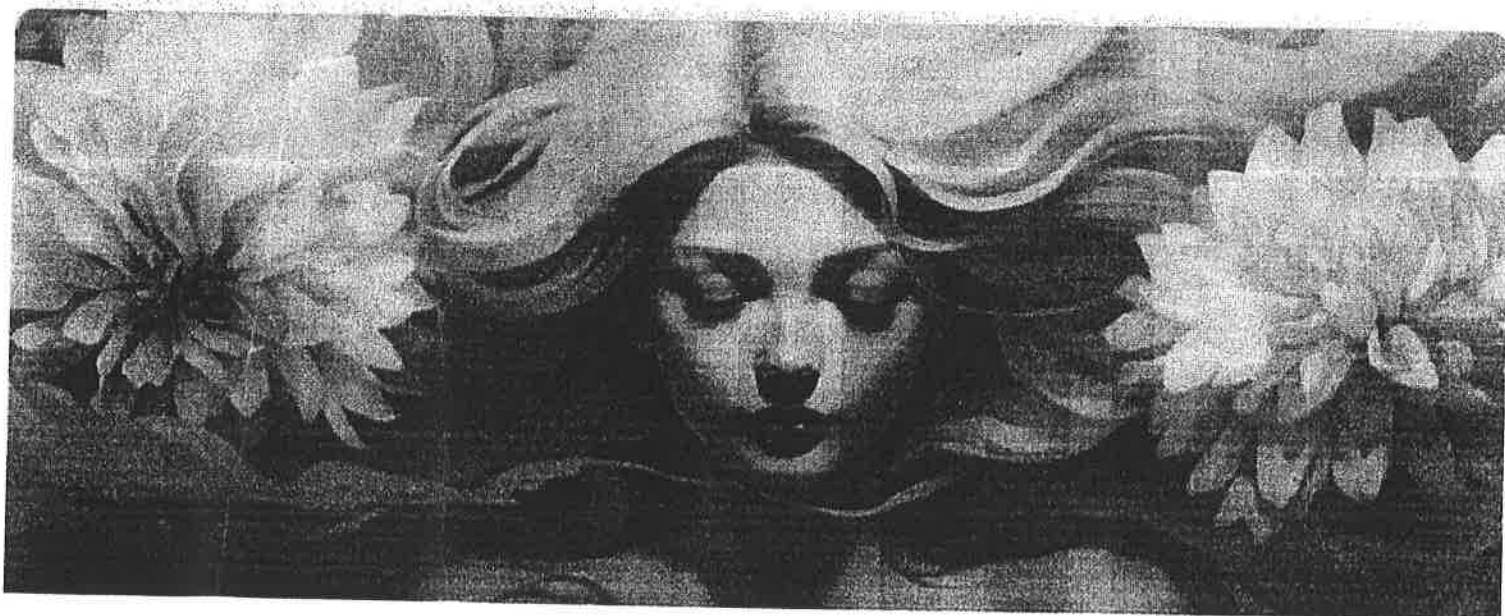
**10. Personalization and Blame** - Personalization comes when you hold yourself personally responsible for an event that isn't entirely under your control. When a woman received a note that her child was having difficulty in school, she told herself, "This shows what a bad mother I am," instead of trying to pinpoint the cause of the problem so that she could be helpful to her child. When another woman's husband beat her, she told herself, "If only I was better in bed, he wouldn't beat me." Personalization leads to guilt, shame and feelings of inadequacy.

Some people do the opposite. They blame other people or their circumstances for their problems, and they overlook ways they might be contributing to the problem: "The reason my marriage is so lousy is because my spouse is totally unreasonable." Blame usually doesn't work very well because other people will resent being scapegoated and they will just toss the blame right back in your lap. It's like the game of hot potato—no one wants to get stuck with it.

*Parts of this article were excerpted from the book, "The Feeling Good Handbook" by David D. Burns, M.D. © 1989.*

# 8 Dimensions of Wellness — Tips for Cultivating Wellness to Create a Happier, Healthier, and More Fulfilling Life

Understanding the eight wellness dimensions — emotional, physical, intellectual, occupational, spiritual, social, financial, and environmental — is vital to enhancing your well-being. Discover the interconnected nature of health and wellness and learn practical strategies to achieve it. Start your journey towards a more vibrant and fulfilling existence!



Nowadays, the pursuit of wellness has emerged as a more grounded alternative to the sometimes elusive chase of happiness.

But what is wellness? Most of us imagine it as a state of personal satisfaction and overall health — physical and mental.

And it truly is. Yet, how do we achieve it?

**When a person seeks harmony, some structure to pursue a healthy lifestyle and develop healthy behaviors is necessary; it comes in the form of Swarbrick's model of wellness.**

As this article will explain, from a holistic view, wellness encompasses eight dimensions.

When we acknowledge the interconnected nature of our lives, it becomes clear that reflecting on each dimension is essential for achieving overall well-being in our daily habits.

## **Why is Health and Wellness Important?**

**Without risking an overstatement, health and wellness directly impact every aspect of our lives.**

Although overcoming health issues and living a fulfilled life is absolutely possible, we all have experienced how even a common cold can make every task much more challenging. Resilience, on the other hand, can help us overcome even the toughest of times.

According to research, good physical and mental health and wellness contribute to:

- Productive engagement in daily activities
- Independence until old age
- Better cognitive function and emotional stability
- Quality social connections and healthier romantic relationships
- Work productivity and performance
- Life quality and satisfaction



# **Swarbrick's 8 Dimensions of Wellness**

The American Psychological Association's dictionary entry on wellness states it is a *"dynamic state of physical, mental, and social well-being."*

However, the creator of the wellness model with eight dimensions, Margaret Swarbrick, suggested a more nuanced and practical definition: *"A conscious, deliberate process that requires a person to become aware of and make choices for a more satisfying lifestyle."*

Such an approach emphasizes the importance of self-awareness, choice-making, personal development, self-improvement, and lifestyle modifications in pursuing wellness. It encourages us to take ownership of our well-being and work towards a more satisfying and fulfilling life.

**Let's examine Swarbrick's eight dimensions, determine what they signify, and then discuss ways to enhance each in the next section.**

## **1. Emotional Wellness**

Like emotional intelligence, emotional wellness involves how you handle your own emotions and those of others.

Understanding and respecting your feelings, values, and attitudes is the primary element of emotional wellness. This means you can manage diverse emotions constructively and healthily. As a result, emotional wellness makes you feel optimistic and enthusiastic about life.

However, appreciating the feelings of others is also an aspect of emotional wellness. This capacity fosters empathy, compassion, and healthy relationships. When you respect others' experiences, you deal with disagreements more adaptively and nurture healthy relationships.

## **2. Physical Wellness**

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Caring for your body as a part of your physical wellness routine to stay healthy is another vital element of overall well-being. We already mentioned that physical health contributes to being productive, independent, and generally feeling good about life.

Physical wellness encompasses all aspects of bodily health, such as nutrition, exercise, illness prevention (like regulating your blood pressure), disease management, sexual health, and quality sleep, to name a few.

### **3. Intellectual Wellness**

Growing intellectually is vital for intellectual wellness. An intellectually well person maintains curiosity about all there is to learn, that is, engaging in lifelong learning. They also take care of their cognitive health.

Also, sharing your knowledge with others can be a part of this dimension, whether as a teacher or a wise person people come to for advice.

At the same time, you should know how to respond positively to intellectual challenges and see them as mentally stimulating activities for intellectual wellness. To problem-solve with awareness of one's own knowledge and limitations is an ability within this dimension that evokes feelings of balance and harmony with the world.

### **4. Occupational Wellness**

Occupational wellness means educating and working in the field that provides personal satisfaction and life enrichment. Aligning your work values, setting realistic career goals, and attuning your lifestyle with your career is one sure way to feel fulfilled as a person and professional.

In occupational wellness, you contribute your unique gifts, skills, and talents to meaningful and rewarding work.

### **5. Spiritual Wellness**

Spiritual wellness does not have to mean belonging to any particular religion. It signifies finding purpose, value, and meaning in your life on a deeper level.

So, you do not have to believe in a higher power to attain spiritual wellness.

Participating in activities consistent with your beliefs and personal values is enough to become a spiritually well person.

## **6. Social Wellness**

Social wellness is all about supportive relationships and good communication skills. When you enjoy being with others and develop friendships and intimate relations, you are in a state of social well-being. It also means contributing to your community and social causes by exploring local volunteer opportunities.

Finally, social wellness also means letting others care about you and having trust in people. Healthy bonds with people are those of mutuality and reciprocity, and social wellness is exactly that.

## **7. Financial Wellness**

People who achieve financial wellness understand that everyone's financial values, needs, and circumstances are unique and work towards personal harmony concerning material wealth.

In financial wellness, you manage your resources to live within your means. When it comes to investments and financial decisions, you make informed choices and set realistic goals. Importantly, you are prepared for short-term and long-term needs or emergencies.

## **8. Environmental Wellness**

Environmental wellness is the dimension that explains how your environment affects your health and well-being. When a person is in a state of environmental wellness, they are aware of the Earth's unstable state.

A person who works on this dimension of wellness is intentional about the habits impacting it and demonstrates a commitment to contributing to healthy social, natural, and built environments.

## **8 Dimensions of Wellness Activities: Tips to Improve Your Well-Being**

A balanced and fulfilled existence is, arguably, a universal goal we all would like to attain.

So, how do we improve our overall wellness? Research in the field suggests that dimensions of wellness do not have to be equally balanced.

**It would be best to strive for a “personal harmony” — an authentic, individualized balance.**

In other words, do not feel pressured to feel perfectly satisfied with each of these eight dimensions. Instead, prioritize those that are the most important to you.

Here are some practical tips to develop healthy habits in your everyday life for each dimension:

### **Tips to Improve Emotional Well-Being**

- Practice mindfulness meditation or deep breathing exercises to reduce stress.
- Cultivate self-compassion by treating yourself with kindness and understanding, especially during times of difficulty.
- Practicing gratitude is a way to develop emotional health.
- Seek support when you are facing emotional challenges or mental health concerns.

### **Tips to Improve Physical Well-Being**

- Engage in regular exercise and commit to physical activity for physical health. Habit stacking is a good way to get in more movement.

- Prioritize balanced nutrition rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and healthy fats for weight management and to help you better cope with stress.
- Get adequate sleep each night, and don't underestimate the importance of taking breaks.
- Limit alcohol intake and avoid substance use (unless medically necessary)

### **Tips to Improve Intellectual Well-Being**

- Engage in lifelong learning by pursuing new interests, attaining new skills, engaging in hobbies, or exploring mental growth skills that stimulate your mind.
- Read books, attend workshops, or take online courses to expand your intellectual horizons.
- Challenge yourself to think critically and creatively and develop cognitive skills. Do some type of brain exercise each day.
- Learn to meditate; it's not only good for your emotional and physical wellness, but it has also been shown to improve cognitive functioning and memory.

### **Tips to Improve Occupational Well-Being**

- Explore career options and set realistic and fulfilling career goals aligned with your values and interests.
- Maintain a healthy work-life balance to prevent stress and burnout.
- Advocate for yourself in the workplace, set boundaries, and seek opportunities for growth and development.

### **Tips to Improve Spiritual Well-Being**

- Explore your spiritual beliefs and values through meditation, prayer, self-reflection, or journaling.
- Connect with a supportive community or spiritual group that provides a sense of belonging.
- Reflect on your purpose and meaning in life and align your actions with your core values and principles.
- Choose a spiritual wellness practice that works for you and add it to your routine.

## **Tips to Improve Social Well-Being**

- Spend quality time with friends, family, and loved ones to nurture genuine social connections and a healthy social life.
- Participate in group activities to connect with others who share your interests. Introverts, this doesn't mean you have to be the "life of the party," just don't let loneliness creep in.
- Practice active listening and empathy in your interactions, respecting differences in love languages.
- Carefully choose who you allow in your inner circle, and be sure to set boundaries in a healthy way if you are the type of person who tends to be too nice or an extrovert who thrives on having people around you.
- If connecting with others is a weakness for you, social skills and social intelligence can be learned.

## **Tips to Improve Financial Well-Being**

- Create a budget and financial plan to manage your material wealth.
- Seek professional financial advice or education.
- Practice mindful spending to avoid overspending or impulse purchases.

## **Tips to Improve Environmental Well-Being**

- Reduce your environmental footprint by adopting sustainable practices in your physical environment.
- Spend time outdoors in nature, enjoying activities like hiking, gardening, or simply appreciating the natural world.
- Support initiatives that promote a healthier planet.

# Assess Your Wellness

In the following areas, give yourself a score of 1 - 4.

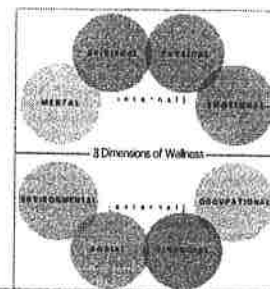
1 = Rarely, if ever.

2 = Sometimes

3 = Most of the time

4 = Always

Then total your score for each section. Total possible points for each section is 25.



## PHYSICAL

1. I exercise regularly.

2. I get 7-9 hours of sleep each night and feel rested in the morning.

✱3. I drink alcohol responsibly (i.e. designated sober driver, avoid binge drinking, etc.)

4. I maintain healthy eating patterns that include fruits and vegetables.

5. I stay hydrated and drink water throughout the day.

Total Score Out of 25

## EMOTIONAL

1. I find healthy ways to cope with stress (e.g. exercise, meditation, social support, self-care activities.)

2. I am able to ask for assistance when I need it, either from friends and family, or professionals.

3. I feel good about myself and believe others like me for who I am.

4. I have a healthy relationship with social media.

5. I can express all ranges of feelings (i.e. hurt, sadness, fear, anger, joy, etc.) and manage in a healthy way.

Total Score Out of 25

## SPIRITUAL

1. I take time to think about what's important in life – who I am, what I value, where I fit in, where I'm going.

2. I have a belief system in place (religious, agnostic, atheist, spiritual, etc.).

3. I have a sense of purpose in my life.

4. I am tolerant and accepting of the view of others.

5. I work to create balance and peace within my interpersonal relationships, community and the world.

Total Score Out of 25

## MENTAL

1. I seek personal growth by learning new skills.

2. I look for ways to use my creative and critical thinking skills.

3. I am open to new ideas.

4. I am eager to learn.

5. I stay informed about social, political and other current issues.

Total Score Out of 25

## ENVIRONMENTAL

1. I spend time outdoors enjoying nature.
2. I try to lessen my environmental impact (recycle, carpool, reuse etc)
3. I am concerned about impacts on my local, national and world climate.
4. I feel content in my environments (class, home, work, etc.).
5. I shop locally.

Total Score Out of 25

## SOCIAL

1. I maintain a network of supportive friends, family and social contacts.
2. I am accepting of the diversity of others (race, ethnicity, religion, gender, ability, sexual orientation, etc.)
3. I have someone I can talk to about my feelings and struggles
4. I give and take equally in my relationships.
5. I plan time with my family and friends.

Total Score Out of 25

## FINANCIAL

1. I am able to set and stick to a budget each month so I don't run out of money.
2. I pay my credit cards, ~~bill~~ fees and other bills on time.
3. I have a savings account and save money regularly.
4. I feel good about my current and future financial situation.
5. I check my bank statements/accounts each month.

Total Score Out of 25

## OCCUPATIONAL

1. I am able to balance work, play, school and other aspects of my life.
2. I take advantage of opportunities to learn new skills that can enhance my future opportunities.
3. I strive to develop good work habits (dependability, initiative, etc.). 1
4. I work effectively with others.
5. I manage my time effectively.

Total Score Out of 25

## WHAT AREAS COULD YOU STRENGTHEN?





## Communication Styles Quiz

The following questions will help you get an idea of what your communication style is. Check off any for which your answer is yes. However, you'll probably be able to see that you do many of these things sometimes, so only check off those that seem to describe you best. The style for which you have most checks is your dominant communication style.

### 1. Passive

- ☐ Do you try to push your feelings away rather than express them to others?
- ☐ Do you fear that expressing yourself will cause others to be angry with you or not like you?
- ☐ Do you often say things like "I don't care" or "It doesn't matter to me" when you do care or it actually does matter?
- ☐ Do you keep quiet or try not to rock the boat because you don't want to upset others?
- ☐ Do you often go along with others' opinions because you don't want to be different?

Total: ☐

### 2. Aggressive

- ☐ Are you most concerned with getting your own way, regardless of how it impacts others?
- ☐ Do you yell, swear, or use other aggressive means of communicating regularly?
- ☐ Do your friends fear you?
- ☐ Are you disrespectful toward others when communicating with them, not really caring if they get what they need as long as your needs are met?
- ☐ Do you have an attitude of "my way or the highway"? Have you ever heard anyone describe you this way?

Total: ☐

### 3. Passive-Aggressive

- ☐ Do you have a tendency to be sarcastic when you feel angry?
- ☐ Do you tend to give people the silent treatment when you're angry with them?
- ☐ Do you often find yourself saying one thing but thinking another, such as going along with another person's wishes even though you want to do something else?

\_\_\_ Are you generally reluctant to express your emotions but find that how you feel gets expressed in other ways, like slamming doors or other aggressive behaviours?

\_\_\_ Do you fear that expressing yourself will cause others to be angry with you or stop liking you, so you try to get your message across in more subtle ways?

**Total:** \_\_\_

#### **4. Assertive**

\_\_\_ Do you believe that you have a right to express your opinions and emotions?

\_\_\_ When you're having a disagreement with someone, are you able to express your opinions and emotions clearly and honestly?

\_\_\_ When communicating with others, do you treat them with respect while also respecting yourself?

\_\_\_ Do you listen closely to what others are saying, sending them the message that you're trying to understand their perspective?

\_\_\_ Do you try to negotiate with others if you have different goals, rather than being focused on getting your own needs met?

**Total:** \_\_\_

\*It is not uncommon for people to use different styles depending on the situation and person they're communicating with. The point is not to diagnose how you communicate, but to increase awareness of your patterns of communicating so you can choose to communicate in different ways if you choose.

### **Communication Styles**

#### **Passive Communication**

Passive people often don't communicate verbally. They tend to bottle up their emotions instead of expressing them, perhaps out of fear of hurting others or making them uncomfortable, or maybe because they don't believe their feelings or opinions matter as much as those of others. People with a passive communication style usually fear confrontation and believe that voicing their opinions, beliefs, or emotions will cause conflict. Their goal is usually to keep the peace and not rock the boat, so they sit back and say little.

#### **Aggressive Communication**

Aggressive communicators attempt to control others. They're concerned with getting their own way, regardless of the cost to others. Aggressive people are direct, but in a forceful, demanding,

and perhaps even vicious way. They tend to leave others feeling resentful, hurt and afraid. They might get what they want, but it's usually at the expense of others, and sometimes at their own expense, as they may later feel guilty, regretful, or ashamed because of how they behaved.

### **Passive-Aggressive Communication**

Like passive communicators, those who have a passive-aggressive style fear confrontation and don't express themselves directly. However, because of their aggressive tendencies, their goal is to get their way, but they tend to use indirect techniques that more subtly express their emotions, such as sarcasm, the silent treatment, or saying they'll do something for others but then "forgetting".

### **Assertive Communication**

Assertive people express their wishes, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs in a direct and honest way that's respectful both of themselves and of others. They attempt to get their own needs met but also try to meet the needs of others as much as possible. They listen and negotiate, so others often choose to cooperate with them because they're also getting something out of the interaction. Others tend to respect and value assertive communicators because this communication style makes them feel respected and valued.

Assertive communication is the way people with good self-esteem tend to express themselves. They feel good about themselves, and they recognize that they have a right to express their opinions and feelings. However, this does not mean people with low self-esteem can't be assertive and being more assertive in your communication will actually improve how you feel about yourself. It will also improve your relationships and interactions with others, and this too will increase your self-esteem.

### **The Skill of Assertiveness**

As with any new behaviour, becoming more assertive will take time and effort. Like any skill, it takes practice. Some people, especially those who have been more passive, find that communicating and acting assertively feels like acting aggressively, simply because you're not used to asking for what you want. Learning to be assertive will be uncomfortable and possibly even scary at times, but gradually you'll learn that this is the healthiest way of communicating and begin to see positive changes in your relationship.

The messages we received about emotions as we were growing up shaped our thoughts and feelings about them. The same thing happens with communication: we learn how to communicate by observing how others around us communicate. It can be challenging to be assertive if you grew up surrounded by people who communicated in passive, aggressive, or passive-aggressive ways.

## **Guidelines for Assertive Communication**

1. Decide on your priorities.
2. Ask for what you want in a way that doesn't damage the relationship.
3. Negotiate.
4. Obtain information.
5. Say no in a way that doesn't damage the relationship.
6. Act according to your values and morals.

## **How Assertiveness is like Getting the Oil Changed**

People often have difficulties asserting themselves with those they really care about, possibly because they fear they might damage the relationship by expressing their true needs and emotions. But relationships usually suffer because of a lack of assertiveness by one or both of the people in the relationship. Work on addressing problems as they arise in a relationship rather than letting them pile up until they come unmanageable.

Many people avoid speaking up when they're unhappy in a relationship because they're afraid of consequences, for example, the other person might get angry or end the relationship altogether. The worst thing that might happen is that the relationship ends, and if you don't discuss the problems and your feelings, chances are the relationship will end anyways as resent builds.

## **The Role of Assertiveness in Balancing Enjoyable Activities and Responsibilities**

Another important part of taking care of relationships is developing more balance. It's important to think about what your patterns are: do you have a tendency to always give in and do what your partner, friends, or family members want you to do? Do you usually disregard others wishes and pursue your own interest? Or are you able to find more of a balance, sometimes putting your own needs first and other times putting the needs of others first? To live balanced lives, we all need to give, share, and sometimes make sacrifices in relationships, but we must also sometimes put our own needs first or even ask others to make sacrifices for us. Always giving in to other person's wishes won't be healthy for the relationship.

If you feel guilty about putting your own needs first at times, remember, putting your needs first isn't contrary to your morals and values as long as you aren't doing this consistently or at the expense of others. Rather, putting your own needs first is actually good self-care and will benefit their relationships as their needs are met. Think of assertiveness as a new language: unless you have opportunities to speak this new language, you're going to lose it fast.

## COMMUNICATION

# Conflict Resolution Skills

Whatever the cause of disagreements and disputes at home or work, these skills can help you resolve conflict in a constructive way and keep your relationships strong and growing.

By Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., Lawrence Robinson and Melinda Smith, M.A.

Last updated or reviewed on February 5, 2024

## What is conflict?

Conflict is a normal part of any healthy relationship. After all, two people can't be expected to agree on everything, all the time. The key is not to fear or try to avoid conflict but to learn how to resolve it in a healthy way.

When conflict is mismanaged, it can cause great harm to a relationship, but when handled in a respectful, positive way, conflict provides an opportunity to strengthen the bond between two people. Whether you're experiencing conflict at home, work, or school, learning these skills can help you resolve differences in a healthy way and build stronger, more rewarding relationships.

## Conflict 101

- **A conflict is more than just a disagreement.** It is a situation in which one or both parties perceive a threat (whether or not the threat is real).
- **Conflicts continue to fester when ignored.** Because conflicts involve perceived threats to our well-being and survival, they stay with us until we face and resolve them.
- **We respond to conflicts based on our perceptions** of the situation, not necessarily to an objective review of the facts. Our perceptions are influenced by our life experiences, culture, values, and beliefs.
- **Conflicts trigger strong emotions.** If you aren't comfortable with your emotions or able to manage them in times of stress, you won't be able to resolve conflict successfully.
- **Conflicts are an opportunity for growth.** When you're able to resolve conflict in a relationship, it builds trust. You can feel secure knowing your relationship can survive challenges and disagreements.

## Causes of conflict in a relationship

Conflict arises from differences, both large and small. It occurs whenever people disagree over their values, motivations, perceptions, ideas, or desires. Sometimes these differences appear trivial, but when a conflict triggers strong feelings, a deep personal need is often at the core of the problem. These needs can range from the need to feel safe and secure or respected and valued, to the need for greater closeness and intimacy.

Think about the opposing needs of a toddler and a parent. The child's need is to explore, so venturing to the street or the cliff edge meets that need. But the parent's need is to protect the child's safety, a need that can only be met by limiting the toddler's exploration. Since these needs are at odds, conflict arises.

The needs of each party play an important role in the long-term success of a relationship. Each deserves respect and consideration. In personal relationships, a lack of understanding about differing needs can result in distance, arguments, and break-ups. In the workplace, differing needs can result in broken deals, decreased profits, and lost jobs.

#### [Read: Tips for Building a Healthy Relationship]

When you can recognize conflicting needs and are willing to examine them with compassion and understanding, it can lead to creative problem solving, team building, and stronger relationships.

## How do you respond to conflict?

Do you fear conflict or avoid it at all costs? If your perception of conflict comes from painful memories from early childhood or previous unhealthy relationships, you may expect all disagreements to end badly. You may view conflict as demoralizing, humiliating, or something to fear. If your early life experiences left you feeling powerless or out of control, conflict may even be traumatizing for you.

If you're afraid of conflict, it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. When you enter a conflict situation already feeling threatened, it's tough to deal with the problem at hand in a healthy way. Instead, you're more likely to either shut down or blow up in anger.

## Healthy and unhealthy ways of managing and resolving conflict

Unhealthy responses to conflict:	Healthy responses to conflict:
An inability to recognize and respond to the things that matter to the other person.	The capacity to empathize with the other person's viewpoint.
Explosive, angry, hurtful, and resentful reactions.	Calm, non-defensive, and respectful reactions.
The withdrawal of love, resulting in rejection, isolation, shaming, and fear of abandonment.	A readiness to forgive and forget, and to move past the conflict without holding resentments or anger.
An inability to compromise or see the other person's side.	The ability to seek compromise and avoid punishing.
Feeling fearful or avoiding conflict; expecting a bad outcome.	A belief that facing conflict head on is the best thing for both sides.

## Conflict resolution, stress, and emotions

Conflict triggers strong emotions and can lead to hurt feelings, disappointment, and discomfort. When handled in an unhealthy manner, it can cause irreparable rifts, resentments, and break-ups. But when conflict is resolved in a healthy way, it increases your understanding of the other person, builds trust, and strengthens your relationships.

If you are out of touch with your feelings or so stressed that you can only pay attention to a limited number of emotions, you won't be able to understand your own needs. This will make it hard to communicate with others and establish what's really troubling you. For example, couples often argue about petty differences—the way she hangs the towels, the way he slurps his soup—rather than what is really bothering them.

### The ability to successfully resolve conflict depends on your ability to:

- **Manage stress quickly while remaining alert and calm.** By staying calm, you can accurately read and interpret verbal and nonverbal communication.
- **Control your emotions and behavior.** When you're in control of your emotions, you can communicate your needs without threatening, intimidating, or punishing others.
- **Pay attention to the feelings being expressed** as well as the spoken words of others.
- **Be aware of and respect differences.** By avoiding disrespectful words and actions, you can almost always resolve a problem faster.

To successfully resolve a conflict, you need to learn and practice two core skills:

- 01. Quick stress relief:** the ability to quickly relieve stress in the moment.

- 02. Emotional awareness:** the ability to remain comfortable enough with your emotions to react in constructive ways, even in the midst of a perceived attack.

## Core skill 1: Quick stress relief

Being able to manage and relieve stress in the moment is the key to staying balanced, focused, and in control, no matter what challenges you face. If you don't know how to stay centered and in control of yourself, you will become overwhelmed in conflict situations and unable to respond in healthy ways.

Psychologist Connie Lillas uses a driving analogy to describe the three most common ways people respond when they're overwhelmed by stress:

**Foot on the gas.** An angry or agitated stress response. You're heated, keyed up, overly emotional, and unable to sit still.

**Foot on the brake.** A withdrawn or depressed stress response. You shut down, space out, and show very little energy or emotion.

**Foot on both gas and brake.** A tense and frozen stress response. You "freeze" under pressure and can't do anything. You look paralyzed, but under the surface you're extremely agitated.

## How stress affects conflict resolution

Stress interferes with the ability to resolve conflict by limiting your ability to:

- Accurately read another person's body language.
- Hear what someone is really saying.
- Be aware of your own feelings.
- Be in touch with your own, deep-rooted needs.
- Communicate your needs clearly.

## Is stress a problem for you?

You may be so used to feeling stressed that you're not even aware you are stressed. Stress may pose a problem in your life if you identify with the following:

- You often feel tense or tight somewhere in your body.
- You're not aware of movement in your chest or stomach when you breathe.
- Conflict absorbs your time and attention.



## Learn how to manage stress in the moment

One of the most reliable ways to rapidly reduce stress is by engaging one or more of your senses—sight, sound, taste, smell, touch—or through movement. You could squeeze a stress ball, smell a relaxing scent, taste a soothing cup of tea, or look at a treasured photograph. We all tend to respond differently to sensory input, often depending on how we respond to stress, so take some time to find things that are soothing to you. Read: [Quick Stress Relief](#).

## Core skill 2: Emotional awareness

Emotional awareness is the key to understanding yourself and others. If you don't know how or why you feel a certain way, you won't be able to communicate effectively or resolve disagreements.

[\[Read: Improving Emotional Intelligence\]](#)

Although knowing your own feelings may sound simple, many people ignore or try to sedate strong emotions like anger, sadness, and fear. Your ability to handle conflict, however, depends on being connected to these feelings. If you're afraid of strong emotions or if you insist on finding solutions that are strictly rational, your ability to face and resolve differences will be limited.

## Why emotional awareness is a key factor in resolving conflict

Emotional awareness—the consciousness of your moment-to-moment emotional experience—and the ability to manage all of your feelings appropriately, is the basis of a communication process that can resolve conflict.

Emotional awareness helps you to:

- Understand what is really troubling other people
- Understand yourself, including what is really troubling you
- Stay motivated until the conflict is resolved
- Communicate clearly and effectively
- Interest and influence others

## Assessing your level of emotional awareness

The following quiz helps you assess your level of emotional awareness. Answer the following questions with: almost never, occasionally, often, very often, or almost always. There are no right or wrong responses, only the opportunity to become better acquainted with your emotional responses.

## What kind of relationship do you have with your emotions?

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships-communication/conflict-resolution-skills.htm>

By Jeanne Segal, Ph.D., Lawrence Robinson and Melinda Smith, M.A.  
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- Do you experience feelings that flow, encountering one emotion after another as your experiences change from moment to moment?
- Are your emotions accompanied by physical sensations that you experience in places like your stomach or chest?
- Do you experience distinct feelings and emotions, such as anger, sadness, fear, and joy, which are evident in different facial expressions?
- Can you experience intense feelings that are strong enough to capture both your own attention and that of others?
- Do you pay attention to your emotions? Do they factor into your decision-making?

If any of these experiences are unfamiliar, your emotions may be “turned” down or even off. In either case, you may need help developing your emotional awareness. You can do this by using Helpguide’s free Emotional Intelligence Toolkit.

## Nonverbal communication and conflict resolution

When people are in the middle of a conflict, the words they use rarely convey the issues at the heart of the problem. But by paying close attention to the other person’s nonverbal signals or “body language,” such as facial expressions, posture, gestures, and tone of voice, you can better understand what the person is really saying. This will allow you to respond in a way that builds trust, and gets to the root of the problem.

[Read: Nonverbal Communication and Body Language]

Your ability to accurately read another person depends on your own emotional awareness. The more aware you are of your own emotions, the easier it will be for you to pick up on the wordless clues that reveal what others are feeling. Think about what you are transmitting to others during conflict, and if what you say matches your body language. If you say “I’m fine,” but you clench your teeth and look away, then your body is clearly signaling you are anything but “fine.” A calm tone of voice, a reassuring touch, or an interested facial expression can go a long way toward relaxing a tense exchange.

## More tips for managing and resolving conflict

You can ensure that the process of managing and resolving conflict is as positive as possible by sticking to the following guidelines:

**Listen for what is felt as well as said.** When you really listen, you connect more deeply to your own needs and emotions, and to those of other people. Listening also strengthens, informs, and makes it easier for others to hear you when it’s your turn to speak.

**Make conflict resolution the priority rather than winning or “being right.”** Maintaining and strengthening the relationship, rather than “winning” the argument, should always be your first priority. Be respectful of the other person and their viewpoint.

**Focus on the present.** If you’re holding on to grudges based on past conflicts, your ability to see the reality of the current situation will be impaired. Rather than looking to the past and assigning blame, focus on what you

can do in the here-and-now to solve the problem.

**Pick your battles.** Conflicts can be draining, so it's important to consider whether the issue is really worth your time and energy. Maybe you don't want to surrender a parking space if you've been circling for 15 minutes, but if there are dozens of empty spots, arguing over a single space isn't worth it.

**Be willing to forgive.** Resolving conflict is impossible if you're unwilling or unable to forgive others. Resolution lies in releasing the urge to punish, which can serve only to deplete and drain your life.

**Know when to let something go.** If you can't come to an agreement, agree to disagree. It takes two people to keep an argument going. If a conflict is going nowhere, you can choose to disengage and move on.

## Using humor in conflict resolution

You can avoid many confrontations and resolve arguments and disagreements by communicating in a humorous way. Humor can help you say things that might otherwise be difficult to express without offending someone. However, it's important that you laugh with the other person, not at them. When humor and play are used to reduce tension and anger, reframe problems, and put the situation into perspective, the conflict can actually become an opportunity for greater connection and intimacy.

## More Information

### Helpful links

01. [CR Kit](#) - Covers causes of conflict, different conflict styles, and fair fighting guidelines to help you positively resolve disagreements. (Conflict Resolution Network)
02. [12 Skills Summary](#) - A 12-step conflict resolution training kit. (Conflict Resolution Network)
03. [Effective Communication](#) - The art of listening in conflict resolution. (University of Maryland)

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01. 10.3 Causes and Outcomes of Conflict – Organizational Behavior. (n.d.). Retrieved May 25, 2022, from
02. Başoğlu, C., & Özgür, G. (2016). Role of Emotional Intelligence in Conflict Management Strategies of Nurses. Asian Nursing Research, 10(3), 228–233.



## The Dangers of Bottling Up Our Emotions

By Wendy Rose Gould | Published on November 01, 2021

✓ Reviewed by Rachel Goldman, PhD, FTOS

Keeping our emotions close to our chest can often feel safer, but it isn't always the healthiest way to move through life. This approach prevents us from discussing our needs (which can turn into a cyclical issue) and prevents us from truly connecting with others. Over the long term, bottling up emotions can even backfire in unexpected ways related to our mental and physical health.

## Why We Tend to Bottle Up Our Emotions

There are so many scenarios in which we feel compelled to suppress our feelings. For example, we may just want to get through the day, we tell ourselves we'll deal with the emotion later, we think the feeling isn't worth exploring, or we try to conceal our feelings in order to make a relationship "work."

Ultimately, though, we tend to bottle up our feelings for one key reason: *it seems easier and safer to do so.*

"The reasons we sometimes—or most times—bottle up our emotions can vary, but they all seem to stem from a fear of vulnerability. Out of this fear, we react through self-protective emotional measures," says Dr. Colleen Mullen, PsyD, LMFT. "Bottling up emotions provides a false sense of emotional safety."

She says that some people learn, as they grow up, that expressing their emotions isn't safe. There are different ways this can play itself out in childhood.

For some, the parent is dismissive or minimizing of their emotions, while for others, the parent is scary in their own expression of emotions or threatening to them. For others, it

can be an early awareness that the parent is overwhelmed and doesn't respond well if the child expresses their needs or feelings.

"Those children can grow up to be the adult who becomes stifled emotionally," Dr. Mullen says. "The stifling, or avoidance, of emotional expression ends up feeling like a fear of being told 'no,' abandonment, or being judged negatively."

## **Why Hiding Our Feelings Can Often Backfire**

Though bottling up our emotions can feel like a good plan in the short term, doing so can adversely affect us in the following ways:

### **Puts Strain on Our Mental Health**

Chronic dismissal of our own feelings can ultimately impact our self-confidence. Over time, we may feel like nobody cares about our needs or desires and that our opinion or voice doesn't matter.

It can also cause us to feel stressed, depressed, or anxious. In some cases, we may even feel deeply angry or rageful and develop feelings of resentment toward others.

### **Compromises Our Physical Health**

"There is some evidence that bottling up your emotions can lead to physical stress on the body," says Dr. Mullen. "The stress caused to the body can lead to increased diabetes and heart disease risks. Other effects can be memory difficulties."

### **Impedes Our Social Relationships**

Nourishing social relationships are vital to our overall well-being. After all, we are social creatures at our core. When we don't adequately express ourselves, our relationships cannot grow in meaningful ways.

"Human to human contact can help balance our nervous system and allows for a broader perspective, protecting us from digressing into loops of fear and false beliefs," says Shari Foos, MA, MFT, MS. "Most importantly, unless you are open and honest, how will you ever be seen and known? And if you are not known, how can you possibly be loved for who you truly are?"

# Signs You're Bottling Emotions

While in some cases we consciously push down our feelings, it's common to do so without even realizing it. Some signs you're not wholly expressing your emotions include:

- It seems like other people don't "get you."
- You're not getting what you want out of time spent with others.
- You often experience somatic symptoms, such as an upset stomach or digestive issues, headaches, racing heart, and tension.
- You experience growing anger and frustration with the world and others.
- You develop feelings of resentment toward others.

If you think someone else might be bottling up their emotions, there are some things to look out for, as well.

"Signs that someone is bottling up emotions can be detected in choice words, tone, and body language. Some individuals may also unconsciously fold their bodies inward, wring their hands, tap their fingers or feet, dart their eyes, or shake their heads," says Foos.

She adds, "Their response to being asked something as basic as, 'tell me about yourself,' might range from a simple 'I don't know,' to an attempt to change the subject, shut down the conversation, or even leaving the room."

## How to Get Better at Expressing Yourself

Expressing our emotions doesn't always come naturally. Rather, it's something that takes practice and a dedication to honoring ourselves. Over time, we can develop the skillset to process and express our feelings.

Dr. Mullen says, "One of the best ways to become getting better at expressing yourself is to just say what you mean." It sounds simple enough, but this will take practice. Start small and focus on positive feelings, and over time you'll build that muscle.

**It might mean saying things like:**

- "I felt really loved when you cooked dinner the other night."
- "I'm hoping you can help me out on Saturday with the project."
- "I want to make sure you understand where I am coming from."
- "I feel happy when we do things like this together."

**From there, you can graduate to expressing neutral or disappointed feelings. Some examples might include:**

- "Sometimes I feel like you don't hear me."
- "I'm really disappointed that you are not going to help me on Saturday."
- "I felt sad when you forgot about XYZ."
- "I'm frustrated that I need to bring this topic up again."

## **A Word From Verywell**

Often, the tendency to conceal our emotions is a deeply ingrained habit that we've developed over time. It requires real diligence to break the cycle and to begin expressing ourselves to others. Though doing so might feel uncomfortable, dangerous, or difficult, don't give up—the reward is worth the effort.





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## Control anger before it controls you

Anger can make you feel as though you're at the mercy of an unpredictable and powerful emotion. Learn how to control it.

Last updated: November 3, 2023    Date created: March 3, 2022    14 min read



We all [know what anger is \(/topics/anger\)](#), and we've all felt it: whether as a fleeting annoyance or as full-fledged rage. Anger is a completely normal, usually healthy, human emotion. But when it gets out of control and turns destructive, it can lead to problems—problems at work, in your personal relationships, and in the overall quality of your life.

Anger can make you feel as though you're at the mercy of an unpredictable and powerful emotion.

## What is anger?

### The nature of anger

Anger is "an emotional state that varies in intensity from mild irritation to intense fury and rage," according to Charles Spielberger, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in the study of anger. Like other emotions, it is accompanied by physiological and biological changes; when you get angry, your heart rate and blood pressure go up, as do the levels of your energy hormones, adrenaline, and noradrenaline.

Anger can be caused by both external and internal events. You could be angry at a specific person (such as a coworker or supervisor) or event (a traffic jam, a canceled flight), or your anger could be caused by worrying or brooding about your personal problems. Memories of traumatic or enraging events can also trigger angry feelings.

### Expressing anger

The instinctive, natural way to express anger is to respond aggressively. Anger is a natural, adaptive response to threats; it inspires powerful, often aggressive, feelings and behaviors, which allow us to fight and to defend ourselves when we are attacked. A certain amount of anger, therefore, is necessary to our survival.

On the other hand, we can't physically lash out at every person or object that irritates or annoys us; laws, social norms, and common sense place limits on how far our anger can take us.

**[Related: [Want to achieve your goals? Get angry](/news/press/releases/2023/10/angry-goals)  
(/news/press/releases/2023/10/angry-goals) ]**

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People use a variety of both conscious and unconscious processes to deal with their angry feelings. The three main approaches are expressing, suppressing, and calming. Expressing your angry feelings in an assertive—not aggressive—manner is the healthiest way to express anger. To do this, you have to learn how to make clear what your needs are, and how to get them met, without hurting others. Being assertive doesn't mean being pushy or demanding; it means being respectful of yourself and others.

Anger can be suppressed, and then converted or redirected. This happens when you hold in your anger, stop thinking about it, and focus on something positive. The aim is to inhibit or suppress your anger and convert it into more constructive behavior. The danger in this type of response is that if it isn't allowed outward expression, your anger can turn inward—on yourself. Anger turned inward may cause hypertension, high blood pressure, or depression.

Unexpressed anger can create other problems. It can lead to pathological expressions of anger, such as passive-aggressive behavior (getting back at people indirectly, without telling them why, rather than confronting them head-on) or a personality that seems perpetually cynical and hostile. People who are constantly putting others down, criticizing everything, and making cynical comments haven't learned how to constructively express their anger. Not surprisingly, they aren't likely to have many successful relationships.

Finally, you can calm down inside (</topics/anger/strategies-controlling>). This means not just controlling your outward behavior, but also controlling your internal responses, taking steps to lower your heart rate, calm yourself down, and let the feelings subside.

As Dr. Spielberger notes, "when none of these three techniques work, that's when someone—or something—is going to get hurt."

## Anger management

The goal of anger management is to reduce both your emotional feelings and the physiological arousal that anger causes. You can't get rid of, or avoid, the

Research has also found that family background plays a role. Typically, people who are easily angered come from families that are disruptive, chaotic, and not skilled at emotional communications.

## **Is it good to “let it all hang out?”**

Psychologists now say that this is a dangerous myth. Some people use this theory as a license to hurt others. Research has found that “letting it rip” with anger actually escalates anger and aggression and does nothing to help you (or the person you’re angry with) resolve the situation.

It’s best to find out what it is that triggers your anger, and then to develop strategies to keep those triggers from tipping you over the edge.

## **Strategies to keep anger at bay**

### **Relaxation**

Simple relaxation tools, such as deep breathing and relaxing imagery, can help calm down angry feelings. There are books and courses that can teach you relaxation techniques, and once you learn the techniques, you can call upon them in any situation. If you are involved in a relationship where both partners are hot-tempered, it might be a good idea for both of you to learn these techniques.

Some simple steps you can try:

- Breathe deeply, from your diaphragm; breathing from your chest won’t relax you. Picture your breath coming up from your “gut.”
  - Slowly repeat a calm word or phrase such as “relax,” “take it easy.” Repeat it to yourself while breathing deeply.
  - Use imagery; visualize a relaxing experience, from either your memory or your imagination.
  - Nonstrenuous, slow yoga-like exercises can relax your muscles and make
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you feel much calmer.

Practice these techniques daily. Learn to use them automatically when you're in a tense situation.

## **Cognitive restructuring**

Simply put, this means changing the way you think. Angry people tend to curse, swear, or speak in highly colorful terms that reflect their inner thoughts. When you're angry, your thinking can get very exaggerated and overly dramatic. Try replacing these thoughts with more rational ones. For instance, instead of telling yourself, "oh, it's awful, it's terrible, everything's ruined," tell yourself, "it's frustrating, and it's understandable that I'm upset about it, but it's not the end of the world and getting angry is not going to fix it anyhow."

Be careful of words like "never" or "always" when talking about yourself or someone else. "This !&\*%@ machine never works," or "you're always forgetting things" are not just inaccurate, they also serve to make you feel that your anger is justified and that there's no way to solve the problem. They also alienate and humiliate people who might otherwise be willing to work with you on a solution.

Remind yourself that getting angry is not going to fix anything, that it won't make you feel better (and may actually make you feel worse).

Logic defeats anger, because anger, even when it's justified, can quickly become irrational. So use cold hard logic on yourself. Remind yourself that the world is "not out to get you," you're just experiencing some of the rough spots of daily life. Do this each time you feel anger getting the best of you, and it'll help you get a more balanced perspective. Angry people tend to demand things: fairness, appreciation, agreement, willingness to do things their way. Everyone wants these things, and we are all hurt and disappointed when we don't get them, but angry people demand them, and when their demands aren't met, their disappointment becomes anger.

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As part of their cognitive restructuring, angry people need to become aware of their demanding nature and translate their expectations into desires. In other words, saying, “I would like” something is healthier than saying, “I demand” or “I must have” something. When you’re unable to get what you want, you will experience the normal reactions—frustration, disappointment, hurt—but not anger. Some angry people use this anger as a way to avoid feeling hurt, but that doesn’t mean the hurt goes away.

## **Problem solving**

Sometimes, our anger and frustration are caused by very real and inescapable problems in our lives. Not all anger is misplaced, and often it’s a healthy, natural response to these difficulties. There is also a cultural belief that every problem has a solution, and it adds to our frustration to find out that this isn’t always the case. The best attitude to bring to such a situation, then, is not to focus on finding the solution, but rather on how you handle and face the problem.

Make a plan, and check your progress along the way. Resolve to give it your best, but also not to punish yourself if an answer doesn’t come right away. If you can approach it with your best intentions and efforts and make a serious attempt to face it head-on, you will be less likely to lose patience and fall into all-or-nothing thinking, even if the problem does not get solved right away.

## **Better communication**

Angry people tend to jump to—and act on—conclusions, and some of those conclusions can be very inaccurate. The first thing to do if you’re in a heated discussion is slow down and think through your responses. Don’t say the first thing that comes into your head, but slow down and think carefully about what you want to say. At the same time, listen carefully to what the other person is saying and take your time before answering.

Listen, too, to what is underlying the anger. For instance, you like a certain amount of freedom and personal space, and your “significant other” wants more connection and closeness. If he or she starts complaining about your

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activities, don't retaliate by painting your partner as a jailer, a warden, or an albatross around your neck.

It's natural to get defensive when you're criticized, but don't fight back. Instead, listen to what's underlying the words: the message that this person might feel neglected and unloved. It may take a lot of patient questioning on your part, and it may require some breathing space, but don't let your anger—or a partner's—let a discussion spin out of control. Keeping your cool can keep the situation from becoming a disastrous one.

## Using humor

"Silly humor" can help defuse rage in a number of ways. For one thing, it can help you get a more balanced perspective. When you get angry and call someone a name or refer to them in some imaginative phrase, stop and picture what that word would literally look like. If you're at work and you think of a coworker as a "dirtbag" or a "single-cell life form," for example, picture a large bag full of dirt (or an amoeba) sitting at your colleague's desk, talking on the phone, going to meetings. Do this whenever a name comes into your head about another person. If you can, draw a picture of what the actual thing might look like. This will take a lot of the edge off your fury; and humor can always be relied on to help unknot a tense situation.

The underlying message of highly angry people, Dr. Deffenbacher says, is "things oughta go my way!" Angry people tend to feel that they are morally right, that any blocking or changing of their plans is an unbearable indignity and that they should NOT have to suffer this way. Maybe other people do, but not them!

When you feel that urge, he suggests, picture yourself as a god or goddess, a supreme ruler, who owns the streets and stores and office space, striding alone and having your way in all situations while others defer to you. The more detail you can get into your imaginary scenes, the more chances you have to realize that maybe you are being unreasonable; you'll also realize how unimportant the things you're angry about really are. There are two cautions in using humor.

things or the people that enrage you, nor can you change them, but you can learn to control your reactions.

## **Are you too angry?**

There are psychological tests that measure the intensity of angry feelings, how prone to anger you are, and how well you handle it. But chances are good that if you do have a problem with anger, you already know it. If you find yourself acting in ways that seem out of control and frightening, you might need help finding better ways to deal with this emotion.

## **Why are some people more angry than others?**

According to Jerry Deffenbacher, PhD, a psychologist who specializes in anger management, some people really are more “hotheaded” than others are; they get angry more easily and more intensely than the average person does. There are also those who don’t show their anger in loud spectacular ways but are chronically irritable and grumpy. Easily angered people don’t always curse and throw things; sometimes they withdraw socially, sulk, or get physically ill.

People who are easily angered generally have what some psychologists call a low tolerance for frustration, meaning simply that they feel that they should not have to be subjected to frustration, inconvenience, or annoyance. They can’t take things in stride, and they’re particularly infuriated if the situation seems somehow unjust: for example, being corrected for a minor mistake.

What makes these people this way? A number of things. One cause may be genetic or physiological: There is evidence that some children are born irritable, touchy, and easily angered (</pubs/magination/441A001>), and that these signs are present from a very early age. Another may be sociocultural. Anger is often regarded as negative; we’re taught that it’s all right to express anxiety (</topics/anxiety>), depression (</topics/depression>), or other emotions but not to express anger. As a result, we don’t learn how to handle it or channel it constructively.

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First, don't try to just "laugh off" your problems; rather, use humor to help yourself face them more constructively. Second, don't give in to harsh, sarcastic humor; that's just another form of unhealthy anger expression.

What these techniques have in common is a refusal to take yourself too seriously. Anger is a serious emotion, but it's often accompanied by ideas that, if examined, can make you laugh.

## **Changing your environment**

Sometimes it's our immediate surroundings that give us cause for irritation and fury. Problems and responsibilities can weigh on you and make you feel angry at the "trap" you seem to have fallen into and all the people and things that form that trap.

Give yourself a break. Make sure you have some "personal time" scheduled for times of the day that you know are particularly stressful. One example is the working mother who has a standing rule that when she comes home from work, for the first 15 minutes "nobody talks to Mom unless the house is on fire." After this brief quiet time, she feels better prepared to handle demands from her kids without blowing up at them.

## **Some other tips for easing up on yourself**

**Timing:** If you and your spouse tend to fight when you discuss things at night—perhaps you're tired, or distracted, or maybe it's just habit—try changing the times when you talk about important matters so these talks don't turn into arguments.

**Avoidance:** If your child's chaotic room makes you furious every time you walk by it, shut the door. Don't make yourself look at what infuriates you. Don't say, "well, my child should clean up the room so I won't have to be angry!" That's not the point. The point is to keep yourself calm.

**Finding alternatives:** If your daily commute through traffic leaves you in a state of rage and frustration, give yourself a project—learn or map out a different

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# PERSONAL ANGER ASSESSMENT

The following assessment is designed to help you understand how you manage your anger. Read each of the twelve hypothetical scenarios and check the box associated with the statement that most closely matches your response. It is possible that none of the three statements are a perfect match, but select the one that is closest.

## CHOOSE THE STATEMENT THAT MOST CLOSELY DESCRIBES YOU.

- 1** ☐ I have serious arguments with my loved one, sometimes for no reason. (A)
- ☐ I think most people would think I handle my anger well. (B)
- ☐ When I am angry with someone, I am quickly and respectfully able to tell him or her why. (C)

- 3** ☐ I occasionally feel regret about how I express my anger. (B)
- ☐ I simply let bygones be bygones. (C)
- ☐ I find it very hard to forgive someone who has done me wrong. (A)

- 5** ☐ I've been so angry at times I couldn't even remember some of the things I said or did. (A)
- ☐ I consistently find appropriate outlets for my anger. (C)
- ☐ I'm usually able to figure out what it is that makes me angry. (B)

- 7** ☐ I've had trouble on the job because of my temper. (A)
- ☐ My temper has caused problems with loved ones, but we usually seem to work it all out. (B)
- ☐ If I have anything to do with it, I don't let unresolved issues hang in the air with those I care about. (C)

- 9** ☐ Though it doesn't always happen, I usually recognize when I'm angry. (B)
- ☐ I have control over how I express my anger in the vast majority of situations. (C)
- ☐ I often break things when I'm angry. (A)

- 11** ☐ I just keep it to myself when I'm angry. (A)
- ☐ I am quick to forgive others who have offended me. (C)
- ☐ I'm usually able to resolve arguments with other people. (B)

- 2** ☐ I'm very good at being quick to talk to someone who offends me so we can work out the issue. (C)
- ☐ I fly off the handle quickly. (A)
- ☐ Sometimes it takes me longer than I'd like to get over being angry. (B)

- 4** ☐ Little things don't bother me very much. (C)
- ☐ I wish I had some better strategies or ideas for taking care of the anger I feel. (B)
- ☐ I take frustration so badly that I can't put it out of my mind. (A)

- 6** ☐ I don't generally like being angry with others. (B)
- ☐ I have said malicious things about others to get back at them when I am angry. (A)
- ☐ I rarely if ever raise my voice in anger. (C)

- 8** ☐ I don't tend to get in many arguments. (A)
- ☐ Some people are afraid of my bad temper. (B)
- ☐ I've blurted things out in anger that I knew I needed to apologize for right away. (C)

- 10** ☐ After getting angry, I'm still able to act lovingly toward those around me. (B)
- ☐ I sometimes feel like arguments with my loved ones just lead to more arguments and difficulties. (A)
- ☐ My anger tends to come out suddenly in strong bursts that often appear uncontrollable to others around me. (C)

- 12** ☐ After an argument, I often find myself wishing I had thought of a better way to respond. (B)
- ☐ People tend to think I overreact when I'm angry. (A)
- ☐ I work hard to have all the facts before acting on my anger. (C)



# PERSONAL ANGER ASSESSMENT

## NOW LET'S SEE HOW YOU DID!

Go back and count how many times you checked each of the individual letters. Then transfer those totals to the appropriate columns below. For example, if you checked A eight times, then write the number 8 in the blank above the A symbol below.

A	B	C

Multiply the total number in C by two and add the total number in B.

$C \times 2$	+	B	=	TOTAL
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## IF YOUR TOTAL SCORE IS:

**19–24**

You Know How To Handle Anger

**7–18**

You Are Doing Well,  
But Can Improve

**0–6**

Your Anger Is Handling You

## WHAT DOES MY SCORE MEAN... AND WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

### 19–24 YOU KNOW HOW TO HANDLE ANGER

Your responses indicate that you generally have a good handle on your anger. You are likely aware of what makes you angry, and tend to be intentional in processing your feelings of anger. You likely don't experience too many difficulties from anger-related issues in your personal or professional life. There's always room for improvement, however. Consider the following possibilities for future action:

#### Action Steps

1. Is there someone that you need to reconcile with? Perhaps you had an issue or conflict some time ago and you haven't taken the initiative or effort to repair your relationship. Assuming it's within your power and you can't foresee any significant and/or unintended negative consequences, prayerfully consider reconciling and rebuilding a relationship with this person. Dr. Chapman highlights some biblical strategies for reconciling in chapter three of this book.
2. Even though you're doing well in handling your anger, none of us are perfect. Maybe you have some unexamined anger that you haven't considered as it relates to your spouse, your kids, your family of origin, your self, or perhaps even God. Take some time to examine your inner life and ask God, as the Psalmist did, to "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me, and know my anxious thoughts." (Psalm 139:23 NLT) Dr. Chapman has some great words of wisdom for you in chapters 9-12 to figure out new ways of handling these kinds of anger.

### 7–18 YOU ARE DOING WELL, BUT CAN IMPROVE

Your results are indicative of someone who likely handles your anger well in many situations, but there are still times when your anger is handling you. Recognize the areas where you are doing well in handling your anger, but also be cautious that your anger is not getting out of hand in other ways.

Think about the situations where your anger comes out most often. Is it with loved ones? At work? What happens when you react angrily? Are you a shouter, or do you turn your anger inward? What words do you tend to use? What feelings tend to come out when you're angry, and how do those feelings find expression, in good ways or bad? Consider the following possibilities for future action:



# PERSONAL ANGER ASSESSMENT

## Action Steps

1. You would benefit from better understanding the distinction between good anger and bad anger. Definitive (or "good") anger, as Dr. Chapman describes it, is a normal response to genuine wrongdoing, injustice, or mistreatment. Distorted (or "bad") anger, on the other hand, is our response to others when we have incorrectly perceived a construed wrongdoing, injustice, or mistreatment. We don't have all the facts correct in distorted anger. Learn some other key differences between the two responses in chapter four of this book.
2. Some people look like they have it all together on the outside and rarely appear out of control due to anger, while underneath the façade they tend to simmer with unexamined anger. This "implosive" anger can be characterized by brooding or withdrawal, among other expressions. Dr. Chapman identifies key strategies to deal with implosive anger in chapter six of his book.

## 0—6 YOUR ANGER IS HANDLING YOU

Your responses indicate that how you are currently handling your anger could use improvement. You likely have many difficulties stemming from how you express your anger and how you relate to others during times of conflict. Your angry responses in many situations are likely exaggerated and create additional problems for you. You also may not understand why you respond angrily in certain situations, or from where your anger is stemming. These difficulties likely demand further attention from you to either heal some broken relationships or to move ahead in a healthy way in other personal and/or professional situations. Consider the following possibilities for future action:

## Action Steps

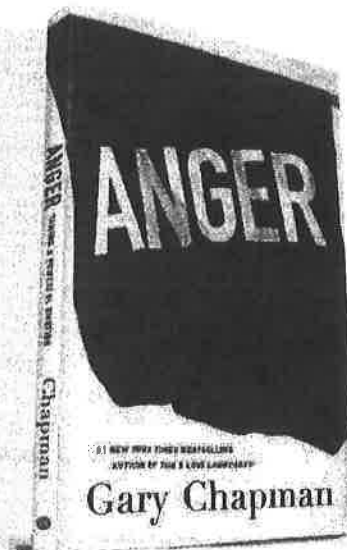
1. Your angry responses are likely driving people away quicker than you realize or want. It's important to take a serious look at your anger and how it is affecting your life. You will likely benefit from learning techniques that help you change your anger responses in the heat of the moment. While learning some of these techniques, however, you would also benefit from understanding what anger really is. In chapter one Dr. Chapman helps you define what anger is and where it comes from. Later in chapter three you will learn a unique and manageable technique for managing your anger responses.
2. Proverbs 29:11 (NLT) says "Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back." Perhaps you've given vent to your anger for so long and in so many situations that it's hard to remember what it's like to keep it under control. Dealing with the long-term effects of anger can be difficult. You'd do well to make yourself very familiar with the specific anger management techniques Dr. Chapman highlights in this book. It may also be very beneficial for you to understand and identify the effects of long-term anger as it relates to your emotional well-being, something that's explained in greater detail in chapters seven and twelve.

## LEARN MORE

Anger can erupt in a flash or smolder for a lifetime. It can spread like wildfire or engulf an individual. Sometimes anger is appropriate and other times it's irrational, but the fact is that the emotion of anger needs to be a part of a healthy human experience.

Some suggest that anger is merely an evolutionary reflex to danger. However, anger, understood within a Christian worldview, is much more complex. It's essential that we learn to deal with anger well and, in some cases, use it productively. Anger does not need to control us.

In *Anger: Taming a Powerful Emotion*, Dr. Gary Chapman, author of *The 5 Love Languages*®, offers insight to the often surprising reasons behind our anger. He also guides you in learning helpful techniques for managing this intense emotion with reflection questions included in the book and a downloadable 13-session discussion guide that's perfect for small groups, workplace studies, and book clubs.



For more information or to take this assessment online, visit [www.5lovelanguages.com](http://www.5lovelanguages.com).





# PERSONAL ANGER ASSESSMENT

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	+	=	
C x 2		B	TOTAL

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## Defense Mechanisms Worksheet

### Part I. Understanding Defense Mechanisms

Review Freud's structures of personality and ego defense mechanisms in Chapter 11 then answer the questions below.

1. What develops when the demands of the id and superego threaten to overpower the ego?
2. What is the result when the id overpowers the ego? When the superego overpowers the ego?
3. What is the purpose of the ego defense mechanisms?

Then match the definition with the type of defense mechanism it describes.

Definition	Defense Mechanism
_____ When adult defense mechanisms stop working for us, we regress to a personality we had at childhood.	
_____ Overacting in the opposite way to a fear or reality.	<i>Displacement</i>
_____ Unconscious pushing of unacceptable or threatening feelings out of awareness to a point where he/she becomes unaware of it.	<i>Regression</i>
_____ Refusal to acknowledge that an anxiety producing event has occurred.	<i>Projection</i>
_____ Replacing an unacceptable action or thought with one that is acceptable.	<i>Rationalization</i>
_____ The person attributes one's own perceived negative attributes onto someone else.	<i>Repression</i>
_____ The shifting of actions from a desired target to a substitute target when there is some reason why the first target is not permitted or not available.	<i>Reaction Formation</i>
_____ Redirecting destructive urges into socially acceptable actions	<i>Sublimation</i>
_____ Justification of thoughts or actions with socially acceptable explanations, while hiding or ignoring one's true intentions.	<i>Undoing</i>
	<i>Denial</i>



## Defense Mechanisms Worksheet

**Part 2.** What is the defense mechanism that is being used? Use each answer as many times as necessary. You can also create flash cards with these by using the table on the last page of this worksheet.

*Displacement*

*Regression*

*Projection*

*Repression*

*Reaction Formation*

*Sublimation*

*Undoing*

*Denial*

*Rationalization*

Answer

Examples

Nicholas lost his track race and said, "I would have won the race but the track was wet."

Bill blames the instructor for a bad grade when he didn't study.

Otto wins the lottery. He turns to the person next to him and gives the person a big kiss.

Veata suffered a mental breakdown and assumes the fetal position, rocking and crying.

Fenecia is in a hurry and cut off another driver on the highway, then patiently waits at a stop light for a car to pull in front of her because she feels bad about cutting someone off earlier.

Aisha has an obsessive need for control and order and starts up a successful business entrepreneur.

Toby is sure to take his teddy-bear with him to his first year at college and puts it on his nightstand each night.

Yvette is attracted to a fellow worker but accuses him of sexual advances.

Misha is a womanizer and openly criticizes gay men, although he has had sexual relationships with men in his past.

Alexis says to her mother, "You are the worst mom ever!" but then cleans up her room like she was asked.

Phillipe was abused by a parent as a young child and still has no recollection of the events, but has trouble forming relationships.

Tatyana has been a smoker for more than 10 years, but concludes that the evidence linking cigarette use to health problems is bogus.



## Defense Mechanisms Worksheet

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Sophia found childbirth particularly painful but continues to have children (and each time the level of pain is surprising).

Julio evades paying taxes and justifies it by talking about how the government wastes money.

Gizela is angry with a colleague but actually ends up being particularly courteous and friendly towards her.

After getting in a fight with his husband yesterday, Mark cooks his husband's favorite meal for dinner.

Jacob has extra-marital desires but takes up household repairs when his wife is out of town.

Michael was bullied at school today and kicked a hole in his wall when he got home.

Madison was fired this week for poor conduct but instead blames the boss because, "He is a jerk."

Li was resentful that his wife became pregnant, but becomes very protective of the child after it is born.

Yasir got in an oral argument with his neighbor and instead of hitting him he went to his backyard and chopped firewood.

Erik is having an affair but does not think about pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

Chantal's boss reprimanded her at work and that night she yelled at her daughter for spilling a glass of water.

Esther is an alcoholic but frequently says, "I may like to drink, but I'm not an alcoholic."

Jacob has extra-marital desires but takes up household repairs when his wife is out of town.

Sam cheats on his spouse and blames the spouse for cheating.





## Defense Mechanisms Worksheet

**Optional Activity:** Cut out the table below and write the correct answer on the back to use as flashcards!

Nicholas lost his track race and said, "I would have won the race but the track was wet."	Bill blames the instructor for a bad grade when he didn't study.	Otto wins the lottery. He turns to the person next to him and gives the person a big kiss.
Veata suffered a mental breakdown and assumes the fetal position, rocking and crying.	Fenecia is in a hurry and cut off another driver on the highway, then patiently waits at a stop light for a car to pull in front of her because she feels bad about cutting someone off earlier.	Aisha has an obsessive need for control and order and starts up a successful business entrepreneur.
Toby is sure to take his teddy-bear with him to his first year at college and puts it on his nightstand each night.	Yvette is attracted to a fellow worker but accuses him of sexual advances.	Misha is a womanizer and openly criticizes gay men, although he has had sexual relationships with men in his past.
Alexis says to her mother, "You are the worst mom ever!" but then cleans up her room like she was asked.	Phillipe was abused by a parent as a young child and still has no recollection of the events, but has trouble forming relationships.	Tatyana has been a smoker for more than 10 years, but concludes that the evidence linking cigarette use to health problems is bogus.



### Defense Mechanisms Worksheet

Sophia found childbirth particularly painful but continues to have children (and each time the level of pain is surprising).	Julio evades paying taxes and justifies it by talking about how the government wastes money.	Gizela is angry with a colleague but actually ends up being particularly courteous and friendly towards her.
After getting in a fight with his husband yesterday, Mark cooks his husband's favorite meal for dinner.	Jacob has extra-marital desires but takes up household repairs when his wife is out of town.	Michael was bullied at school today and kicked a hole in his wall when he got home.
Madison was fired this week for poor conduct but instead blames the boss because, "He is a jerk."	Li was resentful that his wife became pregnant, but becomes very protective of the child after it is born.	Yasir got in an oral argument with his neighbor and instead of hitting him he went to his backyard and chopped firewood.
Erik is having an affair but does not think about pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.	Chantal's boss reprimanded her at work and that night she yelled at her daughter for spilling a glass of water.	Esther is an alcoholic but frequently says, "I may like to drink, but I'm not an alcoholic."
Jacob has extra-marital desires but takes up household repairs when his wife is out of town.	Sam cheats on his spouse and blames the spouse for cheating.	



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

# Defense Mechanisms (A. Freud)

1. The seeking of success in one area of life as a substitution for success in another area of life that has been limited because of personal or environmental barriers (e.g. a disabled athlete becoming a computer expert).

A. Reaction Formation

2. The transformation of anxiety into a physical dysfunction, such as paralysis or blindness, which does not have a physiological basis (e.g. an individual who was abused and became blind as a defense against further abuse).

B. Repression

3. The refusal to acknowledge an aspect of reality, including one's experiences, because to do so would result in overwhelming anxiety (e.g. an individual who manifests symptoms of cancer but refused to accept the diagnosis because he/she could not face the truth).

C. Sublimation

4. The shifting of negative feelings one has about a person or situation onto a different person or situation (e.g. a husband who was angry with his boss and then berated his wife when he came home).

D. Projection

5. Mechanism by which painful feelings are separated from the incident that triggered them initially (e.g. an individual who was in a serious automobile accident but expressed no emotion regarding the accident).

E. Intellectualization

6. Mechanism by which reasoning is used to block difficult feelings. It involves removing one's emotions from a stressful event (e.g. a wife who refers to her husband's heart attack in medical terminology rather than expressing her emotions).

F. Isolation of Affect

7. Mechanism by which one's own negative characteristics are denied and instead seen as being characteristics as someone else (e.g. an individual who criticizes her mother for being a perfectionist when she herself is extremely compulsive about having every detail correct).

G. Compensation

8. Mechanism by which a person substitutes a more socially acceptable, logical reason for an action rather than identifying the real motivation (e.g. an individual who states that she is unable to attend a family outing because she has a work project that she has to complete, when she really does not want to attend).

H. Displacement

9. Adopting a behavior that is the antithesis of the instinctual urge (e.g. an individual who expresses support for a particular racial group when the individual actually has strong negative feelings about the group).

I. Conversion



10. Reverting back to more primitive modes of coping associated with earlier and safer developmental periods (e.g. an individual who, when upset, clutches their blanket for security).

J. Substitution

11. The unconscious pushing of anxiety-producing through and issues out of the conscious and into the unconscious (e.g. an individual who cannot recall being sexually abused as a child because he/she has pushed those memories into their unconscious; these memories may not be recalled except through psychoanalysis or hypnosis).

K. Undoing

12. Mechanism by which intolerable drives or desires are diverted into activities that are socially acceptable (e.g. individual who has strong sexual urges and redirects those urge into sports activities).

L. Denial

13. Mechanism by which a person replaces an unacceptable goal with an acceptable one (e.g. an individual who wanted to be a tattoo artist but instead became a painter as a result of pressure from his/her family).

M. Regression

14. Mechanism by which an individual engages in a repetitious ritual in an attempt to reverse an unacceptable action previously taken (e.g. an individual who ritualistically washes his/her hands in attempt to symbolically wash off blood that was on his/her hands from a physical altercation).

N. Rationalization





# Defense Mechanism Worksheet

Using the descriptions on the back of this worksheet, determine which defense mechanism best fits the examples given here. It is helpful to work in small groups and discuss the examples and come to a group consensus.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Jim bought a sweater he really didn't need and couldn't afford. He claimed it was a bargain he couldn't pass up.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I got a dean referral because the teacher doesn't like me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Whenever there is something unpleasant to do, Mary gets sick.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Tom is not strong academically, so he puts extra effort into sports.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Bill seems unable to recognize any of his faults
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Mister Smith had an argument with his boss. When he got home he beat his wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Dan pouts and sulks when he doesn't get his way.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Whenever things go badly at work, Sarah goes to yoga class.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Bob blames the bat every time he strikes out.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Mary has an overly strong urge to help people. This influenced her becoming a nurse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Lately Paul has begun to walk and talk like his favorite celebrity
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Mary never allows herself to cry when she feels hurt
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. When Tom was in school, he was always trying to get attention by making snarky comments in class. Today he makes a living as a stand up comic.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Bill complains about his job. He says, "all the foreigners are taking the good gobs".
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Even though John likes Ellen, he teases her constantly.



**Directions:** For each of the following statements determine which of Freud's defense mechanisms is being utilized.

- **Options:**
- Denial
- Repression
- Regression
- Reaction Formation
- Projection
- Rationalization
- Displacement
- Identification
- Sublimation

1. \_\_\_\_\_ After a very stressful day at work, Sabrina arrives home & immediately begins yelling at her two children for not cleaning their rooms.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ After Dolores rejected him, Philip told his friends that he didn't think she was very attractive or interesting, and that he really wasn't all that crazy about her.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ Sixteen-year-old Theodore started using drugs, and the changes in his behavior were fairly obvious; however, his parents didn't believe the school principal when she called to talk with them about Theodore's problem.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Norm behaves like a stereotypical "he-man;" however, he's actually anxious and insecure about his gender identity.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ After getting home from an incredible shopping spree, Stacey explains to her husband why she "had" to purchase each of the items.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ Frank feels that his younger son, Ralph, is unattractive and not particularly smart. Frank accuses his wife of picking on Ralph and favoring their other son.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Dwayne, raised in a xenophobic family, is afraid of other ethnic groups. Outwardly, he protests the KKK and is quick to call others racist if they use controversial terms.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ A traumatized soldier has no recollection of the details of a close brush with death.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ A smoker concludes that the evidence linking cigarette use to health problems is scientifically worthless.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ After parental scolding, a young girl takes her anger out on her little brother.
11. \_\_\_\_\_ A parent who resents a child, spoils the child with outlandish gifts.
12. \_\_\_\_\_ An adult has a temper tantrum when he doesn't get his way.
13. \_\_\_\_\_ A student watches TV instead of studying, saying that "additional studying wouldn't do any good anyway."
14. \_\_\_\_\_ Many people who were victims of the concentration camps were unable to recall the events that occurred during their internment.
15. \_\_\_\_\_ George's new supervisor is very difficult to work for. Recently, George has begun going to the gym after work.

16. \_\_\_\_\_ The young wife, after a conflict with her husband, gives up the marriage and returns to the home of her parents. She again takes on the role of a dependent child who expects unlimited love and indulgences.
17. \_\_\_\_\_ The majority group of a culture may blame all the various ills of society on a small minority group. This is a process termed "scapegoating" and is a factor in racial and religious prejudice.
18. \_\_\_\_\_ The woman with a strong sexual drive may feel that most other women exhibit flirtatious behavior or wear revealing clothes.
19. \_\_\_\_\_ The habitual drinker may insist that he really doesn't care much for the taste of alcohol but feels that he is obliged to drink with his friends "*just to be sociable.*"
20. \_\_\_\_\_ Even the best baseball players will sometimes strike out on an easy pitch. When this happens, the player's next action may be to throw his bat or kick the water cooler with all his might.

## DEFENSE MECHANISMS WORKSHEET ANSWERS

**DISPLACEMENT** 1. After a very stressful day at work, Sarina arrives home and immediately begins yelling at her two children for not cleaning their rooms.

**DENIAL/R.F.** 2. After Doloris rejected him, Philip told his friends that he didn't think she was very attractive or interesting, and that he really wasn't all that crazy about her.

**DENIAL** 3. Sixteen-year-old Theodore had started using drugs, and the changes in his behavior made it pretty obvious, but his parents didn't believe the school principal when she called to talk with them about the problem.

**REACTION FORM.** 4. Norm behaves like a stereotypical "he man," but he's actually anxious/insecure about his gender identity.

**RATIONALIZATION** 5. After getting home from an incredible shopping spree, Stacey explains to her husband why she "had" to purchase each of the items.

**PROJECTION** 6. Frank feels that his younger son, Ralph, is unattractive and not very smart. Frank accuses his wife of picking on Ralph and favoring their other son.

**R.F./PROJECTION** 7. Dwayne, raised in a xenophobic family, feels scared of Latinos. Outwardly, he protests the KKK and is quick to call others racist if they use controversial terms.

**REPRESSION** 8. A traumatized soldier has no recollection of the details of a close brush with death.

**DENIAL** 9. A smoker concludes that the evidence linking cigarette use to health problems is scientifically worthless.

**DISPLACEMENT** 10. After parental scolding, a young girl takes her anger out on her little brother.

**REACTION FORM.** 11. A parent who resents a child spoils the child with outlandish gifts.

**REGRESSION** 12. An adult has a temper tantrum when he doesn't get his way.

**RATIONALIZATION** 13. A student watches TV instead of studying, saying that "additional study wouldn't do any good anyway."

**REPRESSION** 14. Many people who were interned in concentration camps were unable to recall events that happened in the camp during their internment.

**SUBLIMATION** 15. George's new supervisor is very difficult to work for. Recently George has begun stopping off at the gym after work.

**REGRESSION** 16. The young wife, after a conflict with her husband, gives up the marriage and returns to the home of her parents. She again takes on the role of a dependent child who expects unlimited love and indulgences.

**DISPLACEMENT** 17. The majority group of a culture may blame all the various ills of society on a small minority group. This is a process termed "scapegoating" and is a factor in racial and religious prejudice.

**PROJECTION** 18. The woman with a strong sexual drive may feel that most other women exhibit flirtatious behavior or wear revealing clothes.

**RATIONALIZATION** 19. The habitual drinker may insist that he really doesn't care much for the taste of alcohol but feels that he is obliged to drink with his friends "just to be sociable."

**DISPLACEMENT** 20. Even a top baseball player will sometimes strike out on an easy pitch. When this happens, his next action may be to throw his bat or kick the water cooler with all his might.



# Defense Mechanisms

**Definition:** *Defense Mechanisms contribute to mental health by providing relief from stressful situations. However, too much dependence on them can lead to avoidance in facing problems.*

<b>Denial:</b>	Refusal to accept reality. Carol's longtime pet has died. She continues to act as if it were still alive. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Escape or Fantasy:</b>	Running away from problems through daydreams, books or excessive sleep. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Rationalization:</b>	An attempt to justify one's actions with an excuse. Anne justifies flunking a math test because she was absent the day it was scheduled. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Projection:</b>	An attempt to protect one's feelings or self-esteem by blaming others. Bill blamed his teacher's dislike of him for his poor grade. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Repression:</b>	The unconscious exclusion or holding back feelings. You forget about chores you are supposed to do on the weekend allowing yourself to enjoy the company of friends instead. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Suppression:</b>	The conscious holding back of thoughts or feelings. You think that showing frustration is a sign of weakness so you hold those feelings inside and don't express them. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Identification:</b>	Acting like, or modeling behaviors after a person someone likes. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Displacement:</b>	Directing feelings at someone or something other than the source of those feelings. Angry at not making the team, Sarah pushes her little sister when she gets home. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Regression:</b>	Acting as if one was back in an earlier less troublesome time in their life. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Compensation:</b>	An attempt to make up for a weakness in one area by excelling in another area. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Sublimation:</b>	Transforming unacceptable behaviors into acceptable ones. A very aggressive person might become a professional athlete. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Conversion:</b>	Emotional problems result in real physical ailments. Excessive worrying can cause headaches. <b>Example:</b>
<b>Reaction Formation:</b>	Acting outwardly the opposite of what one feels. <b>Example:</b>





# Forgiveness

## Information Sheet



**Forgiveness** is a process where someone who has been wronged chooses to let go of their resentment, and treat the wrongdoer with compassion.

### Deepening Understanding of Forgiveness

Forgiveness does not mean forgetting or condoning the wrongdoing, granting legal mercy, or reconciling a relationship. You can forgive a person while in no way believing that their actions were acceptable or justified.

On the other hand, simply saying the words “I forgive you”, or accepting an apology, is not forgiveness. In fact, forgiveness can occur without ever speaking to the wrongdoer. Forgiveness is an emotional change that occurs within the person who has been wronged.

#### What forgiveness is:

The decision to overcome pain that was inflicted by another person.

Letting go of anger, resentment, shame, and other emotions associated with an injustice, even though they are reasonable feelings.

Treating the offender with compassion, even though they are not entitled to it.

#### What forgiveness isn't:

Reconciliation (repairing or returning to a relationship).

Forgetting the injustice.

Condoning or excusing the offender's behavior.

Granting legal mercy to the offender.

“Letting go”, but wishing for revenge.

### The Four Phases of Forgiveness

- 1 The Uncovering Phase.** During the first phase of forgiveness, you will improve your understanding of the injustice, and how it has impacted your life.
- 2 The Decision Phase.** During the second phase, you will gain a deeper understanding of what forgiveness is, and make the decision to choose or reject forgiveness as an option.
- 3 The Work Phase.** During the third phase, you will start to understand the offender in a new way, which will allow positive feelings toward the offender and yourself.
- 4 The Deepening Phase.** During the final phase of forgiveness, you will further decrease the negative emotions associated with the injustice. You may find meaning in the experiences, and recognize ways in which you have grown as a result.



# Forgiveness

## Uncovering Phase

During the **uncovering phase** of forgiveness, you will improve your understanding of the injustice, and how it has impacted your life. Use the journal prompts below to begin exploring.

**Describe the injustices you have endured. What happened? Why was this treatment unfair?**


**How have the injustices affected you? Circle any of the examples that apply, and describe them in the box below. Feel free to add something else that isn't listed.**

painful emotions  
(e.g. anger or shame)

changed behavior  
(e.g. avoiding new relationships)

practical costs  
(e.g. time or money)

changed worldview  
(e.g. "people are evil")

cognitive rehearsal  
(recurring thoughts about injustice)

physical harm  
(e.g. injuries from abuse)




# Forgiveness

## Decision Phase

During the **decision phase** of forgiveness, you will gain a deeper understanding of what forgiveness is, and make the decision to choose or reject forgiveness as an option.

**Without looking at a definition, how would you describe forgiveness?**


Many people struggle with the decision to forgive because they know that they have the right to be angry, while the offender does not have the right to kindness. Making the decision to forgive means letting go of these resentments—which you have every right to hold—so you can heal.

**What are the pros and cons of deciding to forgive the person who wronged you?**

Pros	Cons

**Whether or not you've made the decision to forgive, describe how things might be different if you decide to do so. Be as specific as possible.**




# Forgiveness

## Work Phase

During the **work phase** of forgiveness, you will start to understand the offender in a new way, which will allow positive feelings toward the offender and yourself.

Learning to understand the offender, and to see them as more than their wrongdoing, is an important part of forgiveness. However, it must be stressed that understanding does not mean condoning. One can understand another person without believing their actions are acceptable.

**Respond to one of the following prompts:**

- **What was life like for the offender as they grew up? May this have impacted their behavior?**
- **What was life like for the offender at the time of the offense?**


**List the feelings you currently have toward the offender.**


**Did you list any positive feelings toward the offender? If so, describe them. If not, describe how your negative feelings have changed over time. Have they lessened?**






# Forgiveness

## Deepening Phase

During the **deepening phase** of forgiveness, you will further decrease the negative emotions associated with the injustice. You may find meaning in the experiences, and recognize ways in which you have grown as a result.

**How have you benefitted by forgiving the offender? Consider how forgiveness has affected your emotional health, behavioral changes that resulted from the injustice, and time/energy spent thinking about the offender.**


**Describe how you have grown because of injustice you endured and your efforts to forgive. How has your worldview changed? Are you stronger than you were before deciding to forgive?**




# Strengths Exploration



## Personal Fulfillment

hobbies, interests, and pleasurable activities

List the strengths you possess that help you achieve personal fulfillment.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help you with personal fulfillment.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths for personal fulfillment.

1

2

# Strengths Exploration



## Profession

past or present work, school, or other professional endeavors

List the strengths you possess that help you in your profession.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help in your profession.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in your professional life.

1

2

# Strengths Exploration



## Relationships

romantic relationships, friendships, and family

List the strengths you possess that help you in your relationships.

Describe a *specific* time your strengths were able to help you in a relationship.

Describe two new ways you could use your strengths in relationships.

1

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# Strengths Exploration

Those who know their strengths and use them frequently tend to have more success in several areas. They feel happier, have better self-esteem, and are more likely to accomplish their goals.

To use your strengths effectively, it's important to have a clear idea of what they are, and how they can be used. Some of your greatest strengths might be easy to recognize, while others go unnoticed because they feel ordinary to you (even if they aren't).

**In this worksheet you will identify your strengths and ways in which you are already using them. Additionally, you will explore *new* ways to use your strengths to your advantage.**

Circle your strengths from the choices below, or add your own at the bottom.			
Wisdom	Artistic Ability	Curiosity	Leadership
Empathy	Honesty	Open Mindedness	Persistence
Enthusiasm	Kindness	Love	Social Awareness
Fairness	Bravery	Cooperation	Forgiveness
Modesty	Common Sense	Self-Control	Patience
Gratitude	Love of Learning	Humor	Spirituality
Ambition	Creativity	Confidence	Intelligence
Athleticism	Discipline	Assertiveness	Logic
Optimism	Independence	Flexibility	Adventurousness

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# What are Personal Boundaries?

## Types of Boundaries

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**Physical boundaries** refer to personal space and physical touch. Healthy physical boundaries include an awareness of what's appropriate, and what's not, in various settings and types of relationships (hug, shake hands, or kiss?). Physical boundaries may be violated if someone touches you when you don't want them to, or when they invade your personal space (for example, rummaging through your bedroom).

**Intellectual boundaries** refer to thoughts and ideas. Healthy intellectual boundaries include respect for others' ideas, and an awareness of appropriate discussion (should we talk about the weather, or politics?). Intellectual boundaries are violated when someone dismisses or belittles another person's thoughts or ideas.

**Emotional boundaries** refer to a person's feelings. Healthy emotional boundaries include limitations on when to share, and when not to share, personal information. For example, gradually sharing personal information during the development of a relationship, as opposed to revealing everything to everyone. Emotional boundaries are violated when someone criticizes, belittles, or invalidates another person's feelings.

**Sexual boundaries** refer to the emotional, intellectual, and physical aspects of sexuality. Healthy sexual boundaries involve mutual understanding and respect of limitations and desires between sexual partners. Sexual boundaries can be violated with unwanted sexual touch, pressure to engage in sexual acts, leering, or sexual comments.

**Material boundaries** refer to money and possessions. Healthy material boundaries involve setting limits on what you will share, and with whom. For example, it may be appropriate to lend a car to a family member, but probably not to someone you met this morning. Material boundaries are violated when someone steals or damages another person's possessions, or when they pressure them to give or lend them their possessions.

**Time boundaries** refer to how a person uses their time. To have healthy time boundaries, a person must set aside enough time for each facet of their life such as work, relationships, and hobbies. Time boundaries are violated when another person demands too much of another's time.

# What are Personal Boundaries?

**Personal boundaries** are the limits and rules we set for ourselves within relationships. A person with healthy boundaries can say “no” to others when they want to, but they are also comfortable opening themselves up to intimacy and close relationships.

A person who always keeps others at a distance (whether emotionally, physically, or otherwise) is said to have *rigid boundaries*. Alternatively, someone who tends to get too involved with others has *porous boundaries*.

## Common traits of rigid, porous, and healthy boundaries.

Rigid Boundaries	Porous Boundaries	Healthy Boundaries
<p>Avoids intimacy and close relationships.</p> <p>Unlikely to ask for help.</p> <p>Has few close relationships.</p> <p>Very protective of personal information.</p> <p>May seem detached, even with romantic partners.</p> <p>Keeps others at a distance to avoid the possibility of rejection.</p>	<p>Overshares personal information.</p> <p>Difficulty saying “no” to the requests of others.</p> <p>Overinvolved with others’ problems.</p> <p>Dependent on the opinions of others.</p> <p>Accepting of abuse or disrespect.</p> <p>Fears rejection if they do not comply with others.</p>	<p>Values own opinions.</p> <p>Doesn’t compromise values for others.</p> <p>Shares personal information in an appropriate way (does not over or under share).</p> <p>Knows personal wants and needs, and can communicate them.</p> <p>Accepting when others say “no” to them.</p>



Most people have a mix of different boundary types. For example, someone could have healthy boundaries at work, porous boundaries in romantic relationships, and a mix of all three types with their family.



The appropriateness of boundaries depends heavily on setting. What’s appropriate to say when you’re out with friends might not be appropriate when you’re at work.



Some cultures have very different expectations when it comes to boundaries. For example, in some cultures it’s considered wildly inappropriate to express emotions publicly. In other cultures, emotional expression is encouraged.



# What Are Spiritual Habits? 9 Spiritual Practices That Will Transform Your Life

Spiritual practices foster a harmonious relationship with oneself, others, and the universe. However, for this to be possible, you must achieve a state of inner balance, purpose, and connection—something possible with these 9 Spiritual Habits.



practices great for our souls, but they are also great for our bodies and form an important part of our spiritual awareness — they alleviate stress, increase resistance to burnout, and help to develop healthy habits.

By spending time on spiritual habits, you will find a balance in life and make it more meaningful. They play a significant role in a whole body and holistic approach to wellness.

So, what spiritual habits can we use to improve our general well-being? This article will explore nine spiritual practices that can transform your life and help you grow spiritually.

## **What is a Spiritual Practice?**

A spiritual practice or spiritual discipline refers to any activity done consistently with the aim of enhancing one's inducing spiritual experiences and fostering spiritual development. There are various spiritual disciplines practiced, such as prayer, guided meditation, mindfulness, breathing exercises, as well as ceremonies or rituals.

Note that these spiritual disciplines can differ for everyone based on their beliefs, culture, and lifestyle. However, they all share a common goal: to bring peace, clarity, and transformation in our lives. In essence, spiritual practices are a way to connect with our inner selves, higher power, or divine entity. Often, these habits can also help us bond with others and our surroundings, which in turn helps us lead a more meaningful life.

## **The Benefits of Spiritual Practices**

There are numerous benefits to incorporating spiritual discipline into your daily routine. Some of these benefits include:

- Increased self-reflection and introspection
  - Reduced stress and anxiety
  - Enhanced relationships with others
  - Greater sense of purpose, inner calmness, and fulfillment
-

- Self-discovery and personal growth
- Greater empathy and compassion towards others

## **9 Spiritual Habits to Help Transform Your Life**

Of course, some physical habits like exercising, eating healthy, and getting enough sleep also play a critical role in balancing our spiritual lives. But beyond these, there are key practices of mind, heart, and attitude that can have a significant impact on our spiritual well-being.

Here are nine spiritual disciplines to incorporate into your daily life.

### **1. Meditation**

Meditation is probably one of the most common and popular spiritual practices people use worldwide for better mental health. While it may seem that meditation is something for "enlightened" people only, scientific data shows it is incredibly effective in reducing depressive symptoms, stress, and anxiety. People suffering from various disorders, such as agoraphobia or panic disorder, also find meditation helpful.

Mindfulness meditation, widely used in psychotherapy, teaches people how to focus on feelings and emotions they have in a non-judgmental manner. It allows accepting negative experiences without avoiding them, leading to emotional balance, peace, and better physical health.

Even if you don't have any mental health problems, meditation can still be quite effective for improving your general well-being. An increase in self-awareness and better resilience are just a few effects you will enjoy after meditating for at least eight weeks.

### **2. Praying**

External sources of support are as effective as internal ones, and praying is a great way to boost your inner strength and spiritual peace. Spending at least 10 minutes praying daily will make your spiritual life more fulfilling. Better immune function,

higher life satisfaction, and optimism are just positive effects you will obtain from making this spiritual habit a part of your daily life.

Even if you don't believe in God and consider yourself an atheist, consider praying as a mental exercise and share what concerns you with "the higher power." Additionally, you can try positive affirmations to raise confidence and self-esteem.

Still, you may consider joining a prayer group. Being part of a spiritual community with similar beliefs and values can be a form of spiritual practice. It can provide a sense of belonging and connection, leading to better physical health. These groups can also serve as a support system during difficult times, where you can seek guidance and share your struggles and triumphs in your spiritual journey.

If joining a group isn't an option, consider starting one with friends or family members who share similar beliefs. Together, you can create a safe and supportive space for spiritual growth and connection.

### **3. Express Gratitude in Your Everyday Life**

Be good to others, and it will come back to you. Even if you don't feel grateful to anyone, try to find something positive in your life and appreciate even the smallest things. Expressing gratitude fosters positive thinking and creates more meaningful and positive relationships with people.

One of the effective ways to practice gratitude is to keep a gratitude journal. Every night, take note of three things you are thankful for — witness your well-being grow!

### **4. Connect with Nature**

Have you ever heard about El Camino de Santiago (the Way of St. James)? It is one of the most popular pilgrimages in the world. Thousands of believers and travelers embark on a spiritual path to the famous Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Spain every year. This path lies through fields, forests, and mountains, which allows people to connect with nature and enjoy its healing power.

The benefits of connecting with nature are tremendous. Unfortunately, modern society and technology separate us from the natural environments we used to live in. That's why connecting with nature and enjoying outdoor activities is so important — going for a walk, taking a yoga class or tai chi outdoors, or taking a trip to some natural destination.

To achieve maximum results, you can habit-stack these practices by linking them to your daily routines, like walking barefoot for at least 3 minutes after a morning yoga class.

Combining physical activities with nature is a great way to enjoy physical and psychological benefits. Connecting with nature is the way to go if you want to eliminate the feeling of alienation and become more in touch with the world.

## **5. Help Others**

Don't expect to receive anything back when you help others; it should come from the heart. Mentoring, volunteering, and other activities are perfect for finding like-minded people and developing a deep emotional connection with others. You will develop an empathetic connection with others and improve your emotional intelligence — the key to establishing trustful relationships.

Remember that you are never alone and isolated; helping others is one of the best ways to break out of loneliness.

## **6. Cultivate Forgiveness**

Sometimes, people make us feel hurt, and it can be tough to eliminate these negative emotions. Instead of keeping these emotions inside and letting them eat you alive, try to forgive people. Remember that everyone makes mistakes, and people often hurt others without consciously knowing it.

Cultivating forgiveness will help you to release these negative emotions and heal the wounds of your soul. Furthermore, forgiveness will make you more mindful of your negative feelings, leading to higher self-awareness.

## **7. Use Breathing Techniques**

This may seem odd as a spiritual practice, but certain breathing techniques are widespread in religious traditions. For example, the "Om" chant helps to clear your mind and reduce stress. But how exactly does this chant work? By inhaling as deeply as you can and slowly exhaling while chanting "Om," you will achieve a relaxed state of mind. You don't even need to chant anything while you exhale. Just take a deep breath and exhale slowly.

Interestingly, a recent study has proven that regular slow breathing exercises can improve the psychological condition in just 12 weeks. Breathing techniques are easy to learn, and you can practice them everywhere — at home, office, or even in the park. Check out our free member's guide to the grounding techniques, which explores breathing techniques and their benefits.

## **8. Have a Heart of Worship**

A heart of worship is full of gratitude, joy, and love. It is a heart that looks beyond the negative, focuses on what is good in life, and says, "Thank you!". Worshiping doesn't always have to involve singing hymns or attending church services. You can express your worship in many ways, such as thanking God for blessings based on personal experience, spending time in quiet meditation on positive thoughts, or even serving others.

Whatever form it takes, worship helps to cultivate spirituality and connect with a higher power greater than ourselves. It also reminds us to be humble and grateful for our lives.

Tapping into a heart of worship can also provide a sense of meaning and direction in life. Start small, with a few moments of worship each day; the more you practice, the more it will become a natural part of your daily routine.

## **9. See a Flow, Embrace It**

Nobody is perfect, and constantly striving for perfection is a never-ending cycle that can lead to disappointment, frustration, and inadequacy. Eventually, these negative feelings can take a toll on your spiritual well-being.

So, instead of focusing on your own flaws, try shifting your mindset to seeing the goodness in others. When you see a flaw in someone else, embrace them instead. Take it as God's cue to practice compassion rather than dwelling on their imperfections and judge them. Not only does this shift your focus from negativity to positivity, but it can also bring a sense of fulfillment in knowing that you are actively spreading love and kindness while at the same time practicing self-care.

This spiritual practice also helps you develop empathetic habits. It strengthens your connection with others and the world around you. After all, won't you want the same from others when they see your flaws?

## **Your Spiritual Journey is Your Journey: Do What's Right for You**

Spirituality is not just about religion or following certain rituals; it's about caring for your soul and finding inner peace. Having better spiritual health also helps us be more emotionally aware and present, which in turn helps us live a more fulfilling life while exploring life possibilities.

Therefore, with these easy spiritual practices, you will change the lives of others around you for the better and yours. Start small, and you will eventually notice positive changes in your life. Invest a few minutes into these daily habits, and you'll be setting yourself on the path of improved spiritual health.



**BrainManager Team**

Published 20 December 2023





# Spirituality Worksheet

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Exploring your beliefs

List your core beliefs about spirituality.

Reflect on how these beliefs influence your daily life and decisions.

Are there any beliefs you'd like to explore or challenge?

## Your personal spiritual journey

Describe your spiritual journey so far.

What spiritual practices or rituals do you currently engage in?

How do these practices impact your mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being?

## **Relationships**

How do your spiritual beliefs influence your relationships with others?

Are there practices or beliefs that assist you in cultivating compassion and understanding in your interactions?

## **Growth and development**

Identify aspects of your spirituality that you'd like to develop or deepen.

How do you envision your spiritual growth in the next six months or a year?

Brainstorm ways to integrate your spiritual beliefs and practices into your everyday routines.

How can you infuse more mindfulness and spirituality into your daily activities?

## **Additional notes**

# Silver Linings

## positive psychology exercise

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In difficult situations, it's possible to focus on the negative, or look for the positive. Research shows that finding the *silver linings* of challenging situations can help you become happier and more optimistic. The more you practice finding silver linings, the better you'll get.

**Instructions:** Complete this exercise every day for three weeks, then practice regularly for continued benefits.

### Step 1: Positive Mindset

List five things that make your life enjoyable. These can be as general as "my health" or as specific as "the feeling of sunshine on my skin." This will help you get into a positive mindset.

### Step 2: A Moment of Frustration

Briefly describe the most recent time something didn't go your way, or you felt upset or frustrated.

### Step 3: Silver Linings

Spend some time reflecting on the silver linings from the situation in Step 2. Describe three of the silver linings.



Pessimists expect bad things to happen and tend to look at the downside of things while optimists expect good things to happen and look for the silver lining when life doesn't go their way.

## The Pessimism-Optimism Spectrum

Psychologists view pessimism and optimism as being on a line. At one end of the line lies a pure pessimist, who may believe that life has no meaning or purpose (nihilism) or have a lot of cynicism. At the other end is the pure optimist, who might be so positive that they are detached from reality.

Most people lie somewhere in the middle of the pessimism-optimism spectrum. Everyone has their ups and downs, when their way of thinking is more negative or positive. Life circumstances and the effects of time and experience also impact our relative pessimism or optimism.

People can be more optimistic about one area of life and less optimistic about another. However, one's way of thinking usually leans toward one end of the spectrum. This results in a personality that is more or less pessimistic.

## Signs of Pessimism

How can you tell if you or someone you know may be a pessimistic person? Signs of pessimism include:

- You feel surprised when things actually work out.
- You don't go after what you want because you think you will probably fail.
- You tend to focus on what can go wrong in a situation.
- You think that the risks almost always outweigh the benefits.
- You experience imposter syndrome and undervalue your abilities.
- You tend to concentrate on your flaws or weaknesses rather than your strengths.
- You often feel annoyed by people with an optimistic demeanor.
- You often engage in negative self-talk.
- You assume that all good things will eventually come to an end.
- You find it easier to live with the status quo than change things for the better.

While you may not experience all of these signs of pessimism or think this way all the time, pessimists tend to engage in many of these types of thinking to some degree.



Another 2013 study, this one in *Psychology and Aging*, found a correlation between underestimating future life satisfaction with positive health outcomes and longevity in older adults. In other words, the study found that thinking your life would not go well was linked with some health benefits.

Pessimism can be a positive or a negative, having both types of impacts on one's life.

## Risks of Pessimism

There are several clear drawbacks of too much pessimism. Some of the major pitfalls of being overly pessimistic are:

- **Dwelling on negative thoughts is bad for well-being.** Studies suggest that women may have higher rates of depression because they have higher rates of rumination, brooding, and reflection. Rumination and brooding are both components of pessimistic thinking.
- **Overly negative thinking contributes to depression and anxiety.** Key symptoms of anxiety disorders are excessive worry, rumination, and worst-case scenario thinking. Likewise, low mood, negative thoughts, low self-esteem, and worry are not only characteristics of pessimistic thinkers, but also factors in depression.
- **Pessimism contributes to negative health effects.** A negative outlook is associated with a number of other heightened health risks, such as heart disease and overall mortality.
- **Pessimists tend to have greater stress and fewer coping skills.** One study showed that in older people, pessimism was correlated with higher stress levels, more focus on the less positive parts of their life, and a greater tendency to look back on life with more negativity in general, reducing life satisfaction.

Pessimistic people tend to experience more isolation, greater conflict and stress, poorer health, and reduced well-being. Conversely, optimists experience healthier stress levels and a higher perception of life satisfaction.

2015 study found that "higher optimism was associated with better physiological adjustment to a stressful situation, while higher pessimism was associated with worse physiological adjustment to stress."

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adjl  
psycl



Another worrisome component of pessimism is that it may make stressful situations feel worse than they actually are. On the other hand, more optimistic thinking can help significantly when coping with challenging events.

## Benefits and Drawbacks of Optimism

One of the biggest risks of being a pessimist is *not* being an optimist. Significant scientific research has found that optimists tend to be healthier, happier, more successful (financially, socially, and in many other ways), and enjoy stronger and more satisfying relationships.

But living on the bright side isn't always sunny. Drawbacks of optimism include a greater propensity for taking unwarranted risks in terms of personal health and safety—such as not buckling a seatbelt or not getting a vaccine—or in finances, such as investing in a risky business venture.

Even when considering the possible drawbacks, the benefits of optimism are huge.

- Positive thinking is correlated with greater relationship satisfaction in dating couples.
- Greater optimism is also related to an increased likelihood of seeking out social support in times of stress and hardship, along with lower levels of interpersonal conflicts.
- Higher levels of optimism in married couples are correlated with better health as studies have shown that one partner's level of optimism plays a role in promoting the health of both partners.
- Optimism is associated with warmer, more outgoing personality types, and pessimism is associated with more hostile and submissive interpersonal styles.
- Research has linked optimism to increased longevity.
- Optimism is also associated with greater life satisfaction, coping skills, social support, and resilience.

Pessimists may be less surprised when crises occur, but optimists don't stay in negative situations for as long since they tend to focus on finding solutions rather than ruminating about what went wrong.

## Living With Pessimism



### **FOR PROCESS GROUP**

- Any new developments in your life (getting DL, getting car, etc.)
- Any issues you are currently struggling with (thoughts of using, family or relationships issues, etc.)
- Progress towards goals; state goal then what progress you have made (if you are not working towards something you are not making progress)  
Should be related to the 8 areas of wellness: 1. Physical  
2. Emotional/Mental 3. Employment/Career 4. Financial 5. Social  
6. Environmental 7. Intellectual 8. Spiritual
- What are you learning from treatment (that is what you are doing here Mondays Wednesdays and Thursdays) be specific
- One new thing you are grateful for
- What recreational, social, activities, contacts have you had this week
- How do you feel today (use feeling words)
- Challenge yourself with one new behavior to work on
- Challenge someone else in group with one new behavior to work on
- Give yourself one compliment/praise
- Give someone else a compliment/praise
- What is a negative thought you have had this week and what is the replacement positive thought that you used to counter it.
- What is one coping skill you have practiced this week.
- What are you doing for self-care.
- You are you doing for self-help.



## WORKSHEET • 3

## Optimist or Pessimist?

Read each statement. Circle the number that reflects how well the statement describes you.

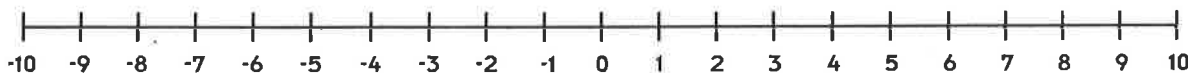
	No way!		That's me!	
1. Things usually turn out for the best for me.	1	2	3	4
2. It's easy for me to relax.	1	2	3	4
3. If something can go wrong, it will!	1	2	3	4
4. My future's so bright, I've got to wear shades.	1	2	3	4
5. I enjoy my friends a lot.	1	2	3	4
6. I always keep busy.	1	2	3	4
7. I hardly ever count on things going my way.	1	2	3	4
8. It doesn't take much to get me angry.	1	2	3	4
9. I do not get my hopes up.	1	2	3	4
10. When all is said and done, I expect more good things to happen to me than bad things to happen.	1	2	3	4

## HOW TO SCORE THE SURVEY

- Cross out questions 2, 5, 6, and 8. They are fillers.
- Add up the answers to questions 1, 4, and 10. This is your O score. O = \_\_\_\_\_
- Add up the answers to questions 3, 7, and 9. This is your P score. P = \_\_\_\_\_
- Subtract your P score from your O score. (*The answer may be a negative number.*) Then circle your answer on the number line below: \_\_\_\_\_

Pessimist

Optimist



WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE? \_\_\_\_\_



# Values Discussion Questions

**1** Values tend to change as we pass through different stages of life. For example, the things that a teenager values are usually very different than what a parent values. Think back to a different stage of your life. How were your values different? How are they the same?

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**2** Everyone has a personal set of values, built from their unique life experiences. One important factor in what we value are the values of our friends, families, and society. How do your values *differ* from your friends and family? How do they differ from the society you live in?

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**3** Think of a person who you respect or look up to. What do you think their most important values might be? What strengths or qualities do they have that you admire?

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**4** We can learn a lot about our own values by the way we react to other people. Think of behaviors that you disapprove of, or dislike, from others. What does this tell you about your own values? How would you behave differently if you were in their position?

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**5** Think of a value you have now that you did not used to have, or a value that has become more important to you. What life experiences led to this value changing? How does this change affect you now?

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**6** The values we hold do not always align with our actions. Some values are difficult to live up to, or other priorities get in the way. Which of these values do you hope to focus on in the future? What life changes would you need to make to accomplish this?

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**7** How our values are shown differ from setting to setting. For example, your family might see a different side of you than friends, co-workers, or an authority figure. Think of three people from different parts of your life. How do you think each of them would describe your values? What evidence do they have?





# Values Clarification

Your values are the beliefs that define what is most important to you. They guide each of your choices in life. For example, someone who values family might try to spend extra time at home, while someone who values success in their career may do just the opposite. Understanding your values will help you recognize areas of your life need more attention, and what to prioritize in the future.

Select the 10 most important items from the following list. Rank them from 1-10 with "1" being the most important item.

\_\_\_ Love  
\_\_\_ Wealth  
\_\_\_ Family  
\_\_\_ Morals  
\_\_\_ Success  
\_\_\_ Knowledge  
\_\_\_ Power  
\_\_\_ Friends  
\_\_\_ Free Time  
\_\_\_ Adventure  
\_\_\_ Variety  
\_\_\_ Calmness  
\_\_\_ Freedom  
\_\_\_ Fun  
\_\_\_ Recognition  
\_\_\_ Nature  
\_\_\_ Popularity  
\_\_\_ Responsibility  
\_\_\_ Sexuality

\_\_\_ Honesty  
\_\_\_ Humor  
\_\_\_ Loyalty  
\_\_\_ Reason  
\_\_\_ Independence  
\_\_\_ Achievement  
\_\_\_ Beauty  
\_\_\_ Spirituality  
\_\_\_ Respect  
\_\_\_ Peace  
\_\_\_ Stability  
\_\_\_ Wisdom  
\_\_\_ Fairness  
\_\_\_ Creativity  
\_\_\_ Relaxation  
\_\_\_ Safety

\_\_\_  
\_\_\_  
\_\_\_



# **Dysfunctional Family Roles**

## **Healthy Vs. Unhealthy**

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In any given family the individual members fulfill and act out roles, yet there are differences between healthy and dysfunctional families as outlined below:

### **HEALTHY FAMILIES**

1. While in healthy, functional families these roles are generally fluid, change over time, in different circumstances, at events and are age and developmentally appropriate, in dysfunctional families the roles are much more rigid.
2. In healthy family members are integrated and various parts may surface at different times at no threat to the family system. In functional families the roles are interdependent.
3. The various roles in a healthy family are parts of every person. Individual members, in particular children, are allowed to grow, develop, and integrate these roles in their personality to become a fully functional adult with a full set of skills to develop further during their own independent adult life.
4. Healthy families in general retain functionality when individual members 'leave' the family system through 'moving out', starting their own families or even death of an individual member.

### **UNHEALTHY FAMILIES**

1. In dysfunctional families the roles are almost a form of continuity or stability of the family system, stifling development of primarily the children, though one or more parents may be severely stifled as well.
2. Members must submerge parts of their personalities and take on a role so they are less of a threat to the family system that must be kept in place. In the case of a dysfunctional family all the roles are characterized as co-dependent.
3. In a dysfunctional family each member takes on a role, and/or is assigned one, to make up the whole of the family. Rather than a family of fully (yet age appropriate) persons, the family system gears to create just one: the family itself.
4. In dysfunctional family systems when an individual member leaves, this creates an (almost) irreparable hole in the existing system. When an individual member discards the taken or assigned role it threatens the family stability (such as it is) as there is no-one capable of fulfilling (or willing to fulfill) that role. This is why dysfunctional families are often so enmeshed. The system needs all members to function as a unit, not as a community.

### **UNHEALTHY FAMILY ROLES**

Unhealthy or dysfunctional family roles emerge when families chronically struggle with alcoholism, mental health disorders, abuse, rigid or dogmatic values/rules. Roles may shift or change as family members leave or move away either emotionally or physically.

## **THE ENABLER**

Another descriptive word for this type of codependent family role is "The Caretaker ". This is also a role a child can fulfill, especially in case the other parent/caregiver has not resigned to enable the dysfunctional addicted or narcissistic parent. The Enabler feels like they must keep the family going. Over and over, they take on the addict's or victim's problems and responsibilities. The Enabler is the martyr of the family, and often supports not only dysfunctional behavior, but also a prime enforcer of the codependent roles that everyone else is required to play. You often see this role in a family where the functioning of (one of) the parent(s) is impaired in some way, i.e., mental illness, substance abuse or a medical disability. This child will attempt to function as the surrogate parent. They worry and fret, nurture, and support, listen and console. Their entire concept of self is based on what they can provide for others.

The Enabler protects and takes care of the problem parent so that the parent is never allowed to experience the negative consequences of his or her actions. The Enabler feels he or she must act this way, because otherwise, the family might not survive. The paradoxical thing about The Enabler's behavior is that by preventing the dysfunctional parent's crisis, he or she also prevents the painful, corrective experience that crisis brings, which may be the only thing that makes the dysfunctional parent stop the downward spiral of addiction.

## **THE HERO**

This family member devotes his/her time and attention to making the family look "normal" and without problems. The Hero can mask or make up for the dysfunctional home life. Over-responsible and self-sufficient they are often perfectionistic, are over-achievers and look very good - on the outside. The parents look to this child to prove that they are good parents and good people. Their goal in life is to achieve "success", however that has been defined by the family; they must always be "brave and strong".

The Hero's compulsive drive to succeed may in turn lead to stress-related illness, and compulsive overworking. They learn at a young age to suffer the sadness of a parent and become a surrogate spouse or confidante. While The Hero saves the family by being perfect and making it look good, the golden child may struggle to live up to his status.

## **THE GOLDEN CHILD**

In a narcissistic personality disordered (NPD) family, the Golden Child is the recipient of all the narcissistic parent's positive projections and is their favorite child. The golden child is usually the victim of emotional and (covert) sexual abuse by the narcissistic parent. (S)He is also witness to, and sometimes takes part in, other children's abuse. Many specialists believe that witnessing your sibling's abuse is as damaging as receiving it.

## **THE SCAPEGOAT**

The Scapegoat is the "problem child" or the "troublemaker". This family member always seems defiant, hostile, and angry. The Scapegoat is the truth teller of the family and will often verbalize or act out the "problem" which the family is attempting to cover up or deny. This individual's behavior warrants negative attention and is a great distraction for everyone from the real issues at hand. The Scapegoat usually has trouble in school because they get attention the only way they know how - which is negatively. They can

be very clever, may develop social skills within his or her circle of peers, and become leaders in their own peer groups. But often the groups that they choose to associate with are groups that do not present healthy relationships. The relationships he or she experiences tend to be shallow and inauthentic. The Scapegoat is sacrificed for the family. The Scapegoat will be the "identified patient". \* Scapegoats come in many different flavors, but two common ones are: 1) the picked, weak or sick child; or, 2) the angry, rebellious problem child who is constantly getting into conflicts. They are often self-destructive, cynical, and even mean. In an NPD family, The Scapegoat, or no good child is the recipient of the narcissist's negative projections. They can never do anything right. The name 'rebel' implies that the child has chosen this role, which is debatable. The Scapegoat is usually a victim of emotional and physical abuse by the narcissistic parent.

## THE LOST CHILD

The Lost Child is usually known as "the quiet one" or "the dreamer". The Lost Child is the invisible child. They try to escape the family situation by making themselves very small and quiet. (S)He stays out of the way of problems and spends a lot of time alone. The purpose of having a lost child in the family is like that of The Hero. Because The Lost Child is rarely in trouble, the family can say, "He's a good kid. Everything seems fine in his life, so things can't be too bad in the family." This child avoids interactions with other family members and basically disappears. They become loners or are very shy. The Lost Child seeks the privacy of his or her own company to be away from the family chaos. Because they don't interact, they never have a chance to develop important social and communication skills. The Lost Child often has poor communication skills, difficulties with

intimacy and in forming relationships. They deny that they have any feelings and "don't bother getting upset." They deal with reality by withdrawing from it. In an NPD family, The Lost Child just doesn't seem to matter to the narcissist and avoids conflict by keeping a low profile. They are not perceived as a threat or a good source of supply, but they are usually victims of neglect and emotional abuse.

## THE MASCOT

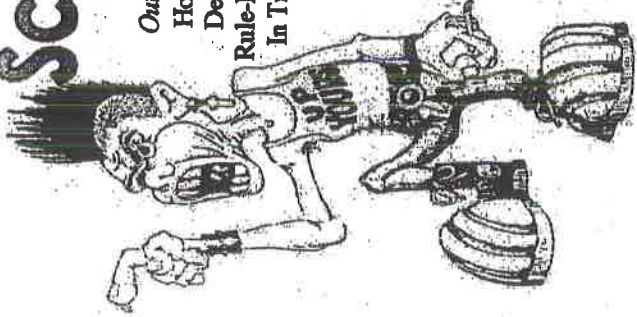
The goal of The Family Mascot is to break the tension and lighten the mood with humor or antics. (S)He is usually "the cute one." This child feels powerless in the dynamics which are going on in the family and tries to interrupt tension, anger, conflict, violence, or other unpleasant situations within the family by being the court jester. The Mascot seeks to be the center of attention in the family, often entertaining the family and making everyone feel better through his or her comedy. They may also use humor to communicate and to confront family dysfunction, rather than address it directly. They also use humor to communicate repressed emotions in the family such as anger, grief, hostility, or fear. This behavior is lighthearted and hilarious, just what a family twisted in pain needs — but the mascot's clowning is not repairing the emotional wounds, only providing temporary balm. The rest of the family may try to protect their "class clown". The Mascot is often busy body. They become anxious or depressed when things aren't in constant motion. The Mascot commonly has difficulty concentrating and focusing in a sustained way on learning, and this makes school or work difficult. (Hence, they also referred to as "The Slacker".)



# Scapegoat

## Problem Child

- Outside:** Hostile, Defiant, Rule-Breaker, In Trouble
- Inside:** Rejection, Hurt, Guilt, Jealousy, Anger



# Victims

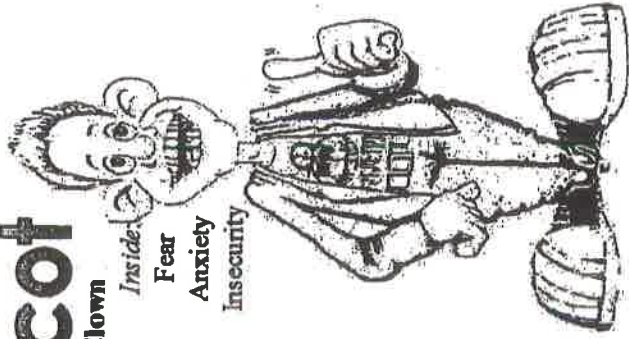
## Chemically Dependent

- Outside:** Hostile, Manipulation, Aggression / Self Pity, Blaming, Charming, Rigid Values
- Inside:** Shame, Guilt, Fear, Pain, Hurt

# Mascot

## Family Clown

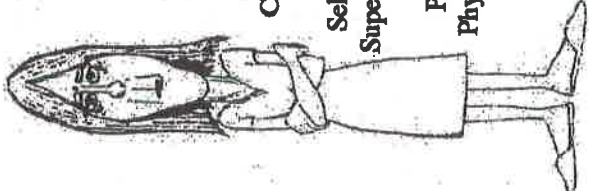
- Outside:** Immature, Fragile, Cute, Hyperactive, Distracting
- Inside:** Fear, Anxiety, Insecurity



# Chief Enabler

## Closest Emotionally to Victim

- Outside:** Self-Righteous, Super-Responsible, Sarcastic, Passive, Physically Sick, Martyr
- Inside:** Anger, Hurt, Guilt, Low Self Esteem



# Lost Child

## Forgotten Child

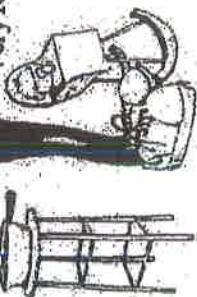
- Outside:** Shy, Quiet, Fantasy Life, Solitary, Mediocre, Attaches to Things, not People
- Inside:** Rejection, Hurt, Anxiety



# Family Hero

## Caretaker of Family

- Outside:** Good Kid, High Achiever, Follows Rules, Seeks Approval, Very Responsible
- Inside:** Guilt, Hurt, Inadequacy



## The Story of THE YOUNG PRINCESS

A long time ago there lived a young Princess. She lived with her father, the King, and her mother, the Queen, in a castle near the Black Forest. Her mother felt unhappy and neglected because the King traveled frequently to other lands. Therefore, she gave all her attention to the young Princess, who became spoiled and demanding. One day the Princess commanded that she visit her "subjects" in the neighboring village. The Queen gave in, even though it would be dangerous, and allowed her to go off. After a day of pranks, the young Princess found herself far from home as night was falling.

Unable to find her way home alone, the Princess found a church and demanded an escort. The Friar, who was angered with the King for taxing the people, told the young Princess to return home by way of a shortcut. Unbeknownst to the Princess, the path the Friar described was through the most dangerous part of the Black Forest and belonged to the Wicked Sorcerer.

The Princess, tired and lost, had given up hope when she came across a White Knight. The very frightened Princess begged for aid. The Knight promised his undying support, but rode away when he found that the Princess had no money. The Princess went deeper into the forest, whereupon she met the Wicked Sorcerer. After listening to her pleas, the Sorcerer turned the Princess into a fox, forever to live in the forest.

*Rank order 1 (most responsible for the plight of the Young Princess) to 6 (least responsible):*

- \_\_\_\_\_ The Young Princess
- \_\_\_\_\_ The King
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Queen
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Friar
- \_\_\_\_\_ The White Knight
- \_\_\_\_\_ The Wicked Sorcerer



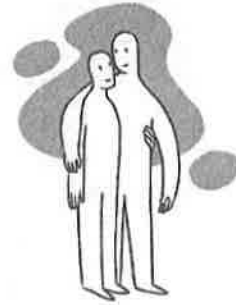


## EXERCISE 21

## Relationships and Self-Esteem

Our self-esteem affects the quality of our relationships—and the quality of our relationships affects our self-esteem.

The lists below feature qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. No relationship is perfect, but all relationships tend toward one or the other.



Check the words that primarily describe the most important relationships in your life—these could be relationships with your significant other, friends, or family members.

Healthy Relationships	Unhealthy Relationships
<input type="checkbox"/> supportive	<input type="checkbox"/> mean
<input type="checkbox"/> kind	<input type="checkbox"/> negative
<input type="checkbox"/> loyal	<input type="checkbox"/> critical
<input type="checkbox"/> caring	<input type="checkbox"/> awkward
<input type="checkbox"/> sympathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> unsupportive
<input type="checkbox"/> steady	<input type="checkbox"/> unhelpful
<input type="checkbox"/> encouraging	<input type="checkbox"/> chaotic
<input type="checkbox"/> reassuring	<input type="checkbox"/> uncaring
<input type="checkbox"/> empathetic	<input type="checkbox"/> shaming
<input type="checkbox"/> fun	<input type="checkbox"/> dependent
<input type="checkbox"/> understanding	<input type="checkbox"/> violent
<input type="checkbox"/> trusting	<input type="checkbox"/> mistrustful



**Looking at the words you checked, consider whether you have healthier qualities in your relationships or unhealthier qualities. What do you notice?**

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If we are struggling with unhealthy relationships, we may want to take a step back and ask ourselves why. *Why is this happening?* And, more importantly, *why is this okay with us?*

Our relationships are often like a mirror, reflecting back to us how we feel about ourselves. If we feel worthy, lovable, and special, we will seek out people who treat us this way. If we feel the opposite, we will, often unconsciously, seek out people who reinforce the negative things we feel about ourselves.



Our relationships won't change until we believe we are worthy of that change.

**Think about your most important relationships again.** If you truly believed you were completely worthy, lovable, and special, how would these relationships need to change? Write your ideas in the space provided. If you find it difficult to come up with ideas, ask someone you trust to help you.

**My relationship with my significant other**

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*exercise continued on next page*



My relationships with my friends

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My relationships with my family members  
(children included)

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Even in the most committed relationships, we may feel the need for change at times. And in many ways, relationships are like a dance—one person may learn new steps and another may have trouble learning them or resist trying new moves altogether. As we grow in our self-esteem, some of our old patterns in relationships may no longer fit. It's important to be aware of this and to recognize if or when we should seek out new relationships.

It Takes  
Practice

*Each evening, think of your interactions with others during that day. Did you relate to people as if you were completely worthy, lovable, and special? If not, why not?*



# DEALING WITH CHANGE

Change, both good and bad, is an inevitable part of life. By taking time to think through the change you're facing, you can work to make both the change and the emotions around the change more manageable. Use this worksheet as a tool to process an existing or upcoming change that you are facing.

**DESCRIBE THE BIG CHANGE YOU ARE FACING AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOUR LIFE.**

**LIST OUT ANY EMOTIONS THAT COME UP WHEN YOU THINK ABOUT THIS CHANGE.**

For a list of emotions, visit <http://bit.ly/emotionsunderneath>

**WHAT WORRIES YOU ABOUT THE CHANGE?**

**WHAT EXCITES YOU ABOUT THIS BIG CHANGE OR WHAT POSITIVE THINGS CAN COME FROM THIS CHANGE?**



**WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO REDUCE YOUR WORRIES AROUND THIS CHANGE?**

**WHAT ARE SOME ACTIONS YOU CAN TAKE TO INCREASE THE POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THIS CHANGE?**

**WRITE DOWN ANY SKILLS, ACTIVITIES, OR STRENGTHS THAT HAVE HELPED YOU COPE WITH CHANGE IN THE PAST.**

**WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS, RESOURCES, OR SITUATIONS THAT EXIST TODAY THAT HELP YOU FEEL MORE CONFIDENT THAT YOU'RE GOING TO BE OK FOLLOWING THIS CHANGE?**





# Self-Care Tips

## Do things you enjoy.

Self-care isn't complicated—all it means is taking time to do things that make you feel good. This includes activities that you find fun, relaxing, or energizing. They can be as simple as reading a book or as big as taking a vacation.

## Take care of your health.

This means eating regular meals, getting enough sleep, exercising, caring for personal hygiene, and anything else that maintains good health. These forms of self-care might not give instant gratification, but they will help you feel good in the long run.

## Give yourself permission to relax.

When life gets busy, self-care is often the first thing to go. Set boundaries around self-care, even if that means scheduling "me time" on your calendar or saying "no" to invitations from others.

## Set specific self-care goals.

Vague goals like "I will take more time for self-care" rarely work. Instead, set clear goals like "I will walk for 30 minutes every evening after dinner."

## Make self-care a habit.

Just like eating one apple won't make you healthy, practicing self-care once won't fix stress. Find activities that can become a normal part of your day. For example, try making your lunchtime sacred. Savor your meal and take a short walk instead of working while you eat.

## Limit unhealthy self-care.

Sometimes you just want to turn off your brain, munch on some chips, and scroll on your phone. These habits are okay in moderation, but try to prioritize healthier self-care options.



**Just For Today**

Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts

May 22

Symptoms of a spiritual awakening

"The steps lead to an awakening of a spiritual nature.  
This awakening is evidenced by changes in our lives."  
Basic Text, p.48

We know how to recognize the disease of addiction. Its symptoms are indisputable. Besides an uncontrollable appetite for drugs, those suffering exhibit self-centered, self-seeking behavior. When our addiction was at its peak of activity, we were obviously in a great deal of pain. We relentlessly judged ourselves and others, and spent most of our time worrying or trying to control outcomes.

Just as the disease of addiction is evidenced by definite symptoms, so is a spiritual awakening made manifest by certain obvious signs in a recovering addict. We may observe a tendency to think and act spontaneously; a loss of interest in judging or interpreting the actions of anyone else, an unmistakable ability to enjoy each moment, and frequent attacks of smiling.

If we see someone exhibiting symptoms of a spiritual awakening, we should be aware that such awakenings are contagious. Our best course of action is to get close to these people. As we begin having frequent, overwhelming episodes of gratitude, an increased receptiveness to the love extended by our fellow members, and an uncontrollable urge to return this love, we'll realize that we, too, have had a spiritual awakening.

Just for today: My strongest desire is to have a spiritual awakening. I will watch for its symptoms and rejoice when I discover them.



**Just For Today**

Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts

July 19

Fulfilling our dreams

"Dreams that we gave up long ago can now become realities."

Basic Text, p.68

All things begin with a dream. But how many of us fulfilled our dreams while using? Even if we managed to complete something we had started, our addiction usually robbed us of any pride in our accomplishment. Perhaps when we used, we dreamed of the day when we would be clean. That day has come. We can use this day to make our dreams come true.

To fulfill our dreams we must take action, but our lack of self-confidence may keep us from trying. We can begin by setting realistic goals. The success we experience when we attain our initial goals allows us to dream bigger dreams the next time around.

Some of our members share that when they compare the ambitions they had when they first got clean with what they have actually achieved in recovery, they are astounded. In recovery, we often find more dreams come true than we could ever have imagined.

Just for today: I will remember that all things begin with a dream. Today, I will allow myself to make my dreams come true.



**Just For Today**

Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts

May 20

Coming out of isolation.

"We find ourselves doing and enjoying things that we never thought we would be doing."

Basic Text, p.98

Active addiction kept us isolated for many reasons. In the beginning, we avoided family and friends so they wouldn't find out we were using. Some of us avoided all nonaddicts, fearing moral backlash and legal repercussions. We belittled people who had "normal" lives with families and hobbies; we called them "uncool," believing we could never enjoy the simple pleasures of life. Eventually, we even avoided other addicts because we didn't want to share our drugs. Our lives narrowed, and our concerns were confined to the daily maintenance of our disease.

Today, our lives are much fuller. We enjoy activities with other recovering addicts. We have time for our families. And we've discovered many other pursuits that give us pleasure. What a change from the past! We can live life just as fully as the "normal" people we once scorned.

Enjoyment has returned to our lives, a gift of recovery.

Just for today: I can find pleasure in the simple routines of daily living.

August 6<sup>th</sup>

McMinn Co. Court



**Just For Today**

Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts

March 12

Getting out of the rut

"Many times in our recovery the old bugaboos will haunt us. Life may again become meaningless, monotonous, and boring."

Basic Text, p. 75

Sometimes it seems as though nothing changes. We get up and go to the same job every day. We eat dinner at the same time every night. We attend the same meetings each week. This morning's rituals were identical to the ones we performed yesterday, and the day before that, and the day before that. After the hell of our addiction and the roller-coaster craziness of early recovery, the stable life may have some appeal-for awhile. But, eventually, we realize we want something more. Sooner or later, we become turned off to the creeping monotony and boredom in our lives.

There are sure to be times when we feel vaguely dissatisfied with our recovery. We feel as if we're missing something for some reason, but we don't know what or why. We draw up our gratitude lists and find literally hundreds of things to be grateful for. All our needs are being met; our lives are fuller than we had ever hoped they'd be. So what's up?

Maybe it's time to stretch our potential to the fullest. Our possibilities are only limited by what we can dream. We can learn something new, set a new goal, help another newcomer, or make a new friend. We're sure to find something challenging if we look hard enough, and life will again become meaningful, varied, and fulfilling.

Just for today: I will take a break from the routine and stretch my potential to it's fullest.



**Just For Today**

Daily Meditations for Recovering Addicts

September 29

Just for today

"When we stop living in the here and now, our problems become magnified unreasonably."

Basic Text, p.96

"Just for today"-it's a comforting thought. If we try to live in the past, we may find ourselves torn by painful, disquieting memories. The lessons of our using are not the teachers we seek for recovery. Living in tomorrow means moving in with fear.

We cannot see the shape of the secret future, and uncertainty brings worry. Our lives look overwhelming when we lose the focus of today.

Living in the moment offers freedom. In this moment, we know that we are safe. We are not using, and we have everything we need. What's more, life is happening in the here and now. The past is gone and the future has yet to arrive; our worrying won't change any of it. Today, we can enjoy our recovery, this very minute.

Just for today: I will stay in the here and now. Today-this moment-I am free.

