

MENTAL *Health* WORKBOOK

7 Books in 1:

Attachment Theory,
Insecure Attachment,
Codependency, BPD,
Cognitive Behavioral Therapy,
Dialectical Behavior Therapy
and Acceptance
and Commitment Therapy



ATTACHMENT THEORY

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INSECURE ATTACHMENT

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MENTAL HEALTH

WORKBOOK

7 books in 1:

Attachment Theory, Insecure Attachment, Codependency, BPD, Cognitive and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy

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ATTACHMENT THEORY

Why is your attachment type impacting upon your happiness in relationships? Discover how to identify who is right for you and help to heal your wounds.

INTRODUCTION

Whether we are aware of it or not, the experiences of our childhood play an enormous role in determining the people we are today. The relationships we had as children with our parents, or other primary caregivers have a profound effect on the way we react to situations in our lives, and the way we interact with the people around us.

As young children, we respond instinctively to the kind of love and support offered to us by our parents or carers. While a strong bond to our primary caregiver is critical for our development in these early years, difficulties arising from this attachment can lead to problems with relationships and self-image in later life.

Extensive scientific research has proven that everyone has a certain “love style” or manner of behavior within relationships, based on their experiences as a young child. For example, children who grow up with strict, disciplinary parents often learn early to bury their emotions out of fear of being reprimanded. This trait often continues long into adulthood, with such people finding it hard to share their feelings and connect with others. Those who grow up with unpredictable or inconsistent parenting with often seek attention through raising their voice or expressing anger and frustration in other ways. Their self-image is, as a result, less than positive. Conversely, children who grow up feeling a secure and loving attachment to their primary caregiver usually become trusting adults with a positive self-image.

Of course, these behaviors are often unconscious and instinctive, making them difficult to recognize. These unidentified behaviors can cause us to have problems as adults when it comes to making friends, finding love and developing meaningful relationships.

Think back to the environment you grew up in. Was your relationship with your parents or caregivers a healthy and secure one, or did you recognize a little of yourself in any of the above situations? Perhaps you have never thought to examine the way your upbringing is affecting you today.

But if you have identified with any of these issues, all is not lost. The patterns and beliefs we develop as children, though often deeply ingrained in our psyche, can be unlearned and replaced with more helpful beliefs and approaches to life.

In this book, you will discover the specific ways in which our childhood attachment experiences shape and affect our adult experience, along with proven methods for reducing their effect and eliminating your own troublesome behavior in many areas of your life.

Are you unable to maintain a successful romantic relationship? Do you see the same patterns emerging in your relationships with partner after partner? Perhaps you have questioned what you are doing wrong, or why you always seem to attract the same kind of person, who will treat you in the same negative way. Or maybe you are aware that you yourself are the problem. Perhaps you have found yourself repeatedly sabotaging your relationships and turning people away. Do you see the same behavior in yourself again and again, but are unable to make changes? If this sounds like you, it may be time to examine this behavior and the way your romantic relationships are affected by your childhood experiences of attachment.

In order to do this, we will examine the four attachment styles of love, and the way attachment affects your ability to interact with your significant other. Understand your love style and conversely, the way you love, will assist you in recognizing – and putting an end to – any destructive behavior. By identifying your instinctive behavior, you will be able to anticipate your reaction to specific situations and alter your behavior accordingly. Understanding your love style will help you form the healthy and fulfilling romantic relationship you have been waiting for.

Of course, it is not necessary to have a life partner in order to be happy. Our attachment style has as profound an effect on our relationship with ourselves as it does on our relationship with others. Addressing the ways our self-worth and self-image is affected by our past relationships is crucial to finding lasting happiness. This book will address these issues, along with the many ways of feeling good about yourself and your life when going it alone, whether you have chosen to be single, or are yet to find the one you have been searching for.

Perhaps you have found your behavioral patterns resurfacing when interacting with people other than your romantic partner. Our attachment styles come into play in many other relationships too, such as with close friends, colleagues, family and even strangers. We will examine how personal attachment can affect your relationships in many different facets and will look at ways to adapt your behavior accordingly. This can help you build lasting friendships, productive working relationships and a strong support network.

Finally, we will take an extensive look at attachment wounds and examine proven ways to heal them, resulting in stronger and healthier relationships in all facets of life.

By implementing the strategies presented in this book, you will be able to identify, address and remove harmful beliefs and behavioral patterns you have likely carried around since childhood. Though removing these deeply ingrained beliefs is no

easy task, it is an extremely worthwhile investment of your time and energy. By healing attachment wounds and replacing learned negative behavior with more positive traits, you will see marked improvements in your relationship with both yourself and others.

So are you ready to release negative behavior caused by your attachment and love styles once and for all? Are you ready to embrace a healthier, happier life full of rewarding relationships?

Let's get started.

CHAPTER ONE

HOW OUR CHILDHOOD AFFECTS US IN LATER LIFE



Early childhood is a time of discovery. Everything around us is new, and each day is full of exploration and learning. It the time that we begin to make sense of the complex world around us.

As children, we absorb information at a particularly rapid rate. At a young age, it is far easier to learn a foreign language, or to play music by ear, for example, as we are so open to taking in new information. But as children, we also absorb beliefs and patterns of behavior that come about as a result of those around us.

Primarily, our beliefs and behaviors are shaped by our connection to our primary caregivers – in most cases, our parents. Our relationship with our mother and father can instill patterns of behavior deep within us that can affect us all through our lives. These behavioral patterns can be either positive or negative.

The concept of attachment theory was introduced by British psychologist John Bowlby in the 1950s and 60s. To formulate the theory, Bowlby sought information from a variety of fields such as biology, developmental psychology, cognitive science and evolution to understand the mechanisms behind a child's ties to its mother.

Secure Attachment

As children, we learn ways of responding to those around us, along with methods of coping and reacting to the situations we find ourselves in. When we are offered love, support, and attention, we will respond positively, forming a ***secure*** attachment style.

As young children, our instinct is to examine and explore the world around us, in order to make discoveries about ourselves, our bodies and the environment we live in. Research has proven that a secure bond to our primary caregiver is crucial for our development. When we have a secure, loving connection to this caregiver, we feel safe going out into the world to explore, knowing that Mom or Dad will always be there to keep us safe. Our primary caregiver becomes our safe haven; someone to whom we can always return to and find comfort.

Having a secure connection with our primary caregiver usually leads to children becoming trusting adults who have no difficulty connecting to others and forming meaningful relationships. If a child feels secure at the age of one or two, they will go on to make friends at kindergarten, then at school, all the way through to college and work. They are optimistic, with a positive self-image. Most children with a secure attachment style go on to have successful adult lives, including happy marriages, strong relationship with their children and a large income.

Insecure Attachment

But not everyone is lucky enough to have had a strong and loving relationship with their parents. What about those among us who struggled for attention from distant, overworked parents? Or, worse, those who grew up with a caregiver who was physically or emotionally abusive? Sadly, these situations are anything but rare. Let's take a look at how these situations affect us, both as children, and in later life.

If our bond with our caregiver is weak, the thought of venturing out into the world can seem frightening. We do not have the trust that we will have a safe place to return to when our adventures are over, and nor do we trust that Mom or Dad will always be there to protect us. If we are insecurely attached to our primary caregiver as a child, it can lead to trust issues as an adult, along with a lack of social skills and problems forming meaningful relationships. Insecurely attached children often struggle to make friends at an early age, a pattern which can continue throughout their life.

There are three types of insecure attachment styles that can affect us throughout our life. Let's take a look at the causes and characteristics of each:

Anxious Ambivalent Attachment

Let's say we grow up with a single mom who works long hours to make ends meet. While this mom may be loving, as children we focus on the fact that she is not always there for us. We view the relationship as inconsistent and insecure. As a result, we can become clingy, needing to take advantage of our mother's attention when we feel lucky enough to have it. But Mom always has work to do, and even though she might have the best of intentions, she is not able to give us attention as much as we would like.

We come to believe the only way to get her attention is to raise our emotional state, by screaming and throwing tantrums. And when we finally receive that predictable, loving response from Mom we have been seeking, we act ambivalent and detached, disguising our true feelings.

Children who have an anxious ambivalent attachment style often grow up to be unpredictable, moody adults. They struggle with self-esteem issues and often have a less-than-positive image of themselves.

Anxious Avoidant Attachment

Now let's imagine we grow up in a home in which our primary caregiver is a strict father. Dad loves us and wants the best for us, but he believes – perhaps due to his own upbringing – that heavy discipline is the best way to raise a strong and resilient child. When we get too loud, or express too much emotion, Dad gets angry and punishes us. As Dad is frightening when he is angry, we quickly learn not to show our emotions, in order to avoid antagonizing him.

We come to believe that showing our feelings equates to punishment and, consequently, fear. We quickly learn that it is best to keep our feelings hidden deep inside – both in front of Dad and in other situations, such as in the classroom, or among friends. We see this as a way of protecting ourselves from harm.

Children who have an anxious avoidant attachment style will often carry this same belief throughout their life. They find it difficult to express their feelings and often have trouble forming meaningful relationships. This leads to a negative self-view and lack of self-worth.

Anxious Disorganised Attachment

This attachment style differs from the other two insecure attachment styles (and the single secure attachment style) by acting in a chaotic, disorganised manner when faced with distress.

Let's say we grow up with parents who are distant and self-absorbed. Sometimes they may even be physically abusive. When placed in such a situation as a child, we become anxious to be around the people we rely on for security and care. This inner conflict completely disorganizes our beliefs about love, safety and security. Being in such an environment causes us to feel fear, without any resolution (in the form of a show of love). In response, we seek to avoid all social situations and contact with others. We see this as a way of protecting ourselves from harm. We become withdrawn and are starved of love.

Children with an anxious avoidant attachment style often grow up believing themselves unworthy of love. This, in turn, affects their ability to form relationships, and express themselves effectively. Their self-worth, as a result, is usually extremely low.

Toxic Stress

Our attachment style is formed in the very first years of life, at a time in which we are too young to communicate our anxiety effectively. As a result of this struggle to convey our concerns, we can experience high levels of stress. This stress activates the fight or flight response, which causes our adrenal glands to produce the stress hormones adrenaline and cortisol. Our heart rate and blood pressure increase and we become increasingly alert. When the fight or flight response is engaged frequently, it becomes what is known as ***toxic stress***.

As you are most likely aware, stress is one of the major issues in our busy, modern lives. It can lead to all manner of health issues, from heart disease to cancer and everything in between. But toxic stress can have an even more severe effect on children. Increased levels of adrenalin and cortisol can impair a child's brain development and weakens their immune system. Prior to birth, or in the first months of life, toxic stress can go so far as to switch the expressions of our genes, which can cause health problems to appear years, and even decades, later.

The Long-Term Effects of Our Attachment Styles

As you can see from the above examples, our attachment styles have a great effect on us all the way through our lives. But these effects are far from theoretical. In the 1970s, researchers at Minnesota University began a study through which they were able to predict from the age of three whether or not a child would drop out of high school, as based on their attachment style. Their results were proven to have 77% accuracy.

Another study, conducted at Harvard University in the 1950s, asked its undergraduate subjects how close they felt to their parents. Thirty-five years later, these same subjects were surveyed about their health. Ninety-one percent of those who claimed they had a negative or broken relationship with their primary caregiver were suffering from health issues such as heart disease, high blood pressure and alcoholism. Conversely, among subjects with a warm and loving relationship with their parents, only 45% reported suffering from health issues.

*

Although we have the ability, to some degree, to choose who we are and what we want to become, there is no doubt that the experiences of our childhood shape us to an extent. Understanding exactly what our attachment styles are and how they affect us in our experience and perception of the world can go a long way to helping us manage any negative behaviors springing from our attachment style.

CHAPTER TWO

UNDERSTANDING LOVE STYLES – ATTACHMENT STYLES IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS



As we have learned, there are four distinct style of attachment when it comes to a child's relationship with his or her primary caregiver. Our childhood attachment style can have far-reaching implications on the way we react to situations in later life.

One of the greatest facets of life affected by our childhood attachment styles is our ability to love and build romantic relationships.

Perhaps this is what drew you to this book. Maybe you always seem to attract partners with similar characteristic. Or perhaps you continually date people who don't turn out to be as compatible with you as you first thought.

But have you ever stopped to think about why you are attracted to the people you are?

Falling in love and building relationships involves constant choice, commitment and work. While love can be extremely rewarding, and even exhilarating, it is often far from easy. Connecting with a romantic partner requires us to develop an understanding of the behavior of both our loved one and ourselves.

Researchers have determined that everyone has a certain **love style**, based on their upbringing. A love style is constituted of our behaviors and inclinations with regards to how we respond to our romantic partners. By making sense of the way we love, we can learn how our love styles affect our relationships. Understanding our inclinations and tendencies in relationships can help us to make sense of our own – and our partner's – behaviour, and build stronger, long-lasting relationships.

The four attachment styles of love are closely linked to the childhood attachment styles discussed in the previous chapter. Let's take a closer look:

Secure Love Style

Those of us lucky enough to have a secure love attachment style have a significant advantage when it comes to finding partners and maintaining meaningful, loving relationships. People with a secure love style generally feel able to go to their partner with any issues or problems, allowing for meaningful, productive discussions. A secure love style also means you have great trust in your partner, allowing them the freedom to explore their own interests and pursue their own goals.

This leads to open, loving and honest relationships in which both partners are equal. It provides an environment in which both parties can thrive, grow and be happy.

Having a secure love style means we are comfortable having separate interests from our lover, but also understanding how to mesh and work together to build a loving and secure partnership with which to go through life.

Maybe you're thinking this all sounds too good to be true. But it's important not to confuse a secure love style with perfection. Because, as we know, perfection is something unattainable, especially when it comes to love and relationships.

Having a secure attachment style does not mean we are immune from conflict, arguments and bad days. Far from it. The nature of building a romantic relationship means there will always be disagreements. But where those with a secure attachment style differ is in their ability to work with their partner to problem solve, in order to reach an agreeable resolution to any conflict that may arise. Those with a secure attachment style also have a higher emotional intelligence, which leads them to seek solutions, rather than acting rashly, striking out or attacking their loved one.

Great resilience and self-awareness are typical characteristics of people with a secure love style – traits that assist them in moving past obstacles and conflicts in a mature and loving way. Secures have the capacity to reflect on their own emotional states, along with the emotional states of their partner. This allows them to communicate more effectively. As a result, secures perform well in partnerships and are able to respond appropriately to the emotional messages they are sent by their loved one.

Outside of romantic relationships, people with a secure attachment style make excellent colleagues, due to their ability to work well in teams. On average, they have higher incomes than those with insecure attachment styles.

Though we will look more closely at ways of assessing attachment style in the following chapter, if you can answer yes to most or all of these questions, you may exhibit a secure attachment style:

- Do you feel a strong emotional connection to the loved ones in your life?
- Are you comfortable with emotional and physical closeness?
- Are you equally comfortable with independence?
- Do you feel as though you communicate effectively?
- Do you have the ability to resolve conflicts when they arise?
- Do you feel as though the relationships in your life are fairly stable?
- Do you trust your partner?
- Do you feel comfortable opening up and being vulnerable around your partner?

Anxious Preoccupied Love Style

For people with an anxious preoccupied love style, love is often a thing relegated to the world of fantasy. They romanticize love, and are prone to falling for a fantasy, or unobtainable ideal, as this is far easier to manage than the often-challenging reality of maintaining a relationship.

This romantic view of love often leads anxious preoccupied lovers to be attracted to partners who they perceive as “needing saving,” or, conversely, partners they believe can save them. Anxious preoccupied lovers often find themselves seeking an unobtainable fairy-tale ending.

People with this attachment style often suffer from insecurities and self-doubt and struggle to find a strong sense of their own identity.

Whilst in a relationship, people with this attachment style can be clingy, demanding and obsessive. They often overthink and overanalyze situations and can be moody and unpredictable. As a result, their relationships can be tempestuous and troubled, with anxious preoccupied lovers mistaking this constant conflict for passion.

Outside of romantic relationships, people with an anxious preoccupied attachment style are often dissatisfied with their jobs and have a lower income than those in a secure relationship.

If you answer yes to some or all of the following questions, you may exhibit an anxious preoccupied love style:

- When you argue with your loved one, does it make you feel extremely anxious and overwhelmed?
- When your partner requests a little alone time, do you hound them for attention until they give in?
- Do you feel the need for constant reassurance within your relationship?
- If your partner is away, does it make you question their love for you?

The anxious preoccupied love style is closely tied to the anxious ambivalent attachment style. Generally, those who exhibit one will also exhibit the other.

Dismissive Avoidant Love Style

A dismissive avoidant love style is characterized by being distant and detached in relationships. People with this attachment style often have strong personalities and come across as independent and self-sufficient.

But this strength is often just a cover for their inability to share feelings and express their emotions. People with this love style often withdraw at the first sign of conflict, cutting themselves off from any chance at true emotional intimacy.

It's important, of course, in any relationship, for both people to have personal space and time away from their partner. But those of us with a dismissive avoidant love style will seek solitude far more often than most people. They will often push their partner away and deflect their advances, seeking the safety of their own personal space. In the eyes of someone with a dismissive avoidant love style, spending time with a romantic partner puts them at risk of being vulnerable and getting hurt.

When crisis hits a relationship, in the form of conflict, or even a breakup, people with this love style have the ability to close themselves off and convince themselves – at least for a while – that they don't care about what's happening. Their strong, independent personality kicks in, and they convince themselves they are happy on their own.

But this steely independence can only last so long. As humans, we need contact with others in order to survive. None of us can prosper on our own. The reality is that the steely façade portrayed by people with a dismissive avoidant love style is just a front for a deep-seated lack of self-worth.

Those with a dismissive avoidant love style will avoid shows of affection such as hugs, and will often avoid making eye contact.

A dismissive avoidant love style can manifest itself outside of romantic relationships too. People with this love style have difficulty maintaining close relationships of all kinds, whether with friends, family or lovers.

The most extreme avoidants are almost entirely incapable of talking about their feelings. The feelings they do have are primarily negative and they have great difficulty putting them into words. This is known as *alexithymia* – a syndrome referring to the inability to find words for feelings. It is important to note that this is not the same as *not having* feelings. Extreme avoidants suffering from alexithymia are often only able to express themselves through rage and tantrums. Their emotions can also manifest as physical symptoms such as unexplained stomach pains or rushes of adrenalin.

Outside of romantic relationships, people with an avoidant attachment style are prone to being workaholics. Letting work take over their life is often a ploy to avoid social situations. Avoidants generally prefer to work alone. Because of their work ethic, their incomes are often as high as those with a secure attachment style, but they are often just as dissatisfied with their jobs as anxious preoccupieds. However, their work ethic and ability to act alone makes people with avoidant personalities excel in roles that require individual effort. Their lack of empathy and concern for others' feelings can also be beneficial in fields such as litigation.

If you can answer yes to some or all of the following questions, you may exhibit a dismissive avoidant attachment style:

- Do you feel closest to your loved ones when you are apart?
- Do you find yourself pulling away when your partner is seeking emotional or physical intimacy?
- Do you seek to remove yourself from stressful situations of conflict?
- Do you feel emotionally disconnected from others?

The dismissive avoidant love style is most often exhibited by people with an anxious avoidant attachment style.

Fearful Avoidant Love Style

For people with a fearful avoidant love style, maintaining a relationship is something of a juggling act. They simultaneously fear being both too close and too distant from their partner. For those with fearful avoidant attachment issues, love can be akin to a terrifying roller-coaster ride.

Such people understand that, in order to build a strong relationship, they must allow themselves to get close to another person. But doing this makes them fearful, as they are scared of being abandoned. They struggle to build trust and rely on their partner, and often have little confidence in the strength of their relationship.

Unsurprisingly, this leads them to behave unpredictably, and they can become overwhelmed by the intensity and inconsistency of their own emotions. People with this attachment style struggle with endless inner conflict: on one hand, they crave intimacy, and on the other, they resist it, out of fear of getting hurt.

For fearful avoidant lovers, relationships are often full of highs and lows. They often find themselves clinging to their partner when they start to feel rejected, which, in some cases, can lead to emotionally and physically abusive relationships.

Just like with the dismissive avoidant love style, these traits can lead a person to have few close friends and meaningful relationships in all facets of their life.

If you can answer yes to any of the following questions, you may exhibit a fearful avoidant attachment style:

- Do you desperate seek emotional intimacy, but simultaneously feel as though it's safer to be on your own?
- Do you feel like emotional or physical intimacy will led to you getting hurt?
- As a child, was your primary caregiver physically or emotionally abusive?
- Did your primary caregiver show love one minute and hurt you the next?

The fearful avoidant love style is most often exhibited by those with an anxious disorganized attachment style.

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Can you see yourself in any of the above examples?

If it is all still a little hazy, don't panic. In the next chapter, we will look more closely at exactly how to determine your own attachment style, particularly with regards to romantic love.

CHAPTER THREE

WHAT IS YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE?

We have begun to explore the attachment and love styles, as theorized by a number of prominent psychologists. Perhaps you have already begun to identify some of these characteristics within yourself, your partner, or your children.

No doubt you are also beginning to realize just how beneficial knowing your attachment style can be. For parents, identifying their child's attachment style can assist them in recognizing the challenges their children face on a daily basis, and how their own behaviour may be contributing to their child's issues.

And for those of us seeking to understand how attachment style affects our romantic life, understanding our own and our partner's tendencies and inclinations can go a long way towards anticipating and resolving conflict.

As attachment style is such a key thing to determine, psychologists have developed a number of tests to determine attachment and love styles in both adults and children. Let's take a look at the methods used to ascertain these crucial pieces of information:

Determining Attachment Style in Young Children

Experts believe that our attachment style is formed as early as the age of one. Tests have been developed in order to determine attachment style in babies and young children, in hope that this can help eliminate insecure attachment as soon as possible.

The test involves allowing the child to play with its mother, or primary caregiver, inside a room for several minutes. Then the child is left alone. After several minutes, the mother returns to the room. The key moment is the child's reaction to the return of the mother.

If a child is securely attached, they will usually hug their mother, before quickly calming down and returning to the game they were playing. Children with an insecure attachment style can react in a number of negative ways; from acting ambivalent and avoidant to crying and refusing to continue playing, despite their mother's attempts to soothe them.

Determining Attachment Styles in Adults

But what about determining our own love and attachment styles?

Widely accepted as one of the most meaningful advances in 20th century psychology, a short questionnaire used to determine attachment style was devised by University of Denver psychologists, Phillip Shaver and Cindy Hazan.

The questionnaire first appeared in 1985 in The Rocky Mountain News, a local Colorado newspaper.

The questionnaire provided readers with three simply statements about behaviors in love, and asked them to pick which they felt most closely resembled them. This presented readers with three possible love style options – secure, avoidant or anxious.

So let's go ahead and take Shaver and Hazan's questionnaire:

Which of the following to do you feel most closely resembles you in love?

A. I am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others; I find it difficult to trust them completely, and find it difficult to allow myself to depend on them. I am nervous when anyone gets too close, and often, others want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being.

B. I find it relatively easy to get close to others and am comfortable depending on them and having them depend on me. I don't worry about being abandoned or about someone getting too close to me.

C. I find that others are reluctant to get as close to me as I would like. I often worry that my partner doesn't really love me or won't want to stay with me. I want to get very close to my partner, and this sometimes scares people away.

(Note that, in this case, "close" refers to emotional attachment, and may or may not include sexual intimacy.)

As you may have already determined, those selecting choice A are experiencing an **avoidant** love attachment style. (Either dismissive avoidant or fearful avoidant) Choice B represents **secure** attachment, while choice C indicates an **anxious preoccupied** love attachment style.

Over the years, psychologists have built on Hazan and Shaver's initial questionnaire developing further tests to determine attachment styles within adults.

The following quiz is a variation of a study devised by the Fetzer Institute in Michigan, US.

1.	I'm afraid that my partner will stop loving me.	123 456 7	
2.	I often worry that my partner will leave me.	123 456 7	
3.	I often worry that my partner's love for me is not real.	123 456 7	
4.	I worry that I will care about my romantic partners more than they care for me.	123 456 7	
5.	I often find myself wishing that my partner's feelings for me were as strong as my feelings for him or her.	123 456 7	
6.	I am constantly worrying about the security of my relationships.	123 456 7	
7.	When my partner and I are apart, I worry that he or she might become interested in someone else.	123 456 7	
8.	When I show my feelings for romantic partners, I get nervous that they will reject me, or will not feel the same about me.	123 456 7	
9.	I often worry about my partner leaving me.	123 456 7	
10.	My romantic partner sometimes makes me doubt myself.	123 456	

		7	
11.	I can't help worrying about being abandoned.	123 456 7	
12.	I feel like my romantic partners never get as close to me as I would like them to.	123 456 7	
13.	Sometimes my romantic partners seem to change their feelings about me for no apparent reason.	123 456 7	
14.	My need for physical and emotional intimacy often scares people away.	123 456 7	
15.	I'm afraid that once my partner gets to who I really am, he or she won't like me.	123 456 7	
16.	I get mad when I do not get the support and affection I need from my partner.	123 456 7	
17.	I constantly worry that I am not good enough for other people.	123 456 7	
18.	My partner only seems to notice I'm around when I get angry.	123 456 7	
19.	I feel uncomfortable showing my partner how I really feel.	123 456 7	
20.	I don't like sharing my private thoughts and feelings with my partner.	123 456 7	
21.	I don't allow myself to depend on my romantic partners.	1234567	
22.	I do not feel very comfortable being close to my romantic partners.	1234567	
23.	I don't feel comfortable opening up and sharing with my partners.	1234567	
24.	I prefer not to get too close – emotionally or physically – with my romantic partners.	1234567	
25.	When my romantic partner wants to get too close, it makes me uncomfortable.	1234567	
26.	I sometimes have difficulty building emotional closeness with my partner.	1234567	
27.	I sometimes have difficulty building physical closeness with my partner.	1234567	
28.	When I have concerns and problems, I find it challenging go to my partner for help and advice.	1234567	
29.	Turning to my partner in times of need is something I find difficult to do	1234567	
30.	I share very little about myself with my partner.	1234567	
31.	I talking things over with my partner makes me uncomfortable or nervous	1234567	
32.	I get nervous when my partners get too close.	1234567	
33.	Depending on my romantic partners makes me uncomfortable.	1234567	
34.	I do not find it easy to depend on my romantic partners.	1234567	
35.	I do not find it easy to be affectionate with my romantic partner.	1234567	
36.	I do not feel as though my partner really understands me or my emotional needs.	1234567	

(Adapted from <http://www.psych.uiuc.edu/~rcfraley/measures/ecrritems.htm>) :

How to analyze your results:

The first eighteen questions reflect your responses to attachment-related anxiety. To determine whether or not you display any anxious preoccupied attachment tendencies, take your average of questions 1 to 18. The higher your score, the more attachment anxiety you exhibit.

Question 19-36 can be used to determine your attachment-avoidance related issues. To determine whether or not you display avoidant attachment tendencies, take the average of questions 19-36. The higher your score, the more avoidant attachment issues you have.

If you scored low on both the attachment- anxiety and attachment-avoidance questions, you likely exhibit a secure attachment style.

Multiple Attachment Styles

But what if you find yourself identifying with more than one attachment style? If this is the case, you are certainly not alone. As human beings, we are complex creatures, and our behaviour and tendencies can rarely be neatly categorized.

Even those among us who have a primarily secure attachment style may exhibit occasional avoidant or anxious tendencies. While it is possible to have more than one attachment style, and to fluctuate between them, it can be helpful to take a close look at your behaviour and tendencies to determine which style is the most dominant.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOW ATTACHMENT SHAPES

OUR LOVE PERSONALITIES

As psychologist John Bowlby famously said, “What cannot be communicated to the mother cannot be communicated to the self.”

This famous quote highlights the fact that those of us with attachment issues often have trouble understanding ourselves. We struggle to make sense of what it is we are feeling, and as a result, find it difficult to express our feelings to our partners and other loved ones.

Hopefully by now you are beginning to recognize the attachment style, or styles, that you exhibit. Perhaps you are beginning to make correlations between any attachment anxiety you have and the way you behave, both in relationships and in everyday life.

Let’s take a look now at how our attachment styles can manifest into what we term ***love personalities***. Through extensive research, marriage and family therapist Kay Yerkovich and her husband Milan Yerkovich have devised five love personalities that can help make sense of how we love. See if you can recognise yourself in any of these five love styles:

The Pleaser

Those of us who grow up to become pleasers were often raised with overly critical parents. As children, pleasers' primary goal was to keep their often-irritable parents happy and went out of their way to be good and do the right thing. All their actions were driven by a need to avoid provoking a negative response from their primary caregiver. These children rarely received comfort from their parent, and instead, devoted their time and energy to providing comfort to those they relied on for love and support.

As both adults and children, pleasers do their best to avoid conflict at all costs, even if that means refusing to stand their ground in an argument, or accepting responsibility for something they did not do. Pleasers are also prone to lying, in order to avoid confrontation or conflict.

The pleaser often finds it very difficult to say no, often leading them to do things they do not want to do.

As they grow, pleasers become adept at reading the moods of others. They see this as an integral part of avoiding conflict and keeping everyone happy.

In romantic relationships, this constant need to please can often lead to a breakdown. If a pleaser believes they are letting their partner down in any respect, they will often flee from relationships, unable to face conflict.

In trying to keep everyone happy, pleasers often spread themselves too thin, neglecting their own wellness and requirements. Pleasers put the needs of others before their own and often suffer from the belief that they are simply not good enough.

While caring about the needs of others is an honorable trait, pleasers need to remember to make time for themselves. In order to build strong relationships, they must learn to be honest about their feelings, even if that opens them up to conflict and disagreements. They must realize that always doing what is expected of them can lead to exhaustion and burnout.

The Pleaser generally identifies with an ***anxious ambivalent*** attachment style.

The Victim

Victims often grow up in a home full of chaos and insecurity. Their parents may be abusive or violent. As a coping mechanism, victims often attempt to disappear into the background, doing everything they can to avoid bringing attention to themselves. Hiding and staying silent become ways of slipping under the radar, in order to avoid provoking their angry or violent parents.

For victim children, reality can be unbearable. To cope, they often create a fantasy world in their heads, in which they can disappear into, allowing them respite from the horrors and struggles of the real world around them.

Victim children often grow up suffering from low self-esteem and depression. Often they will end up marrying someone who exhibits the same abusive behavior as their parents.

Because victims spend so much of their life surrounded by chaos, they come to see this as the norm. When they find themselves in situations without conflict, this can often be a source of stress. So used to existing in a state of chaos, the victim will often spend their time anticipating the next blow-up, with their mind constantly leaping to the worst-case scenario.

But it is possible for victims to cultivate secure and loving relationships. In order to do this, they must work on developing their sense of self-love and learn to stand up for themselves in difficult situations.

Victims generally identify with an ***avoidant*** attachment type.

The Controller

Children who become controllers usually come from homes in which there was little security or protection. They learn from a young age that, in order to survive, they must toughen up and take care of themselves.

As adults, controllers fear the vulnerability they felt during childhood resurfacing. In order to prevent this, they feel the need to be in control in every situation.

This need for naturally spills over into controllers' romantic relationships. They attempt to exercise control over their partner in order to avoid feeling vulnerable, humiliated or helpless. Controllers see their anger as a weapon, which can be wielded over their partner in order to remain in control. Stepping out of their comfort zone is a big challenge for controllers, as it causes them to feel weak and unsafe, often recalling negative experiences from their unprotected childhood.

Controllers often have a rigid personality, believing that there is only one way to do things, and that their way is right. Relationship-building can be a big challenge for controllers, as they often prefer to do things on their own. Diverting from "their way" of doing something can lead controllers to become angry and malicious.

For controllers to develop long-lasting, meaningful relationships, they need to learn how to develop trust in others and let go a little. As anger is often a big problem, they must learn to successfully manage this emotion, instead of using it to intimidate their partner.

Many controllers identify with a ***dismissive avoidant*** love attachment style.

The Vacillator

Vacillators often grow up in households with unpredictable parents, such as those who work long hours, or are rarely at home. They come to learn that their own needs are not the top priority for their often-busy parents. Craving attention, vacillators spend their energy seeking attention from their unpredictable caregivers. But when vacillators finally receive their parents' attention, they are often too angry or exhausted to properly receive it.

As adults, vacillators seek the reliable and consistent love they did not receive as children. One of their tendencies is to idealize new partners and relationships. While this can make for a blissful "honeymoon period," when the inevitable conflict arises (as it does in all relationships), they quickly grow disheartened, feel let down and allow doubts and insecurity to creep in.

Vacillators are often extremely sensitive, particularly when it comes to operating within a romantic relationship. They exhibit keen skills of perception, which allows them to easily observe changes in others – namely, their romantic partner.

For vacillators to succeed in building a secure and healthy relationship, it is essential that they learn to pace themselves. People with this love style are prone to throwing themselves into relationships too quickly, in their search for consistent love, opening themselves up to disappointment and hurt.

Many vacillators identify with an ***anxious ambivalent*** attachment style.

The Avoider

Those of us with an “avoider” love style often grew up with less affectionate and “hands-on” parents. They likely come from a household in which independence and self-reliance are cultivated and prized. Getting little comfort from their parents, or other caregivers, avoiders learn quickly to push their emotions and anxieties to the background, allowing them to focus on their day-to-day needs for survival. They learn from a young age how to take care of themselves.

This practice of disregarding their feelings leads avoiders to rely on logic, rather than emotion. While this can be a positive trait in some situations, it can also lead to them behaving detached and aloof. Being around people showing extreme emotions can make avoiders very uncomfortable.

To build healthy relationships, avoiders must learn to stop bottling up their feelings. By expressing their emotions and being honest with their partner, they will slowly develop trust.

As the name suggests, avoiders generally identify with ***dismissive avoidant*** or ***fearful avoidant*** love styles.

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Each love style has its own set of unique challenges. Understanding your own attachment style and love personality will help you to identify and manage any negative behavioural patterns that surface within your romantic relationships. This is a powerful, and often life-changing exercise that can truly transform your relationships with those around you.

CHAPTER FIVE

DATING AND ATTACHMENT



Do you find yourself on an endless cycle of awkward first dates and relationships that fizzle out before they've even begun? Can you see the same patterns of behavior emerging in all your relationships – both your own behavior and that of your partner? Do you find yourself always dating the same kind of men or women? Or do you constantly find yourself sabotaging relationships the moment they show any kind of promise?

If your answer to any of these questions is yes, you've likely come to realize that your attachment style is to blame. Depending on our own tendencies, we are drawn to people who exhibit particular characteristics, which explains why we can constantly end up dating people with the same damaging traits and behaviors.

So what are we to do? Sit at home in front of the TV every night? Resign ourselves to a life of being alone? Not at all. Even for those of us with an insecure attachment style, dating doesn't need to be a struggle. It all comes down to understanding ourselves and, wherever possible, our partners.

By now, you're familiar with the traits of each attachment style and the love styles they give rise to. So when you're next with your partner, or on a date, use this information to determine the attachment style and corresponding traits, of your partner.

In this chapter, we will take a look at what you can expect when dating people with each love attachment style. We will then look at all the possible attachment style combinations and some of the challenges that each coupling may face – along with methods for managing conflict and working towards building a healthy, long-lasting relationship.

Dating Someone With a Secure Attachment Style

It goes without saying that dating someone with a secure attachment style can be far less stressful than someone who exhibits anxious or avoidant tendencies. A person with secure attachment will not be afraid to be upfront and honest about what they want. They will likely “put their cards on the table” in terms of what they want out of a relationship and where they see their life heading. A person who is secure will likely have no problem expressing interest if they wish to continue dating, and will not hesitate to be honest and tell you if they don’t wish to continue seeing you.

Once the relationship is established, a secure lover will seek to integrate you into their life, through introducing you to their friends and family wherever possible. A secure lover will never try to keep you from knowing who they truly are, and will welcome your own efforts to share. When they speak about their experiences and memories, secure partners will also share how they felt at the time, fostering a deeper sense of understanding and stronger emotional intelligence.

A partner with a secure attachment style will likely be empathetic and honest, unafraid to share his or her true feelings, due to their strong sense of self-worth. Unlike the other attachment styles, secure partners do not have fears related to love, and they can often assist their avoidant or anxious partners in opening up, or feeling more secure within a relationship.

When conflict inevitably arises, a partner with a secure attachment style will not shy away from it, but will make an effort to understand your point of view, and work towards a compromise that will suit both of you. Secures partners have no difficulty showing anger, but they will seek to communicate their distress in a rational way. They will not suppress their unhappiness, nor will they hold grudges.

Secure partners differ from the other attachment styles in their ability to more accurately read the feelings of their partner. Their peaceful attachment style allows them to tune into others, making them not only better romantic partners, but also great parents, friends and colleagues. They will freely express both positive and negative feelings within a relationship, thanks to their heightened emotional intelligence.

It’s estimated that a little under half the population exhibits a secure attachment style. However, thanks to their ability to form healthy, long-lasting relationships, you’ll find less and less “secures” in the dating pool.

To recap, let’s take a quick look at the characteristics you can expect when dating someone with a secure attachment style:

- A great ability to resolve conflict
- They are not threatened by criticism
- They are open and honest
- They have great communication skills
- They will not play games
- They are comfortable with physical and emotional closeness
- They are quick to forgive
- They see sex and emotional closeness as being intrinsically connected
- They treat their partners with love and respect
- They take responsibility for their partner’s well-being

Dating Someone With an Anxious Preoccupied Love Attachment Style

Behind the secure attachment, anxious preoccupied is the next largest love style, meaning there is a good chance you will come across someone with these tendencies in the dating pool. It is estimated that up to 20% of the population belong to this attachment group.

As we have learned, an anxious preoccupied attachment style is formed when a child's early needs for attachment and security are not met, usually through an absent or overworked parent. The challenges they faced as children – intense efforts to gain their parents' attention, along with the accompanying anger, disappointment and frustration – often remain unresolved and unprocessed.

In a relationship, people with an anxious preoccupied love attachment style can be clingy, or needy, in an often unconscious attempt to make up for the attention they were denied at a young age.

Anxious preoccupied lovers can often be unreliable; a trait that manifests not only in romantic relationships, but also at school, work and among friends. Their internal conflict leads them to be self-centred, unable to notice the emotional messages they are being sent by those around them.

What anxious preoccupied people crave – and what they have been searching for all their life – is stable, patient and reliable love. They require constant reassurance of their partner's love, making them less likely to venture out into the world on their own, afraid that, when they return, this love will no longer be waiting. This need for constant attachment makes the anxious preoccupied type less likely to pursue their own individual goals, or go off on their own adventures.

When single, someone with an anxious preoccupied attachment style will desperately want a partner, throwing themselves into the dating pool again and again, in an often-frantic search for love.

If you find yourself dating someone with an anxious preoccupied attachment style, you will see them “put their best foot forward,” doing their best to win your approval early, often to the point of trying too hard. They feel a need to constantly prove themselves, believing that they need to do this in order to maintain your interest.

As the relationship progresses, they will seek constant interaction and constant physical and emotional contact, which can be a challenge for their partner. Provided you are giving them the attention they crave, they will allow you to behave badly, even to the point of being cruel and manipulative. After all, in the eyes of the anxious preoccupied, negative attention is still attention, and that is what matters.

Anxious preoccupied partners have strong feelings, many of which are centred around their need for attention. They will often blame their partner for not providing them with the love and support they feel they need. Compounding this issue is the anxious preoccupied's inability to properly open up and honestly express their feelings. While it's true that people with this attachment style can be very emotionally expressive, they are often unable to get to the root of the problem and honestly convey what is causing their distress. This comes from a place of not understanding themselves, and also from a place of not feeling safe in the relationship. They fear that, by sharing who they truly are, they will scare their partner away.

People with an anxious preoccupied love style are at risk of settling into a dysfunctional and damaging relationship with a similarly damaged partner, which mirrors the parenting they experienced throughout their childhood. This often leads to co-dependency, a state which prevents both parties from maturing emotionally and moving past their issues. An anxious preoccupied partner will hate being alone, even for short periods of time.

When in a relationship, anxious preoccupied lovers may find themselves constantly thinking about their partner, having difficulty concentrating on anything else. Unsurprisingly, this leads to overthinking issues, and perceiving problems that do not exist. They are also prone to putting their partner on a pedestal, and focusing only on their good traits. As they revere their partner, they tend to forget about their own skills and unique talents. They are often unwilling to leave relationships that are clearly failing, believing that this could be the only chance they ever have to find love. Coupled with this, they often have the belief that they can change their partner, in order to make them more compatible.

In the same way that children throw tantrums in order to gain attention, you'll find anxious preoccupied partners engaging in their own negative or “protest” behaviour in an attempt to secure your attention. This may include:

- Constant calling, texting and/or emailing
- Loitering at your workplace in hope of running into you
- Hostile behavior such as rolling their eyes or walking away when you try to speak to them
- Making empty threats about leaving
- Pretending to be unapproachable, such as leaving messages unanswered or pretending to be busy
- Attempting to make you feel jealous

So what does all this mean if you find yourself dating someone who exhibits these traits and tendencies? Is the relationship

doomed to fail from the beginning? Not at all. The key to cultivating a successful relationship with an anxious preoccupied is building their feelings of security and independence. While much of this work must naturally come from your partner (we will discuss this further in following chapters) there are plenty of things you can do to assist in this process.

Remember that an anxious preoccupied person's issues stem from the lack of safety or consistency they received as a child. In order to cultivate security within the relationship, do your best to be consistent. Answer messages in a timely manner and be sure to be reliable, and keep your promises. When you behave "hot and cold," it can trigger your partner's old, deep-seated insecurities. They may respond through anger, seeking to punish you through the silent treatment, or even by breaking up with you.

When conflict arises in your relationship, as it inevitably will, be sure to let your partner know that having a fight does mean you are leaving them. People with an anxious preoccupied attachment style are prone to jumping to the worst-case scenario and, as they so deeply fear abandonment and rejection, their instinctive reaction to conflict is the adopting the belief that the relationship is about to end. In order to avoid the pain of rejection, they may even seek to end the relationship first. Be sure to let them know that, even though you are fighting, it does not change how much you love and care for them.

People with an anxious preoccupied attachment style have difficulty feeling assured in a relationship. So be sure to tell them how you feel on a regular basis. Be as honest and open about your feelings as possible. It could be as simple as a text to let them know you are thinking of them. Don't assume they know you love them. Anxious preoccupieds will rarely make this assumption on their own. Be proactive in telling them how you feel.

Above all, don't invalidate their feelings. Remember that their behaviours are often unconscious, and come from a place of trauma way back in their early years. Acknowledge that there is nothing foolish about the way they are feeling and, even though you may be able to see the situation logically, understand that this may be impossible for them. Do your best not to judge, instead offering a place in which they can feel safe and secure.

Dating Someone With a Dismissive Avoidant Love Attachment Style

Thanks to unreliable caregivers in childhood, people with a dismissive avoidant love style have a fear of intimacy, and a belief that they do not need attachments. However, as these beliefs and fears are subconscious, you will likely still come across several dismissive avoidants in the dating pool.

The lack of love and security dismissive avoidants receive as children often leads to an inflated sense of self-importance. They have grown up with no one to rely on but themselves, which leads them to believe that they don't need anyone else in order to survive and succeed.

People with dismissive avoidant love styles pride themselves on their independence and self-sufficiency. They believe that needing others is a weakness and a trait that will hold them back. They can be distant, hostile and condescending.

Dismissive avoidant have a tendency to end relationships without giving them a "real go." Often, they will hold an ideal in their mind of a previous relationship; an ideal to which they believe no one can ever measure up to. And when your relationship does end, the dismissive avoidant will act aloof, thanks to their belief that they are fine on their own.

In order to cultivate their protective shield of independence, dismissive avoidants often hate being asked to look inwards and examine their behaviour, both past and present. They will often struggle to remember their childhood, having repressed the negative memories that led to the formation of their dismissive behaviour. When they do recall attachment issues from their past, they often do so in a flippant or dismissive way, believing attachment is unimportant. They carry the belief that any negative experience – such as physical or emotional abuse from their parents – simply helped them become the strong, resilient person they are today.

The more you ask for attention and closeness, the more dismissive your partner will likely become. But of course, as humans, even dismissive avoidants have a biological need for connection. And when they are starved of this, they will engage in unhealthy behaviour in order to compensate. For example, single dismissive avoidants may become workaholics, or obsessed with hobbies or sports. In relationships, being separated from their partner for an extended period of time may elicit similar behaviour, only to have them act distant and hostile on their partner's return.

Dismissive avoidants will often seek to fulfil their biological needs for emotional and physical connection from less demanding partners – often anxious preoccupied lovers who require constant attention, regardless of whether it is based on real intimacy and connection.

If you find yourself dating someone with a dismissive avoidant attachment style, you will likely find them charming at first. They know well what is expected of them when dating and can play the role perfectly at first. But dismissive avoidants' view subconsciously sees being attached to others as a negative thing. They compare all new relationships to that one unobtainable ideal and are prone to quickly discarding new relationships when they come time consuming or inconvenient.

If the relationship does continue, dismissive avoidants will find faults in you and, contrary to the behaviour of the anxious preoccupied, will focus only on your negative traits and shortcomings. But dismissive avoidants will go to great lengths to avoid talking about their feelings. The first inkling you have that something is wrong may well be when your dismissive partner breaks up with you.

But if you experience this, it is important to realize that you are not to blame. A dismissive avoidant's upbringing renders them incapable of tolerating real intimacy, and when anyone tries to get close to them, their knee-jerk response is to run away. While outwardly, the dismissive avoidant may seek to blame others for his or her relationship failures, the reality is that, at their core, his or her self-esteem is so low they do not believe themselves worthy of love and affection. If you succeed in breaking through a dismissive avoidant's defensive shield, catching a glimpse of their insecurities beneath, they will panic and run, seeking either solitude, or someone who does not realize they are not exactly what they seem.

In relationships, dismissive avoidant people engage in protective behaviour known as "distancing," in order to keep their partners from getting too close. These behaviours include:

- Not returning phone calls or messages
- Telling their partner they are not ready to commit, but staying together anyway
- Focusing on their partner's flaws
- Comparing their partner to their ex
- Flirting with others to introduce insecurity into the relationship
- Refusing to say "I love you"
- Pulling away after positive interactions. (For example, not calling after a great date.)
- Forming relationships that do not have a future, such as with someone who is married.

- Avoiding sex
- Not wanting to share a bed with their partner

So what should you do if you find yourself dating someone with a dismissive avoidant attachment style? While this attachment style can lead to potentially destructive and hurtful relationships, the first step in building a healthy relationship is understanding that this avoidant behaviour is not your fault. Understand that it comes from your partner's deep-seated beliefs that began to take root in the very first years of their life.

Firstly, understand that anger or throwing a tantrum might be the only way a dismissive avoidant is able to communicate his or her feelings. It may be tempting for you to respond with anger of your own. But this will only add fuel to the fire. Instead of engaging with this negative behaviour, take a step back. Walk away if you need to, and return to the issue when you feel you can operate with a clear head and a calm state of mind. Express your needs in an adult way, without making demands or issuing ultimatums. After all, this is a sure-fire to get a dismissive avoidant to run in the opposite direction!

Do your best to calmly come up with solutions to the conflict that will benefit you both. For example, perhaps you're angry that your avoidant partner has failed to return your messages for three days straight. Instead of attacking him or her, understand that this is simply a characteristic of their attachment style and is not intended to hurt you. Ask that the next time he or she feels the need for space, they agree to let you know and to contact you the following day. This way, your partner will have the space they need, and you will not feel as though the relationship is being threatened.

People with dismissive avoidant attachment styles have a tendency to overthink things and get lost in their heads. To overcome this, it can be helpful to have dates that involve physical activity, such as hiking, playing sport or going dancing. The physical exertion will cause your partner to get out of their head and be present in the moment and they will be more likely to connect and form a lasting bond.

Having an avoidant partner requires patience. While you may logically see that opening up and sharing their feelings will be beneficial, understand that this process does not come easily to people with an avoidant attachment style. Allow them personal space when they need it and be sure to be engaged and present when they are finally ready to share. The other key thing to remember is that for many avoidants, learning to share their feelings can be as simple as just naming their emotion. By encouraging this simple step, it can open the door to greater connection and openness.

Though they may not always act like it, the reality is that dismissive avoidants want – and need – love just as much as the rest of us. For dismissive avoidants to cultivate a healthy relationship, it is essential that they learn to open up and share with their partner. The exercises in the following chapter will be of particular benefit to couples with a dismissive avoidant partner.

Dating Someone with a Fearful Avoidant Attachment Style

Just like dismissive avoidants, fearful avoidant attachment styles come from a deep distrust of a person's caregiver. Because of the similarities between these two attachment styles, dating a fearful avoidant can be a similar experience to dating someone with a dismissive avoidant attachment style. Unlike dismissive avoidants however, people with a fearful avoidant attachment style do not have the defensive shield of high self-esteem. They accept that they both want and need intimacy and attachment in their life.

Problems can arise, however, as the relationship develops. Fearful avoidants crave intimacy, leading them get closer to their partner. But when they do, their old fears kick in and they suddenly feel the need to pull away. This can lead to an endless series of short relationships, in which the fearful avoidant seeks closeness, only to flee when they actually receive it.

In the dating pool, fearful avoidants often put on a façade; a front they believe makes them more likeable. They can maintain this “false self” even in moments of intimacy. Just like dismissive avoidants, fearful avoidants have difficulty sharing their feelings with their partners. They are also characterized by weakened empathy, meaning they are often difficult to communicate with.

Dating someone with a fearful avoidant attachment style has many similarities with a dismissive avoidant partner. It can be helpful to go back and read the previous section.

If you find yourself dating someone with a fearful avoidant personality, once again, understand that their behaviour is not a reflection of you. Their trait stems from the damaging belief that they are not worthy of love and affection.

Just as with dismissive avoidants, people with this attachment type will greatly benefit from learning to open up and reveal their true selves to their partners. The exercises in the following chapter will be of particular benefit to people with a fearful avoidant attachment style.

Attachment Type Combinations

Knowing both the attachment styles of yourself and your partner can be of incomparable benefit to your relationship. Being able to anticipate the behaviour of both parties within a relationship – and the possible obstacles you will face can help smooth the path to a healthier, long-lasting connections.

Let's take a look at what to expect when people with each attachment type form a couple:

Secure + Secure

While secure couples in relationships have problems just like everybody else, their relationship is often characterized by great communication and empathy. They resolve conflicts more easily and know that they can rely on each other, in good times and bad.

The secure + secure coupling is the most common type of relationship, owing both to the large number of people in the population with secure attachment styles, and secure's abilities to cultivate healthy, long-lasting relationships.

Anxious Preoccupied + Secure

In this relationship combination, the anxious preoccupied partner is likely to test the patience of the secure partner, by seeking regular assurance. If the secure partner does not act quickly, the anxious preoccupied partner can become anxious and stressed. Despite their inherent securities, this behaviour can test the patience of the secure partner and can cause them to act distantly or pull away, much as a dismissive avoidant would.

However, a secure partner can be of great benefit to an anxious preoccupied person. The secure can cultivate their partner's trust in the relationship through patient and constant reassurance.

In such a combination, the secure partner can often feel as though they themselves are responsible for the upkeep and security of the relationship. The anxious preoccupied's insecurities can cause them to become self-centred, causing the secure partner to feel as though their loved one is not invested in the relationship.

Through gentle reassurance from the secure partner, however, this problem should improve over time.

Dismissive Avoidant + Secure

When partnered with a dismissive avoidant, a person will often experience distance and coldness within a relationship. This behaviour can cause even the most secure of people to feel attachment anxiety, leading them to question their self-worth. Even though the secure's requests for assurance will likely be reasonable, the dismissive avoidant partner will usually not respond to these requests.

In order for such a combination to work, the secure partner must be aware of their partner's issues, and demonstrate enormous amounts of patience in order to cultivate more security and openness with the relationship.

It is equally important for the dismissive avoidant partner to recognize the role they are playing in the relationship's struggles and do their best to respond positively to their partner's requests, even if it at first feels like a challenge.

If this does not happen, it will likely be the secure partner who ends the relationship. They are comfortable and confident enough in their own abilities and self-worth to know there is someone out there who will treat them right.

Fearful Avoidant + Secure

This combination has much in common with the dismissive avoidant + secure pairing. The difference is, however that it is likely to be the fearful avoidant partner who ends the relationship at the first sign of trouble. This behaviour comes about thanks to the fearful avoidant's fear of being seen for who they really are. They are afraid of loss and believe that ending the relationship on their own terms will be far less painful than the rejection from their partner. They often come to believe that this rejection is inevitable, once the secure breaks through the fearful avoidant's façade.

Dismissive Avoidant + Anxious Preoccupied

This potentially damaging combination is one of the most common. Because of an unconscious need to replay the events of their childhood, the anxious preoccupied will seek out the inconsistent attention provided by the dismissive avoidant. The dismissive avoidant undervalues their partner, while the anxious preoccupied overvalues them, leading to a relationship characterised by stress and anxiety.

While the dismissive avoidant likes to shy away from intimacy and connection, their needy partner will act to confirm the dismissive avoidant's view that all people are clingy. This confirmation makes the dismissive avoidant more comfortable in the relationship than they would otherwise be, and they often settle in to this coupling for the long-haul.

Meanwhile, the anxious preoccupied partner is unhappy with the sporadic attention doled out by their partner, but they are too afraid of being alone to do anything about it.

These negative patterns can be extremely difficult to break, largely because each partner sees the other as the cause of the relationship's problems.

But change is possible. If you find yourself in this coupling, return to the previous chapter and take a look at the ways of managing partners with avoidant and anxious attachment styles. The avoidant partner must learn to be more consistent and assuring in the relationship, while the anxious partner must work on building their inner-assurance and self-worth, instead of constantly relying on their partner for validation.

As in all couplings, open and honest communication, along with empathy is the key to making this relationship work.

Fearful Avoidant + Anxious Preoccupied

This coupling is among the most negative and damaging. It is also one of the most insecure couplings. The anxious preoccupied partner's constant need for attention will scare off the fearful avoidant partner, who will usually be unwilling to be involved in a relationship in which they are constantly fending off intimacy.

If the fearful avoidant partner acquiesces to their partner's need for closeness, it will likely trigger their anxiety. Conversely, if they remain in their comfort zone and keep their distance, the anxious preoccupied partner will respond by increasing their requests for attention.

Anxious Preoccupied + Anxious Preoccupied

This is another coupling that very rarely has a happy ending. The often self-absorbed anxious preoccupieds will have trouble anticipating the needs and desires of their partner. With both partners having a deep-seated need for attention and closeness, it is unlikely – although not impossible – that they will be able to satisfy each other's desires.

Fearful Avoidant + Dismissive Avoidant

This partnership is an uncommon one, due to both parties being bad at positive attachment. Even though, on the surface, it may appear that both partners want a less “hands-on” approach to the relationship, the fearful avoidant has a deep-seated need for attachment that the dismissive avoidant will rarely fill.

Dismissive Avoidant + Dismissive Avoidant

Unsurprisingly, this coupling is very rare. As cultivating a relationship requires communication – something dismissive avoidants seek to avoid – a relationship between two people with this attachment style rarely gets off the ground. If they do manage to form a relationship, they are prone to ending it at the first hint of conflict, in order to avoid having to communicate and resolve the issue.

Fearful Avoidant + Fearful Avoidant

This is the most uncommon matching, but this is primarily due to the fact that there is only a small number of fearful avoidant people in the general population. The fearful avoidant's difficulties with regards to communication and self-esteem will make this coupling a challenge, however it is not necessarily doomed to fail. As both parties have a deep-seated need for intimacy, there is the chance that they can satisfy this need for each other. They have a better chance of being successful if they understand the challenges faced by both themselves and their partner – something which is true for every coupling.

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It is interesting – and often encouraging – to note that we are not necessarily stuck with one love style forever. Over time, our tendencies and inclinations within romantic relationships can evolve as we grow as lovers and people. So if your relationship has hit a rough patch, don't be discouraged. Just because you and your partner may have seemingly incompatible attachment styles, it does not necessarily mean you have to end things. Instead, look at it as an opportunity for you both to develop as people and strengthen the bonds of your relationship.

CHAPTER SIX

WORKING WITH YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE

TO FIND YOUR LIFE PARTNER



Now that you've recognized your attachment style, and that of your partner, you can use this information to strengthen your romantic relationships. Identifying and understanding the struggles we face in relationships, and the traps we are likely to fall into helps us see and manage problems before they manifest and ultimately doom the relationship.

The reality is that over half of us do not exhibit a secure attachment style, instead exhibiting one of the two “damaged” styles – anxious or avoidant. On top of this, those of us with an avoidant or anxious love style have an above-average chance of falling in love with someone from the other damaged side. Unless we are careful, being with someone from the “opposite” side of the love style spectrum can aggravate our insecurities and cause us to act rashly or put up defenses.

Here are a few things to keep in mind about your own behavior when it comes to dating and building relationships:

If You Have an Avoidant Attachment Style...

- Particularly if you are in a relationship with someone who exhibits anxious preoccupied tendencies, learn to recognize the extent to which you check out emotionally, particularly in tense situations, or when your partner is offering or seeking closeness.
- Begin to recognize the way you prefer sex and physical intimacy with strangers, rather than with your significant other. You may also begin to notice how uncomfortable you feel when cuddling, kissing or during any other displays of affection. It is also highly likely that you don't like the light on during sex and intimacy.
- Notice your behavioral patterns that lead you to sabotage the chance for building healthy, long-term relationships. Can you see that you are afraid of what you really want? How does this internal conflict make you feel? Do your best to have compassion and forgiveness for yourself.
- Think back to your childhood. Can you see where this behavior may have taken root? In all likelihood, closeness would have been a frightening thing, because those you relied on for love and support continually let you down. Can you see the way you adopted a strategy in order to protect yourself from harm?
- Remember, the present is different from the past. By bringing in behaviors driven by fear, you are ruining your chance at a happy present and future. Can you see the way that these behaviors belong to the past? Can you that they do not belong in your present and future?
- With this in mind, now take a closer look at your partner's behavior. Perhaps it may seem as though they are behaving aggressively, and are causing you to feel upset, and perhaps even afraid. Take a moment to reframe their behavior. Understand that they are doing what they are doing because they want to be with you, and, if they have an anxious preoccupied attachment style, they likely have difficulty expressing this in a healthier way. Next time they attack or nag you, try and look beneath the irritation of this and see this as their deep-seated need for love.

If You Have an Anxious Attachment Style...

- If you are an anxious preoccupied person with a partner who exhibits avoidant tendencies, firstly bear in mind that things are usually not as bad as they seem. Perhaps your partner is being quiet and withdrawn. Likely, your mind is jumping to conclusions, interpreting this as a lack of love, or deep-seated troubles within the relationship. But take a moment to consider that this is likely not the case. Your partner's quietness is more than likely just that – a momentary need for peace and stillness. There is every chance it has nothing to do with you at all. Recognize that those with avoidant love styles require greater amounts of personal space. If your partner exhibits these tendencies, it is far more to do with them, than you.
- However, it is not unreasonable for you to want more closeness and intimacy from a partner who can often seem aloof and detached. There is nothing inherently needy about this. But it is important to take note of *how* you are asking your partner for this intimacy. Are you being too direct? In all likelihood, you are probably doing so with too much rage and desperation. Recognize the frightening affect this can have on an avoidant partner, and tread lightly when requesting closeness. Accepting, and even creating, a little more distance between you and your partner can have a positive effect on your relationship.
- Above all, recognize that your partner's behavior does not come from a place of spite. He or she is simply acting out negative behavioral patterns learned in childhood – just as you are.

Increasing Your Attachment Security

While many of us are not lucky enough to naturally have a secure relationship attachment style, there are many things we can do to build our attachment security. Let's take a look at a few of the ways we can work with our partners to build up our own – and each other's – security within our relationships:

Asking Questions:

Asking each other questions can be an invaluable way of opening up to your partner and sharing details about yourself that even you might not have previously been aware of. A structured questionnaire can take away the overwhelming aspect of having to come up with your own questions. Here is a selection of questions, beginning rather light-hearted and increasing in emotional intensity. Particularly if you or your partner find it difficult to open up, you might choose to begin with a few of the early questions, moving down the list as far as you feel comfortable. These are a great way to get to know your partner a little better – and to know your yourself a little better in the process!

1. Who are your top five dream dinner guests?
2. Would you like to be famous? Why? And in what way?
3. Do you ever rehearse conversations of telephone calls? If so, why?
4. Describe your perfect day.
5. When was the last time you sang a song? Was it to yourself, or to someone else?
6. If you could live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30 year old, which would you choose and why?
7. Do you have an inkling about the way you are going to die?
8. What are three things you think we have in common?
9. What are you the most grateful for in your life?
10. If you could change one thing about your childhood, what would it be?
11. Tell me your life story in three minutes, in as much detail as possible.
12. If you could suddenly acquire one new ability, what would it be and why?
13. If a crystal ball could accurately tell you the future, would you want to know it? Why or why not?
14. What have you always dreamed of doing? Why haven't you done it yet?
15. What is your greatest achievement?
16. What do you value most in a friend? A partner?
17. Describe your most treasured memory.
18. Describe your most horrible memory.
19. If you knew you were going to die in one year's time, what would you change about the way you are living your life?
20. How important are love and affection in your life?
21. List five positive traits about your partner.
22. How close do you feel to your family? How do you think your childhood compares to other people's?
23. How positive or negative is your relationship with your mother?
24. Make up three statements about things you and your partner are sharing right now. For example: "We are both sitting on this sofa..."
25. What is the one thing you wish you could share with another person?
26. What is the one thing you need your partner to know about you in order to become closer to them?
27. Tell your partner three things you really like about them. Be honest.
28. What is your most embarrassing moment?
29. When was the last time you cried? Was it by yourself or in front of another person?
30. What do you believe is too serious to ever be joked about?
31. If you were to die today with no chance of communicating to anyone ever again, what is the one thing you wished you'd shared with someone?

32. Besides you loved ones, what are three things you would rescue if your house was on fire? Why?

33. Which of your loved ones' deaths would you find the most difficult to handle? Why?

34. Tell your partner about a personal problem you are having and ask their advice.

This exercise can also be done between two couples. Studies have shown that asking these questions when doubling dating can increase not only closeness between the couples, but within the couples at the same time.

Engaging in Joint Activities

As discussed in the previous chapter, engaging in physical activities with your partner can be a great way of getting out of your heads and being in present in the moment, which can allow for greater bonding. Take this a step further by taking part in activities designed for couples. You might like to consider:

- Couples yoga
- Get a couples massage
- Visit each other's hometowns
- Choose a new TV series together and binge watch it
- Create a scrapbook of your relationship
- Have a picnic
- Play mini golf
- Cook dinner together
- Take a trip somewhere neither of you have been
- Volunteer together
- Watch the sun rise
- Dress up in a couple's costume for Halloween
- Climb a mountain or go on a hike
- Start a new tradition together
- Go bowling
- Go horseback riding
- Create a music playlist as the soundtrack to your relationship
- Take a bubble bath
- Go to the beach
- Take a dance class
- Go camping
- Sit in front of an open fire
- Go on a tandem bike ride
- Do a fun run together
- Read each other your favourite book

Keep a Journal

Writing in a journal each night can be a great way to make sense of your emotions and feelings. Journaling has been scientifically proven to reduce stress and anxiety, and can provide you with greater mental clarity, greater problem-solving abilities and a greater ability to manage conflict.

But journaling and sharing the contents with your partner can also have a profound effect on your relationship's security. It provides a platform for greater honesty and openness, and improves trust between you and your partner. Reading from the written page can also take the stress and spontaneity out of sharing your feelings, which can be of particular benefit to those with avoidant personalities, who will likely find this exercise a challenge.

Reflecting on Positive Relationships

Research has proven that the act of simply focusing on your previous positive relationships can have a profound positive influence on your current romantic relationship. This could be done either through journaling, discussion with your partner, or

even just taking a few moments for yourself to conjure up these positive memories.

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The abovementioned activities and questionnaire is likely to have a greater effect of increasing the attachment security of those with an avoidant attachment style, as these exercises encourage openness and honesty, while pushing participants out of their comfort zones.

Hopefully, the above suggestions have shown that developing a more secure attachment style does not need to be strenuous. Increasing the security of your attachment with your loved one can be an enjoyable experience. And it can be as simple as learning to open up and share a few details about your lives. Remember to above all, do your best to be honest and show compassion, both to yourself and your partner.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO FEEL GOOD WITHOUT PARTNERSHIP



Given the images our media constantly bombards us with, it's easy to develop the belief that there is something wrong with being single. So much of what we see on TV, in magazines, and in films seems to suggest that the one goal in life is to find a loving partner and settle down and have a family. And then there's an ever-growing number of social media sites which portray endless collections of photos of our friends and acquaintances showing off their loving partners, or their beautiful kids... Little wonder many of us see romantic attachment as our main goal or achievement in life.

But the nature of life means that we are all bound to be single at one time or another. This could be due to luck on the dating scene, commitments in other areas of our lives, or even death and bereavement.

For some of us, being single can be a traumatic process. This may be due to our attachment style, and/or the circumstances that led to us being in the situation. It is important to develop skills to cope with being single, or else we may find ourselves heading blindly into unsuitable and damaging relationships, driven by the fear of being alone. It may lead us to settle, agreeing to spend our life with someone we do not love, or who does not love us in return.

While some of us relish time alone, and may choose to be single, many people prefer, and even crave the company of other people. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this – after all, it comes down to our personality and attachment styles – it is important not to fall to pieces the moment we find ourselves alone.

Attachment Style and Single Status

Our upbringing, unsurprisingly, can have a big effect on the way we respond to being alone. Our response to this situation is due largely to what is termed our *family script*. If you grew up in a large family with people constantly around you, you may have a more difficult time adjusting to being on your own. Conversely, those who grew up with distant or absent parents are able to more quickly adjust when they find their relationships ending.

But as we have learned, our attachment styles can always be changed and improved. It's just a matter of understanding ourselves more thoroughly, and determining why we have particular behaviours or fears.

So if you are experiencing stress over the thought of being single, or alone, here are a few strategies to help manage the anxiety:

Facing Your Fears

Start with asking yourself exactly what it is about being single that scares you. Is it the belief that people will judge you? If so, this can be a good opportunity to recognize how much you are letting other people's opinions of you inform your sense of self-worth.

Perhaps you are afraid that not having a partner will cause you to miss out on a lot of things. In this case, you could examine why you feel you need a partner to take part in experiences. Are there are things you have been waiting for a partner to do, such as traveling, when you can just as easily do them on your own?

It's also worth examining just where this fear has come from. Can you identify incidences from your past that may have contributed to your fear of being alone? Perhaps, like the above example, you grew up surrounded by your large family, and not having company feels strange and unnatural. Or maybe there was an incident in your early childhood that sparked this fear – for example, you may have wandered off as a child and lost your mother in a shopping mall.

Understanding the underlying causes of this fear can go a long way towards addressing and removing them.

Understanding What You Want

As we have discussed in many aspects throughout this book, understanding yourself and your desires is of great benefit when it comes to managing your instinctive thoughts and behaviours.

If you find yourself struggling to be single, take the time to really ask yourself what you want from life. This can be with regards to your goals and aspirations, and also as related to your attachment style. What is it that your attachment style demands? Do you need validation from others in order to feel secure in yourself? Or do you crave alone time? (If you have not done so, go to Chapter Three in order to determine your love attachment style.)

Understanding yourself in this way can help you feel more secure in yourself, and less like you need another person to “complete” you.

This is also a great opportunity to explore new interests and hobbies. What have you always wanted to try, but have never done? Is there a hobby from your past that used to bring you joy? Can you incorporate this back into your life?

Relationship Counselling

While it might seem silly, the reality is that relationship counselling is not just for couples. As we know, one of the most important relationships we have is with ourselves. If you are struggling with your single status, it might be worth seeking the help of a qualified counsellor in order to get to the root of exactly what it is that is causing your distress. See Chapter Ten for some tips on how to find the right counsellor or therapist for you.

Being Happy and Single

Depending on your desires, personality and attachment style, the thought of being happy and single might seem impossible to achieve. But the reality is that there are plenty of men and women who are extremely happy without a partner, both through personal choice and external circumstances.

There are plenty of benefits to being single – you have the freedom to decide what you’re going to do and when, you rarely have to compromise, plus you get the whole bed to yourself!

But despite this, it can be difficult to be happy and single when you really want a partner. Society teaches us that we must find love in order to be happy. But in reality, it is the other way around. When we are happy with ourselves and our lives, we are far more likely to attract love.

So let’s look at a few of the techniques that can be employed if you find your single status is getting you down:

Engage in mindful and meaningful activities.

Let’s break this one down, as it contains two elements. When we’re single, it’s a great opportunity to engage in activities that make us happy. After all, we don’t have to seek anyone’s approval, or compromise with a partner about how we will spend our weekend! As discussed in the previous section, it can be of great benefit to take some time to identify activities and experiences that you love, or have always wanted to do. Rather than sitting at home obsessing over your single status, or the next series of awkward first dates you’ll have to go on, get out in the world and take part in activities and experiences that are meaningful for you.

So what does it mean to be mindful, when you’re engaging in these activities? Basically, it means being present in the situation, not lost in your thoughts, or in some fantasy world. If you find yourself drifting into your head, a great exercise to cultivate mindfulness is to focus on all five of your senses. Mentally list three things you can see – and be specific. Rather than just saying “I see a bird,” take time to describe the bird to yourself: “I see the white tips on the feathers of that bird...” etc. Now do the same for each of your five senses. What do you hear, smell, feel and even taste?

Recognise it’s okay to do things alone- and then do them!

When it feels as though everyone else in the world is happily coupled up, it can be difficult to get out and do things without company. But doing things alone can be a liberating experience. Go to the movies. Go shopping. Go out for a meal. Each time you do this, it will become easier and easier.

Take time to foster your other relationships

Despite what you may have led yourself to believe, your significant other is not the only key relationship in your life. Especially while you are single, take the time to cultivate relationships with the other special people in your life. Spend time with family, friends and colleagues in order to strengthen your relationship with them. Give your undivided attention to others when you are with them- don’t be distracted thinking about your ex or your single status.

You can also use this opportunity to meet new people and cultivate new interests. (We will discuss this in more details in Chapter Nine.) And, importantly, allow yourself to meet people without viewing everyone as a potential partner.

Recognise that not all of your thoughts are based in reality.

Particularly for those of us with an anxious preoccupied love attachment style, you may find being single causes an endless cycle of inner dialogue to go charging through your head. Likely, it’s filled with negative and self-deprecating thoughts along the lines of: “*I’m not good enough,*” “*I’ll never find love,*” or “*I’m so unattractive.*”

If you find yourself thinking such things, take a moment to step back and see these thoughts as what they are: your own misinterpretation of reality, not facts.

Next time you find yourself entertaining this negative dialogue, replace it with a more positive belief. For example: “*I’ll never find love*” could be replaced with “*today I will meet someone incredible.*” Repeat this new belief to yourself in the form of an affirmation, or mantra. Say it to yourself over and over, either aloud or in your head. You can even write your new positive beliefs down and put them in places where you will see them often, such as on your bathroom mirror, on your desk at work, or inside your car. In time, you will find your negative inner dialogue replaced with these far more positive and productive beliefs.

Accept your emotions and allow yourself to really feel them.

Understand what you are feeling – give a name to your emotions. Is it grief? Embarrassment? Hopelessness? Joy? Do you feel as though you need to cry? Allow yourself to do so without feeling guilty. You will likely feel much better afterwards, and letting those emotions out is far healthier than bottling them up inside.

Understand how being in a relationship would change you – and make those changes now.

Take some time to determine exactly how being in a relationship would change your behaviour. Would you allow yourself to relax and feel less stressed? Or maybe you would no longer feel the need to spend an hour doing your make-up each morning.

Once you have identified these actions, start doing them now. Cultivate a sense of relaxation through activities such as meditation or yoga. Allow yourself to be that person who spends five minutes on their makeup before they run out the door.

This also applies to achieving your life goals. Are you waiting for that perfect partner to travel the world with? Why wait? Traveling solo can provide you with the most amazing experiences for growth and self-understanding. And who knows, you may even meet someone amazing in the place you least expect!

The same goes with having children. If your fear of being alone stems from your need to have a family, consider the possibility of doing it solo. Fostering, adoption and egg freezing are all valid avenues for exploration.

Don't put unnecessary pressure on any dates you might have

Especially if you have been single for a long time, or exhibit anxious attachment tendencies, it can be tempting to blow things out of proportion when you finally land a date. We can convince ourselves that this will be the one, placing an unnecessary amount of pressure on ourselves to not ruin what we see as our one chance at happiness.

On top of this added pressure, fantasizing about our dates, and convincing ourselves they are The One can be dangerous. It means we are often shut off to any negative behaviours and we may convince ourselves we can be happy with them, even in the face of red flags. This can lead us into unsatisfying and even damaging or abusive relationships.

Instead of focusing the future when you're on a date, remember the value of mindfulness, and focus on the present. Ensure you are fully present during the date, without focusing on past experiences or present fantasies.

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Next time you find yourself without a romantic partner, focus on all the positive aspects of being single. Use it as a time to really understand yourself and your desires and for really exploring what makes you tick. Above all, allow yourself to recognize that we do not need romantic attachment in order to feel complete and happy.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW OUR ATTACHMENT STYLE

AFFECT OUR FRIENDSHIPS



By now, it should be evident just how deeply our attachment style can affect our romantic relationships, along with our relationships with our parents and/or children. But our attachment style can also have a significant impact on our friendships and wider social networks. This includes our interactions with friends in person, along with our behaviours on social media sites such as Facebook.

Attachment Style and Friendship

The table below gives us a quick overview of the way the both our self-esteem (our opinion of ourselves) and our sociability (our opinion of others) is reflected in our love attachment style. We can use this as the basis for understanding our challenges and instinctive responses when faced with social situations, such as making or interacting with friends:

		<i>Self Esteem (Our opinion of ourselves)</i>	
<i>Sociability (Our opinion of others)</i>		Positive	Negative
	Positive	Secure love attachment style	Anxious preoccupied love attachment style
	Negative	Dismissive avoidant love attachment style	Fearful avoidant love attachment style

Friendship for Secure Attachment Personalities

As we have discussed in earlier chapters, people with a secure attachment style have a heightened emotional intelligence which allows them to communicate effectively with those around them. They are able to interpret both verbal and non-verbal cues, giving them strong empathetic skills. For this reason, people with secure attachment styles generally have no problem instigating and maintaining friendships. They make reliable friends and colleagues and flourish in group environments.

Friendship for Anxious Preoccupied Personalities

The anxious preoccupied's desperate need for attention and validation within romantic relationships also shows itself among friends.

People with an anxious preoccupied attachment style often feel as though they are giving far more to their friends than they are receiving. As those of us with these tendencies can be very emotionally expressive, we like to show our friends just how much they mean to us – and can occasionally overdo it. Anxious preoccupieds often see themselves as less valuable than their friends, and will behave accordingly. But for secures who don't view their friend as a "lesser person" than themselves, this anxious preoccupied behaviour can be difficult to understand. As a result, anxious preoccupieds often have difficulty building close connections with their friends.

If you have this attachment style, you may find yourself drawn towards friends who also exhibit anxious preoccupied tendencies. This will result in a friendship in which you both go out of your way to ensure the other knows how much you mean to them. While this can work, it is often characterised by desperation and neediness, and does not lead to the healthiest of relationships.

People with this attachment style are unlikely to maintain friendship with avoidant types, as the anxious need for attention is likely to drive the other person away before the friendship has time to develop.

Friendship for Dismissive Avoidant Personalities

While the way dismissive avoidants relate to their friends is completely opposite to anxious preoccupied personalities, the result is the same: a lack of close friendships. As we have learned, dismissive avoidants prize themselves on their independence and their perceived belief that they do not need anyone else in order to prosper. This can cause them to be distant and dismissive – something their secure friends will perceive as coldness, disinterest or even rudeness.

Friendship for Fearful Avoidant Personalities

While we all have versions of ourselves that we put out into the public eye, fearful avoidant personalities are adept at presenting a carefully cultivated persona, or **false self** when showing themselves to the world. This façade is a defense mechanism to prevent any spontaneous display of emotion and to keep their innermost feelings hidden away.

People who consider themselves friends with a fearful avoidant personality can often find themselves surprised and hurt when distress causes the fearful avoidant's "mask" to fall away. Their friends will then discover that the true personality of the person they had believed themselves close to was little more than a lie.

As a result of this false self, the fearful avoidant often has a group of friends that has been attracted to his or her fake persona and has little idea who they really are. When their true self is revealed in times of crisis, they may find they have no one who truly understands them – or perhaps even likes them – and consequently, they have no one on whom they can really rely.

Not being able to be vulnerable with friends who are vulnerable with you puts a strain on the relationship, making close friendships a challenge for fearful avoidants. It is important for people with this attachment type to recognise that real intimacy and friendship are based on loyalty and honesty. Pretending to be something you are not – while it can be an effective defense mechanism – will leave you with few friends you can count on in times of trouble.

Tie Strength and Multiplexity

Researchers at Australia's Deakin University and the Middle East Technical University in Turkey have determined the role of attachment styles as related to our friendship groups and social networks.

Their study examines "tie strength" and "multiplexity" within their subjects' social networks.

"Tie strength" refers to how close the ties in your network are; in other words, how comfortable you feel going to your friends for love and support in times of emotional distress. It also takes into consideration how often subjects interact with those in their network.

"Multiplexity" refers to having many different roles fulfilled by the same members of a subject's network. For example, a person who is both a colleague and a fellow member of a sports team has a high level of multiplexity. Similarly, if a subject feels close enough to a work colleague to go to them for advice and support, it also shows a high level of multiplexity.

Within an Avoidant Style...

The study shows that people with avoidant attachment styles have a weaker tie strength to members of their social network. This makes sense, given the avoidant's tendencies to shy away from affection. Similarly, avoidant behaviour also leads to lower multiplexity within friendships, meaning the bond an avoidant has with their friends and colleagues is weaker and less reliable. They are less likely to actively maintain ties and are more likely to actively dissolve their friendships.

Within an Anxious Attachment Style...

Those with an anxious preoccupied attachment style are also likely to see the frequent dissolution of friendship ties. However, in their case, it is likely to be instigated by their contacts, rather than by themselves. As we know, people with an anxious attachment style have a need for constant attention and validation. This behaviour can be smothering, leading to their friends and contacts to step away and dissolve the friendship.

Size of Your Social Network

You may assume that the larger a person's friendship network – either on or offline – the more popular and secure they are. However, this is not always the case.

Think about the size of your own social network. If you have hundreds, or even thousands, of connections on sites such as Facebook, think about how often you connect with the majority of people in this network. In all likelihood, not very often. The sheer numbers involved usually make this far too difficult. Similarly, if you have a huge circle of friends in "real life," it can be difficult to maintain close and meaningful relationships with all of them.

Studies support this, proving that the larger the friendship network, the weaker the ties and multiplexity of those connections.

Does this mean we should cull our Facebook pages and cut down our number of friends? Not necessarily. But it is important to recognize social media connections can never take the place of real life friendships. While it can be easier to cultivate friendships behind the safety of the computer screen, putting yourself out into the real world and facing the challenges thrown up by your attachment style is the only way to build valuable, long-lasting friendships.

Increasing your Attachment Security Among Friends

So how can we go about increasing our attachment security with regards to making and maintaining lasting friendships?

Remember those questions we discussed in Chapter Six as a way of developing intimacy between you and your romantic partner? These are just as effective when it comes to really getting to know your friends, or anyone you are seeking to build a deeper connection with. You can also make up your own list of questions, in order to avoid answers becoming routine.

If asking these questions makes you shy or uncomfortable, do your best to focus on the answers given by your friend, rather than your own responses. After all, showing interest in others and making them the focus of attention is a great way to make a person feel valuable and showing them you care.

In the following chapter we will be looking at ways to both build new friendships and maintain existing friendships, regardless of your attachment style.

CHAPTER NINE

HOW TO MAKE GREAT FRIENDS REGARDLESS OF YOUR ATTACHMENT STYLE



Making friends gets more and more difficult as we get older. Sociologists put this down to a number of reasons. Firstly, building friendships takes time. Think of all the hours you spent with your friends at school. Being forced to spend day after day together was what led your relationship to develop from being classmates to becoming friends. But as adults, our lives are often so busy with work, children and numerous other responsibilities that we simply don't have as much time to cultivate friendships as we did when we were young. In addition, we generally spend much less time in one place than we did back in our school days. As adults, the only place we spend large proportions of our time is often our workplace, and some of us are reluctant to build friendships with our colleagues.

Then there's the issue of energy. Spending time with new people can be a major energy drain, especially if you suffer from an insecure attachment style. In today's modern life, so many of us are at risk of burnout, so we are understandably reluctant to introduce more stress into our lives.

But while making – and keeping – friends as a busy adult can be a challenge, it is well worth the effort. Let's take a look at some of the many benefits of friendship:

The Benefits of Friendship

- Being around friends improves your mood. Surrounding yourself with positive, happy people makes you feel better, and is proven to increase positivity and optimism.
- Having friends helps you reach your goals. Encouragement from those around you can boost willpower, while sharing your goals and aspirations with others helps hold you accountable.
- Having friends reduces stress and depression. Studies have shown that an active social life can boost your immune system. It also reduces isolation, which is a major contributor to depression and stress.
- Having friends mean you have someone to rely on in difficult times, such as unemployment, bereavement, illness, or difficulties in your romantic relationship.
- Surrounding yourself with friends can boost your self-worth. This can be of particular benefit to those of us with attachment styles characterized by low self-esteem.

Making – and Keeping – Friends

Meeting New People

So we understand the value of making new friends. But, as we've discussed, meeting new people is not the easiest thing to do, particularly when our modern-day lives are so busy.

Here are a few ways to go about meeting people and forging new friendships:

- Volunteer at your local charity, or for a cause you are passionate about.
- Join a club or take a class. This will put you in contact with many people who share your interests.
- Attend book signing, lecture, gallery, recital and other event in your community in which you might meet people with similar interests.
- Go to a sporting event. While it can be daunting being in a crowd on your own, bonding over shared loved of your sports team can be a great way to meet new people. If you don't feel comfortable attending the match on your own, what about going to watch the game in a bar? You'll have the same opportunity to connect with others, but on a much smaller scale.
- Turn off your phone. No matter where you are, it is difficult to meet new people if you are wearing headphones, or if your head is buried in your smartphone. Put down the phone and engage with the world – and the people – around you.

Strengthening Existing Acquaintances

Making new friends does not necessarily have to mean meeting new people. In many cases, making new friends can be a matter of simply strengthening your existing acquaintances. Here are a few ideas for turning acquaintances into friends:

- Break the ice by inviting a colleague or neighbor out for coffee or a drink.
- Track down old friends on social media and rekindle the friendship by inviting them to meet in person.
- Connect with your college alumni.

Dealing With Fear of Rejection

Just like when you're in the dating pool, making new friends means putting yourself out there and opening yourself up to rejection. This can be scary, particularly for those who suffer from an anxious preoccupied attachment style. In Chapter Ten we will be looking at ways of addressing and healing our attachment issues in order to deal with rejection, among other things. But here are few other key points to keep in mind if you find yourself being rejected by someone you had hoped to build a friendship with:

- If someone rejects your invitation, remember it does not necessarily mean they are rejecting you as a person. Everyone has their own busy life, of which we likely know very little about. Their refusal may just be because they are busy or distracted.
- Similarly, if someone rejects you, it does not mean you are inherently unlikeable, or unworthy of friendship. It's possible that the person just misunderstood you, or are having a bad day. Or perhaps their behavior is more to do with their own insecurities and attachment issues.
- Keep rejection in perspective. Instead of beating yourself up over it, see it as a learning experience – and one that strengthens you, allowing to learn for next time and become a stronger person.

Cultivating Long-Lasting Friendships

What Makes a Good Friend?

Knowing what we look for in a friend can go a long way towards helping us build long-lasting friendships. It reduces the potential for conflict and drama, and helps us manage any problems that may arise due to our attachment issues.

Firstly, take some time to determine what makes a good friend in your opinion. Perhaps they are those who:

- Show genuine interest in you and your life
- Are always there for you in times of need
- Don't judge you, even when you make mistakes
- Never deliberately hurt your feelings
- Never put you down
- You enjoy their company
- Are loyal and trustworthy
- You can laugh and cry with
- Will tell you the truth, even when it is hard to hear
- Will always listen
- You feel comfortable sharing your emotions with

Ask yourself how you feel when you're around a particular person. Does spending time with them make you feel better or worse? Are you yourself when you're around this person, or do you put on a façade, uncomfortable of revealing your true self? Does this person treat you with respect? Do you feel as though this is a person you can trust? (Incidentally, these are all excellent questions to ask yourself when navigating early romantic relationships too.)

How to be a good friend

The best way of maintaining lasting friendships, of course, is to be a good friend yourself. Think back to the characteristics that you determined make a good friend, and ensure you are exhibiting these traits in your own relationships.

Here are just a few of the ways you can work towards being a good friend towards those you care about:

- **Listen:** If a friend is sharing his or her problems with you, ensure you engage in active listening; concentrate, do your best to retain information and offer a well-thought-out response. Ask questions. Do your best to see the situation from your friend's point of view. If you don't have all the answers, don't worry. Likely, your friend is not coming to you for a solution to their problem, they just need a sympathetic ear on which to unload. This can be a particularly difficult thing to do if you suffer from an avoidant attachment style, which is characterised by a lack of empathy.
- **Ask What You Can Do to Help:** If your friend is facing a difficult situation, don't wait for them to ask for ask help. Instead, actively ask them what they need and what you can do to help. This will lead them to reciprocate when you find yourself in a challenging situation.
- **Show physical affection:** This can be another big challenge for those with avoidant attachment styles. But hugging your friends is a great way to show you care, and the physical contact increases the bond between you. All humans need physical contact with others in order to survive. An act as simple as a hug can prevent both you and your friend from feeling alone.
- **Keep in Touch:** Keeping in touch with our friends can be difficult at times, especially for those of us with large friendship circles and social networks. But taking time out of your busy schedule to connect with a friend is a great way to maintain closeness and strength in the friendship. It doesn't need to be a long-winded phone call. If you are short on time, send a short text or message on social media, just to let your friend know you are thinking of them.
- **Share Your Feelings:** Tell your friends what they mean to you. Just as in romantic relationships, your friends can't be

expected to know how you feel if you have not told them. This is especially true for friends with anxious preoccupied personalities. This kind of honesty and openness goes a long way towards building lasting friendships. And for those of you who feel uncomfortable opening up and sharing your feelings, remember that the more you do it, the easier it will get.

CHAPTER TEN

HOW TO HEAL ATTACHMENT WOUNDS



As we have learned throughout this book, without intervention, those of us with an insecure attachment style will go on to relive the negative experiences of their childhood, resulting in strained, stressful and painful experiences throughout their life. These issues can manifest in romantic relationships, friendships, relationships with family and colleagues, as well as the way we relate to ourselves.

But, deep-seated as those these attachment wounds may be, they are able to be healed. It is important to believe that secure attachment is possible for everyone. There are many ways in which attachment trauma can be healed, and in this chapter we will address both self-healing methods and some of the many methods that may be used when working with a therapist.

Self-Directed Healing

Healing becomes possible when we focus on rewiring our brain and creating new experiences of positive emotional connection. In time, these new thought processes will replace the old behavioural patterns that were brought about by our negative childhood experiences.

Let's take a look at some of the ways you can work at healing your attachment wounds:

Allow Yourself to Grieve

The healing process is a process of grieving. When you become aware of the incidents and situations that caused your attachment issues to form, it is likely that you will feel some degree of loss and sadness. This grief will come about with the realization that you suffered neglect as a child, or from the absence of any real emotional connection to your primary caregiver.

Accepting the need for new patterns and getting rid of the old is a grief process. You are mourning both what did happen, and also the safe, secure relationships that *did not* happen. Allow yourself to feel and accept this pain, before releasing it and moving on.

Make Sense of Our Story

If we can understand exactly what the narrative is that is driving our attachment issues, it helps us to see how it is affecting us in our adult lives. It may also make us aware that we are passing down the same narrative and issues to our own children.

These issues may be things we usually associate with the word "trauma" such as bereavement, abuse or other life-threatening situations. But the reality is that most of us carry around the effects of smaller "traumas" – many of which are unconscious. These can be things like dealing with a parent who was always at work, or was too busy dealing with their own emotional issues to really be present when in our company. This trauma could be related to one particular moment, or a series of incidents that took place over time and cumulatively resulted in your attachment style.

The issues that brought about our trauma may not always be obvious, as any emotional abuse we suffered as a child may not be immediately clear. For example, we may have had an outwardly loving and participatory parent who, despite their best intentions, did not offer any true emotional connection or engagement. Often due to their own attachment issues, this parent may have been either available, or been unwilling to really understand the workings of their child's mind. This kind of chronic emotional absence can have the same negative effect on a child as more obvious emotional abuse.

By facing and understanding our past traumas, we can change our attachment patterns; in time altering the course of our relationships and our, ultimately, our lives.

Find a Partner with a Secure Attachment Style

As we have seen in previous chapters, partners with secure attachment styles can be invaluable resources in assisting their loved ones to break out of their negative attachment patterns. Developing a secure relationship with someone who already exhibits a secure attachment style can help increase our self-worth and sense of security, as our new partnership forms an active model for how successful relationships operate. Possibly, those of us with insecure attachment styles have never been part of a secure relationship before, owing to the constant recreation of the negative patterns experienced in childhood.

But entering a healing relationship with a securely attached partner can be a frightening experience for many people suffering from insecure attachment styles. Many insecurities, particularly those with an avoidant attachment style struggle to open up and connect with others, and the idea that a partner may seek emotional intimacy can be overwhelming.

Some people with insecure attachment styles may believe it is necessary to handle all their issues themselves and never ask for help. Others may believe that sharing their problems is futile, as no one could possibly understand what they are going through. Sharing and opening up might also make them feel weak. And for those with dismissive avoidant or fearful avoidant attachment styles, being alone might be the only thing that makes them feel safe.

But for those of you struggling to connect with a secure partner, understand that cultivating a healthy relationship has the power to repair even the most deep-seated of emotional wounds.

Choose a life of connection; not just with your significant other, but in all relationship aspects. Shift your focus about how you define relationships and realise that all relationships are important. Counter the patterns of disconnect you have previously experienced by actively inviting connection into your life.

Make a plan to live a life of connection and value all your relationships. Remember, as humans, we need connection to

survive. Surrounding us with those we care about gives us security, comfort, inspiration, clarity and grounding.

Question Your Core Beliefs About Yourself

Remember those who caused your attachment issues had their own problems. These may have come in the form of addiction, preoccupation, work issues, their own dramas, or marriage issues. Very rarely, if ever, was their behaviour a direct reflection on you.

Nonetheless, our attachment issues create a set of negative core beliefs we have about ourselves. We tell ourselves stories about what happened, and draw our own, often unconscious conclusions. For example, “Dad was always at work, therefore I don’t matter.” Or “Mom never really listened to me, so I must be unlovable.” We personalise the events that took place during our childhood and develop deep-seated core beliefs about ourselves that effect our adult life.

These negative beliefs form obstacles when it comes to building relationships. How can we have a successful relationship when we are lugging around the belief that we are unlovable and do not deserve to be in a relationship? How can we have a successful relationship when we don’t believe we are good enough, or don’t believe that we matter?

Successfully healing our attachment wounds requires us to really confront our core beliefs and examine just what it is we feel about ourselves. Most often, these beliefs leave us to have a diminished sense of self-worth.

Confront the Romantic Narrative

As we touched in Chapter Seven, our culture is constantly presenting us with an ideal of what a romantic relationship should look like. We’ve all seen and heard this story countless times – a couple falls in love at first sight, and they are deliriously happy. They get to know each other more which leads them to discover that they are each other’s soulmate. And of course, they live happily ever after.

But as even those of us with the most secure attachment styles know, the reality of being in a relationship is often far removed from this ideal. Comparing our relationships to this fantasy ideal is unrealistic, immature and unhealthy, particularly for those of us struggling with negative attachment issues.

In the same way that we must identify and question our core beliefs about ourselves, healing attachment trauma requires us to look at our beliefs regarding what a relationship should look like. As yourself how you believe couples “should” meet, interact, grow, share passion and otherwise relate. Then ask yourself where this belief has come from. Is it based on the fantasy of the ideal relationship the media presents us on a regular basis?

If we continue to compare our relationships to the fantasy romantic narrative, we are setting ourselves up for disappointment, as real-life partners will never compare to this ideal.

Strengthen our Self-Compassion

This point ties into the previous two, in which we questioned our core beliefs and our beliefs about the world around us. It calls on us to actively cultivate a greater sense of kindness to ourselves. By doing this, we are not only undoing any negative beliefs we might have about our self-worth, but we are replacing these damaging beliefs with a kinder inner dialogue.

By doing this, we will be able to more easily set boundaries, along with raising our standards and expectations in relationships of all kinds.

A big part of this is teaching ourselves not to accept anything less than true connection. This can be very difficult for those of us with anxious attachment styles, who have grown up accepting whatever miserable scraps of connection we can manage. People with attachment issues have taught themselves to live with emotionally unavailable, or emotionally demanding partners, often out of the fear that they will never find anyone better. They stay in damaging relationships, or with partners they don’t feel connected to, believing that a flawed relationship is better than no relationship at all.

To break out of this pattern, allow yourself to question your relationships and the quality of the love and connection you are receiving. Realign your core belief to accept that you are worthy of true love and connection.

Pay Attention to Your Physical Body

Like all other psychological issues, attachment trauma can manifest itself in our physical body. In Chapter One, we discussed some of the physical effects of attachment issues, from an increased fight or flight response, to the altering of our genes as infants, which can cause health issues in later life. We have also discussed the correlation between healthy familial relationships and health and later life, and seen how suppressing our feelings can manifest as physical symptoms such as stomach pains.

When you are working at healing your attachment injuries, it is important to pay attention to the way your physical body is feeling. The link between our mind and our body is undeniable, so observing the way you physically respond to these healing activities can provide you with a good gauge as to their effectiveness.

Pay attention to any pain or discomfort you are feeling within your body and any areas in which you might be carrying

stress or tension. Listen to your body as you go through the above healing exercises and notice the appearance or disappearance of any pain or discomfort.

Working With a Therapist

While self-directed healing can produce amazing results, sometimes our attachment wounds are simply too deep or too complex for us to manage on our own. This is when it becomes important to enlist the help of a licenced therapist.

A productive therapy session will help clients identify different parts of themselves that they may not have been aware of. A trained therapist will help you understand that your perceived strengths are often covers for underlying hurt and trauma and understand how these issues relate to your everyday behaviour and tendencies.

Therapy can help us connect to our inner child – that often-scared part of us that needs emotional connection, love and support. Therapy can teach us to offer kindness and compassion to this inner child, instead of responding to our own perceived failures with negative self-talk.

Therapy can also help us to identify the opportunities for secure attachment that exist all around us. In all likelihood we have a network of caring friends or family – no matter how big or small – who are eager and willing to offer support when necessary. Remember, our survival depends on staying in close contact with those we love. Even the most independent of humans cannot survive alone.

While therapy sessions may incorporate many of the self-healing techniques we have discussed, there are also a number of different techniques and processes therapists may use in order to get to the root of your attachment injuries.

Let's take a look:

Psychoanalysis Therapy

Psychoanalysis aims to release repressed emotions and experiences, in other words, to make us aware of previous unconscious memories. Although there is some variety in technique from therapist to therapist, this generally involves the patient lying on a couch, unable to see the therapist. They will be asked questions about their day-to-day thoughts and conflicts. This then leads the therapist to ask more probing and confronting questions, along with the analysis of dreams and fantasies, with the ultimate intent of uncovering hidden memories from early life.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy

Unlike psychoanalysis, cognitive behavioural therapy, or CBT, does not aim to take the patient back in time. Instead, it helps you make sense of what is going on in your head, and provides techniques for dealing with seemingly irrational fears and emotions. This is done through the analysis of five different areas in your life; situations, thoughts, emotions, physical feelings and actions, all of which are intrinsically connected. Through in-depth discussion, therapists will help patients identify the core beliefs at the root of their problems and help them replace their damaging inner dialogue with more positive thoughts, implementing behaviors that support these new beliefs.

The Hoffman Process

The Hoffman process, created by Bob Hoffman in 1967, is a guided process of group therapy that aims to uncover the root causes of our attachment issues and injuries. Over an intense week-long retreat, the process teaches participants to trace the root of their negative behavioural patterns, and dissolve their damaging beliefs. The process combines a number of techniques, including psychoanalysis and CBT. Participants also engage in journaling, guided meditation and visualization, with the end goal of cultivating compassion for both themselves, their parents and others in their lives.

Hypnotherapy

Hypnosis can be a useful technique for uncovering hidden memories and discovering the root cause of our emotional issues. By entering a hypnotic state, patients are more likely to obtain access to deeply buried memories and uncover the underlying causes, or causes, of their attachment issues.

How to Find the Right Therapist

With so many therapists out there, finding the right one for you can seem like a daunting task. In a way, it's a bit like dating – finding someone with whom you resonate, and who you feel truly understands you. While it can be time consuming to find the right therapist, it is well worth putting in the time. Studies have proven that a good relationship with a therapist or counsellor can cause the brain to literally rewire itself, leading to real, long-lasting positive changes. So here are a few things to keep in mind when you're trawling through a seemingly endless list of available therapists:

- Start by narrowing down the list. This can be as simple as filtering out those who are not in your vicinity. By taking

this small step, it can make the process immediately feel more manageable.

- Read through your list and get an instinctive feeling about each therapist. Learn a little about each of the professionals on your list – their background, their professional views, their life experiences. Rule out any with whom you don't feel as though you resonate, or could connect with.
- Develop a vague idea of the approach you want. Do you want to quickly remove the symptoms of your attachment wounds? Or do you want to really understand the causes at the root of your injuries by accessing long-buried memories?
- With your goal in mind, take some time to research a few of the different approaches to healing attachment wounds. Which of these approaches do you feel is right for you?
- Ultimately, successful therapy relies on a strong relationship between the patient and therapist. Many therapists offer a free initial consultation phone call, so be sure to take advantage of this. Even if, after this, you feel as though you have found the right person to help you work through your issues, you may like to begin with just one or two sessions, to really ensure you have a strong connection with the person you are working with. After all, this is a relationship that has the power to greatly change your life for the better.

CONCLUSION

As we have come to see throughout the course of this book, the issues caused by our attachment style begin very early in life, in the formative years before we can even properly communicate. Even those of us with the most loving of parents can experience attachment issues to some degree.

If you have not done so already, take some time to really analyse your behavioural and thought patterns, particularly in the field of relationships. Ask yourself the questions in Chapter Three, and examine the love personalities presented in Chapter Four. Can you see yourself in any of these attachment styles and personalities?

It is important to remember too, that even those of us with a primarily secure attachment style can exhibit anxious or avoidant tendencies at times. While the manifestations of these attachment styles may not be as profound as for someone with attachment issues, they can still present obstacles on the road to happy relationships. Even the mildest of manifestations can be solved by addressing the underlying issues and implementing the techniques discussed in Chapter Ten.

Above all, remember that, no matter how many years you have been carrying around your attachment wounds, they are always able to be healed. While the process can be uncomfortable and even painful at times, understand that releasing your attachment issues is among the most valuable things you can do for yourself. By doing so, you will open the door to a greater sense of self-worth, valuable friendships, strong familial ties and a long-lasting and loving romantic relationship. It is always possible to make changes, and doing so can allow you to finally find the happiness, love and security you have been seeking for so long.

INSECURE ATTACHMENT

Anxious or Avoiding in Love? How Attachment

Styles Help or Hurt your Relationships.

Learn to form secure emotional connections

INTRODUCTION

Are your most essential qualities and behaviors determined by your genetics or learned? This is the most enduring debate of our times.

The modern scientific view is that the capacity to behave in a specific way is genetic, but experiences will determine how, when, and whether these capacities are engaged.

As attachment is about how distress is managed, the answer would lie in how often distress is experienced, and how it is expressed lies in the genetic factors, but the responses to stress are modified by learning and experiences. Thus, how an infant develops an attachment style is mostly learned.

Early relationships with parents and caregivers certainly do shape what you expect from and how you participate in later relationships, and specifically in romantic attachments. You develop a blueprint of how you interact in adult relationships, how you seek comfort or push it away, how you trust or don't, and how you approach any situation that could be perceived as a conflict.

However, other relationships and circumstances in your formative years, as well as later relationships also play a big role.

In a successful relationship, people need to be secure. This means they need to govern their emotions and habits in order to ensure a peaceful coexistence with their partner. Partners need to be well-adjusted in order they may have a healthy and rewarding relationship. But sadly, this cannot be said to be the case for many relationships. Partners that struggle with insecure attachment issues are virtually incapable of having healthy relationships. Psychologists believe that insecure attachment begins in early childhood. The experiences of a child in relation to their parents and the surrounding environment are going to influence how they turn out as adults. When a child develops a healthy bond with the people in their early life, they become secure. This means they will have a positive attitude and expect the best from other people. Such kids grow to be stable partners who expect other people to play their part. But when a child has an unhealthy bond with their early life environment, such a kid is likely to grow up to exhibit insecure attachment, whereby they expect the worst of people. Such people end up becoming distrustful of others and it presents significant challenges in relationships. They are likely to be unpredictable. They won't show any consistency in their behaviors and actions. One moment they might act charged and interested and the next moment they might act withdrawn and disconnected, like a robot. Insecure attachment may be overcome but it requires the full participation of the affected person. This book delves into the subject of insecure attachment issues and makes suggestions on how to get rid of it.

Relationships play a critical role in our happiness, but if the partners are not compatible, it can give rise to tremendous pain. One of the factors that would contribute to difficult relationships is the presence of insecure attachment issues in either or both partners. Generally, attachment issues stem from an individual's childhood experiences. If the child had a stable relationship with their parents, they developed a healthy bond with other human beings, and in later years when they get into a relationship, they will have a positive mindset and expect to rely on the other person. However, if someone had a negative relationship with their parent, they likely developed an unhealthy bond, and it makes it hard for them to trust their partners; these people will always be expecting their partners to do them in and this mindset usually sabotages the relationship.

Relationships are hard. That's a common truth.

You might think that learning how to spend large amounts of time with another person, perhaps live with another person, and co-exist beside another person would be easy, after all, we're all human, right?

Wrong.

Learning how to compromise, communicate, overcome conflict, express your emotions, and trust is extremely difficult. We're not born to be in relationships naturally, it's something we have to adapt and learn.

You might think that we're making the world of love sounds like a course you need to take at college, with a rather tough exam at the end, but ask yourself this - if relationships were easy, would be talking about them all the time? Would there be so many glossy magazines with articles dedicated to them? Would we have chat shows bemoaning relationship issues?

No, we would simply allow relationships to fit into our lives, perhaps in the same way that we do with Netflix.

A successful relationship takes hard work, compromise, and trust, but those three things aren't easy to come by in this day

and age. The number of couples with trust issues is staggering, and that could be down to former infidelity or simple paranoia because of the amount of social media use by one side of the partnership.

No, relationships aren't easy, but they're more than worth the hard work.

If you're someone who finds love hard, worry no more. You're not alone, and you're certainly not in the minority. It's important to be comfortable, yourself, secure and happy in any relationship that you enter into, but come on, that's easier said than done!

Love is supposed to be calm, happy, and uplifting, but for some reason, it is so riddled with anxiety problems that it can become a chore, every single day you're with that person.

If you want to rid yourself of relationship anxiety, the first step is recognizing where it's coming from and acknowledging that it is playing a part in your life.

The road towards happiness and security in love starts with yourself. Nobody can fix a problem for you, but we can help you identify where the issue comes from and give you the best advice to overcome it.

We're not going to preach, we're not going to judge, and we're not going to tell you that with a little hard thinking you can fix any problem that comes your way. What we are going to do is show you that the future can be a lot brighter than it is now, and you can find your way towards a happy, healthy, and secure relationship in the very near future.

As humans, we have an in-built desire to connect with others. This helps us feel needed, part of something bigger than ourselves, and it also makes us feel loved. Of course, nobody NEEDS a partner to be complete that is something else entirely. What we're talking about here is the human desire to be a part of a union.

You might meet the odd person who simply doesn't want to be in a relationship. That's fine, but what you will probably find with people such as this, is that they seek out friendship connections instead. We all need people in our lives, it helps us feel happier, healthier, and more hopeful for the future. Loneliness is one of the biggest causes of depression, and we all know about the dark road that depression leads you down.

It's no surprise that one of the best self-help methods for managing depression is to surround yourself with people who you love and care about, those who lift you up and do their best to raise your spirits. This is simply because the bonding hormones that are released by our brains when we're close to others gives us a natural high.

Think about the first few times you met your partner. Did you get butterflies when you saw them? Did you think about them constantly? That's your brain kicking out oxytocin and other 'bonding' hormones, helping you to feel connected to another person. It almost feels like an addiction, because you feel happy and content whenever you're near them and you miss them when they're gone.

Of course, this tapers off after a while, but by that time the closeness has been developed differently.

Put simply, relationships help us to be a better version of ourselves. They help us to open up and be vulnerable, to risk it all for love and give us the opportunity to love someone else unconditionally. Love is beautiful, but it can also be extremely rocky and difficult from time to time!

The point we need to make here is that you should never feel like you have to be in a relationship to be "whole". The only person who can make you whole is yourself but sharing your life with another person brings a whole new dimension of happiness and contentment. This person becomes part of your family, and your relationship evolves over time. At first, it's all honeymoons and stars, and it eventually cools down and turns into true companionship as the years pass by.

Relationships are beautiful, but you should never stay in the wrong one either. Remember, you don't NEED a relationship, but if you want one, you need to understand what not to do and how not to feel, to keep it as beautiful as it is intended to be.

CHAPTER 1

HOW CHILDHOOD AFFECTS LIFE

The experiences that we have as children can play a critical role in how we turn out. If we had a terrible childhood, we are likely to grow up maladjusted. For most people with insecure attachment issues, childhood abuse is one of the major causes. Children are extremely vulnerable and the emotional or physical hurt that they experience comes to haunt them much later. The following are some of the experiences that can be traumatic for children.

Domestic violence

In some dysfunctional homes, parents can be cruel. It normally starts with them going for each other, but soon enough they start focusing on their kids. Kids who have been physically abused tend to endure a lot of trauma, and once they become young adults, they exhibit various issues including insecure attachment. Domestic violence leaves the kid forever scarred as they remember the pain they endured at the hands of their parent or guardian.

Abandonment

Kids are vulnerable. They need to grow up in the warmth of loving parents. But some kids are unfortunate in the sense that they have parents who couldn't care less. Their parents might be emotionally distant or have a tendency of leaving them for long periods. It never turns out well. Kids need to have both parents around so that they can become emotionally stable. For kids who are struggling with abandonment issues, it becomes increasingly hard for them to adjust to society, and it gives rise to a number of mental health issues.

Sexual abuse

It is probably one of the worst things that a kid could have to endure. Kids who are sexually abused tend to have a hard time fitting in society. This is because sexual violence tends to destroy a person's emotional stability. The trauma that comes about as a result of sexual abuse is unrivaled. It is life-long too. The person might seek help and all of that but still they will feel haunted by memories of what happened to them. Subjecting a kid to sexual abuse is quite simply ruining their life.

Verbal abuse

Another experience that sends a kid into trauma is verbal abuse. This usually happens when one or both of their parents are mentally unstable. In most cases, the verbally abusive parent tends to come from a place of being hurt themselves. But then again two wrongs don't make a right. It doesn't matter that they were hurt too, but they should have the sense to stop the cycle of hurt and start treating their kids with more respect. Verbal abuse makes a kid deeply resentful. It affects their self-esteem and causes them to have a hard time fitting in society. They also develop insecure attachment issues.

Loss of a loved one

At the end of the day, we are just mortals. We inevitably have to leave this planet. But the problem is that some people leave the planet whilst having dependents. When a kid loses their loved one, particularly their parent, they can have a hard time adjusting in society, because they no longer have the necessary emotional stability. Loss of a loved one can cause a kid to have a terrible attitude too, because they have the wrong impression of the world; they think that the world is out to get them, they think that nothing goes on in the world, and it can send them on the wrong path.

Accidents

Another experience that could send a kid into trauma is an accident. The more technologically advanced us are, the more

machines we have to operate, and the more risk we subject ourselves to. If a kid is involved in an accident, for instance, road accident, they could be scarred for life, because they have no conception of how to process the events. It might cause them to develop a negative attitude toward life because they are afraid of the next tragedy.

Life-threatening illnesses

Thank heavens we are at a stage when we have eliminated most medical problems from the planet. But then there are far many illnesses still left, and some even terrible illnesses keep coming up. A kid who is battling some form of illness is in a world of pain and they can be left traumatized for the rest of their life. Kids are very aware of what's going on. Being ill stops them from being a normal kid. It gets in the way of their fun. It causes them to have a negative outlook on life.

Natural disasters

As we continue to burden mother earth with our mindless activities, mother earth will find ways of striking back, and you better be sure that when mother earth strikes back, there's a large trail of destruction. One of the common ways that mother earth strikes back is through hurricanes. It hits the coastal cities and brings the buildings down. Kids who witness that are left traumatized for the rest of their life. Various emotional issues, including insecure attachment issues, can stem from such a traumatic experience.

Refugee experience

Again, the world is in relative political stability, but still there are people in certain corners of the world who are still fighting. Kids who are native to such places and have to be carried away as refugees have a hard time developing emotional stability. Refugee camps cannot provide the warmth that a kid is entitled to.

Bullying

Kids are sweet, but they can also be nasty, especially against their fellow kids. Bullying starts in the early schooling years and could last until high school. But it leaves the target devastated. Kids who have been bullied could have a hard time fitting in and developing the emotional stability necessary to become self-sufficient. They could develop insecure attachment issues that would make it difficult for them to have normal relationships.

Fear

When a child is going through a traumatic experience, the first expression they have is fear. They exhibit signs of terror as they feel threatened. For instance, if a child is undergoing bullying at school, they might not always disclose it, because they are embarrassed about what they are going through, but they will always appear scared for their life. You can spot the fear in their eyes, in their hesitation, and they will be extra careful about what they say or do.

Anxiety

Anxiety starts pretty early. When a child is experiencing anxiety, it is usually as a result of the traumatic experience that they are going through. For instance, if a kid has just lost their parent, they look around and see that their momma or dad is not around anymore, and they just feel anxious. Nothing ever feels the same anymore. They are looking for ways to express their pain but they can't even conceptualize it. Their anxiety stops them from becoming well-adjusted. It stops them from being happy. They cannot fit in among other kids. And this is painful.

Depression

Also, kids can be depressed. It usually occurs when a kid is going through a traumatic experience. They don't have the emotional stability to process their feelings and make sense of what is happening in their life, and so, they shut off. Most kids who are depressed have a tendency of hiding themselves. They don't want to spend time with their friends or their family, and they are always keeping to themselves. And this makes it hard for them to have an easy time. Depressed kids will also have antisocial tendencies, and in the quiet of their room, they might weep.

Nightmares

Dreams are a way for our subconscious to make sense of various things in our life. kids who are going through a traumatic time of it will experience nightmares on the regular. These nightmares will keep them awake because they are in the middle of making sense of what is happening to them. If you notice that a kid is struggling with nightmares, it might be an indication that they are going through a traumatic experience. Also, it is not a good sign when a kid has difficulties falling asleep; it means that they too are having traumas.

Loss of appetite

Considering that kids are growing up, they require a lot of energy, and this is made clear through their massive eating. So, it's a bad sign when a kid is not eating enough. It indicates that the kid is going through a traumatic experience. For instance, when a kid runs into bullies at school and keeps quiet about it, you might notice them first withdrawing, and then they will begin to lose appetite. Kids are supposed to have an appetite because their body needs more nutrition. Thus, it might be a sign of trauma when a kid won't indulge in food with enthusiasm.

Trouble forming relationships

Another clear sign that a child is going through trauma is an inability to form relationships with other people. This inability to form relationships with other people is usually driven by their anxiety and fears. Relationships play an important role in our lives and failure to form meaningful relationships is also a bad sign. The kid is against forming any relationships with other people because they have developed the wrong outlook on life; they think that human beings are not to be trusted, that human beings only bring trouble, and therefore human beings need to be shunned.

Inability to trust anyone

When a kid experiences trauma at the hands of an individual, especially their parent, they will come away thinking that human beings at large mean them harm, and they will make a point of avoiding every last human being, or at least not trust them ever again. And this is one of the reasons why it's hard for them to have any meaningful relationship with other people. A kid who has deep trust issues tends to be a loner, because only then they are in charge of the whole process, and they can rely on themselves.

Difficulty concentrating

Another indicator that a kid is going through a traumatic experience is an inability to concentrate. They tend to have a faraway look, because they are lost thinking about the trauma they are having, and it is quite hard for them to overcome this pain.

Poor academic performance

When a kid is going through trauma, they will have a difficult time concentrating on their academics, and they will score poor grades. Also, they will have difficulties comprehending whatever they are learning because most of their mental energy goes toward processing the traumatic experiences they are going through.

Risky behavior

In most cases, trauma tends to overwhelm kids and makes them quiet. But then there are cases where kids react to trauma by going over the board. Such kids will start indulging in risky behaviors as a way of trying to forget their traumatic experiences. Of course, such behaviors only prepare them for the path of delinquency and more often than not it ends badly.

Aches

Some kids react to traumatic experiences through feeling pain in certain areas of their body. This can be especially unnerving because kids need to be in great physical health so they can enjoy their early childhood.

People who have insecure attachment issues are likely to have gone through a traumatic experience in their early childhood. It gets worse depending on whether or not anyone came to their aid.

CHAPTER 2

THE 3 DIFFERENT INSECURE ATTACHMENT TYPES



Different ways of communicating and participating in relationships describe attachment styles. Both attachment models concentrate on how children and parents communicate during early childhood. Commitment types are used in adulthood to identify patterns of commitment in romantic relationships. The theory and attachment studies that emerged throughout the 1960s and 1970s developed the concept of attachment styles. Psychologists today usually recognize four significant styles of attachment.

What is attachment?

Attachment is a particularly emotional relationship involving an exchange of warmth, treatment and enjoyment. The source of attachment study began with Freud's love theories, but as a father of attachment theory, another writer is generally cited.

John Bowlby has devoted extensive research to the concept of attachment, describing it as a "lasting psychological connection between humans."

Bowlby shared the psychoanalytic view that experiences of early childhood are important for later life to influence development and behavior. Our early styles of attachment are established in childhood through the baby-caregiver relationship.

In addition, Bowlby believed that attachment had an evolutionary component; Help in survival. "The propensity to establish strong emotional ties with particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature," he explained.

Disorganized/disoriented attachment

Disorganized attachment is recognized as a serious predictor of maladjustment and psychopathology in children. (Benoit, 2004)

Disorganized attachment puts children at risk for lack of control of emotions, stress, hostile and aggressive behaviors and coercive styles of interactions. They lack self-esteem and confidence, are rejected by their peers and struggle academically, especially in mathematics.

At an early age:

Show a mix of avoidant and resistant behaviors

May seem dizzy, confused or apprehensive

At six years old:

Can take on a parental role

Some children may act as caregivers for their parents.

Children with an unsafe and unorganized attachment style demonstrate a lack of clear attachment behavior. These children are described as exhibiting stunning behavior, sometimes appearing confused or apprehensive in the presence of a caregiver.

Main and Solomon proposed that inconsistent parenting behavior could be a contributing factor to this attachment style. As the child feels comforted and frightened by the parents, it results in confusion.

The young child has conflicting, inconsistent and often frustrating behaviors in this type of attachment. For example, they can cling to the attachment as they look away or weep when he leaves without closing. These behaviors seem incomprehensible and show that a coherent attachment strategy is lacking in construction.

Anxious-ambivalent attachment

In this case, we have a child who learns very early that he cannot trust his parents. Sometimes, they show some affection, others are cold and distant.

They are fathers and mothers who oscillate between times of abandonment or neglect and moments of severity and control. All this generates ambivalent situations in which the child lives in a state of constant anxiety and insecurity. He has little or no control over what happens, so he doesn't know what to expect; an uncertainty that does not know how to manage and that only generates insecurity.

Attachment styles and emotional memory tell us that the person, in this case, ends up focusing on certain events of the past. For example, the adult will remember those moments of the past in which he needed support or help and did not receive it, moments in which he felt alone, scared...

It creates, therefore, an "attachment" to those unresolved and painful issues, from which, in some way, rage and frustration are fed even more. They are emotions that tend to block the person, hence, it is often difficult for them to also release each memory, each painful experience.

In ambivalent attachment, attachment sometimes provide care behaviors, and sometimes they do not. It is this insecurity that causes children to not want to explore the world since they do not know if when they ask for help, their demands will be answered or not.

This type of ambivalent attachment gives rise to people who, in relationships, do not know how to deal with their problems autonomously. In addition, they are people who direct their attention to anxiety and fear and compulsively seek that attention and help.

As children:

- May be wary of strangers
- Be very distressed when parents leave
- Don't look comforted when parents return

As adults:

- Reluctant to approach others
- Worry your partner doesn't love them
- Be very upset when relationships end

According to Cassidy and Berlin, the attachment of twins is relatively rare, and this attachment style is demonstrated by only 7% to 15% of US babies. As these children grow up, teachers often describe them as overly dependent and dependent.

For adults, those with an ambivalent style of relationship are often hesitant to engage others and are worried that their partner will not reciprocate their feelings. This leads to frequent breakups, mostly due to the cold and distant relationship. Some people feel especially distressed after a marriage breakup. Cassidy and Berlin identified another pattern of pathology in which ambivalent adults cling as a source of protection for young children.

Anxious-avoidant attachment

In this case, avoidance attachment appears when a child assimilates, even if not consciously, that his need for care will be answered with indifference, if not with contempt. This means that, on average, these children try to become emotionally self-sufficient people.

Thus, in order not to experience again more damage, emptiness or suffering, they choose to shape an emotional detachment that will characterize much of their relationships.

Studies, like the aforementioned, indicate that in these cases it is common to appear gaps, disjointed or fragmented memories. Many childhood episodes are forgotten or remembered inaccurately, blurry.

Interestingly, people also characterized by a style of avoidance attachment in their emotional relationships also show memory problems.

Forgetting probably facilitates their emotional detachment with the people around them. As a hypothesis, we can think that it is a defense mechanism that ends up generating the brain itself to lower the intensity of suffering at the cost of raising the sensitivity threshold.

As we see attachment styles and emotional memory share a direct link. The quality of our early relationships mediates the quality of our emotional life. Thus, if a past of traumatic experiences is hidden behind the door of our present, it is necessary to cross that threshold to resolve and heal that universe.

The avoidant attachment arises when the attachment for the child does not respond to their demands practically never care. Therefore, and since they have not become accustomed to that, these children do not seek their caregivers when exploring the world; they don't seem to exist.

Relationships that arise as a result of an avoidant attachment are elusive. The signs of anxiety and fear of the couple are not attended to, and neither is their help sought when one feels that fear or needs care. Such care is not requested and does not seek social support to solve problems.

At the time of separation, the insecure, avoiding child does not turn to his attachment and tries to mask his emotional distress by detachment from the situation and attachment to the physical environment. On returning from the attachment, he pretends to be indifferent or avoids contact with her by remaining more focused on his toys. A. Guedeney and N. Guedeney (2002) state that in the first interactions between the baby and his attachment, the latter appears to be detached and not very available to meet the needs of his child. The young child does not seem to be able to develop a basis of security in relation to his mother and can give an impression of early independence.

Insecure avoiding behavior has been observed in young whiny children, who tended to panic during the separation from their attachment and who, on his return rejected it with rage without showing any sign of relief. In an experimental situation, insecure avoiding children would be the ones who displayed the most emotions and anxiety, which would cause the deactivation of their attachment system in order to better manage this situation. In this context, the young child stands out, shows little emotion, turns more towards exploration and is forced to adopt early autonomy as a survival strategy.

Hopkins (1992), referring to Mr. Ainsworth's analyzes, explains that avoidant attachment strategies refer to the failure of the holding company. This is what Mr. Ainsworth calls rejection syndrome for mothers who show a deep aversion to physical contact. The strategies of this type of attachment thus take on a defensive value and an adaptation function in the face of a rejecting environment.

In adults, this type of attachment results in a detached attachment style. The individual describes himself as uncomfortable in an intimate and deep relationship as well as anxious in situations of closeness. According to Hazan and Shaver (1987), the detached subject perceives the relationship with others as threatening proximity, because it risks arousing the archaic fear of being rejected by the significant person. These individuals have self-confidence but not in others, which makes them react by a certain distance and an avoidance in intimate relationships. Tarabulsky states that there are 17% of adults in the general population who fall under this type of attachment.

CHAPTER 3

FACTS ATTACHMENT BONDING



The attachment of an infant to a significant caregiver is the most momentous event in the growth of the child's personality. It is the source of the feeling of safety, self-esteem, and self-control of the child. However, the impact of a first connection goes far beyond emotion. This affects how well the kid remembers, knows, and gets along. A stable connection (or its weakness or absence) wired the brain of a child in a set pattern.

How can an early childhood aspect hold so much power over a lifetime? And how do children's psychologists know about attachment? This segment responds to both questions.

John Bowlby (1907-1990) did more than 50 years ago his naturalistic observations of adolescents, but subsequent research only reinforced his views among psychologists. Bowlby was a British psychiatrist and a professional psychoanalyst who acknowledged Freud's basic understanding of the importance of early childhood interaction in personality development. Bowlby has applied to Freudianism a detailed analysis of the particular experiences that create a safe and precarious first relationship between a mother and her child. And he draws on ethology to establish the organizational theory in order to explain how these relationships derive from mother and child's instincts for survival.

It's in your smile. How can anyone resist a face like that? A baby's smile and kewpie's cheeks are actually irresistible for many adults. Bowlby indicated how this visual charm works as a brilliant adaptation (not unlike kittens, birds, or cowboys) to ensure a baby's way is almost essential for its affection, comfort, and food. While the inherent actions of a mother to support and protect her newborn are generally enough to make her a part of this very mutual relationship.

Babies have a wide range of highly effective cues in what Bowlby called the "human attachment system" to ensure they get what they need to survive and thrive. If they are not laughing, they weep and fuss or coo and grab the lips, hair, and breasts of their mother. We watch her every step around the house as a duckling follows her through the grass of her mother.

Babies are social by the age of three months, but they usually save their biggest smile for the significant caregiver in their lives. In naming these behaviors adaptive, Bowlby pointed out that they were innate. The baby's target, he said, is to remain close to the primary source of his independent survival.

Bowlby found that new hatched gans and ducklings create a unique process called "imprints" for the first moving object that they see. Similar to these birds, human newborns prefer moving objects and often remember their mothers within days of birth. However, full binding on the part of a human baby takes at least six months longer than other species of animals. Luckily, human parents fail to get any slack in the bonding process. After a few minutes with a newborn, moms and fathers usually say that they were goners, already "in love."

Attachment and locomotion, she's been able to consolidate her devotion to a basic adult, usually the mother, in the sixth or seventh month of a baby. Bowlby noticed in another bow to ethology that this time coincides with the beginning of a crawling baby. This suggested a link between the independent locomotive and the baby's completion of the attachment process that began at birth. For example, a kid takes a lot of time to get out of his crib than a chick to fly out of his egg. Before kids and kids wander too far, instinct makes sure they know where to find "home base."

The two competing objectives in the earliest years of a baby are security and exploration. A child that remains secure survives; a child that explores the intelligence and skills necessary to grow successfully. Both of these needs often stand against each other. Bowlby and his predecessors, therefore, assume that a child develops an inner "thermostat" in order to

monitor his environmental safety. An internal alarm bell sounds when he gets too far from home.

It is a common phenomenon when a kid is leaving his mother (either by walking or "toddling") until he has some reason to turn around to see if his mother is still close at hand. Maybe he will keep going if she's always where he left her. Or he might come back to the base before his exploration restarts. The attachment bonding process allows children to control their desire to explore or stick to that particular person by internalizing what Bowlby called their caregiver's working models. Mom's going to go there if you go farther." One model might be "It's too scarce you don't have to go far too far," so babies form one model, or another based on the behavior of their mothers over time.

Striking photos of some very sad, even self-destructive monkeys persuaded many of the doubters of the value of the early animal and human mother-child bonding in the 1950's. These pictures come from the famous series of Rhesus monkey experiments. One was made of bare wire, and the other was covered in a soft cloth by a wiring pattern.

The baby monkeys developed a connection, but only with the cloth-covered cables, not the exposed cable. Interestingly, both kinds of substitutes supplied food via a bottle attached to the wire. It shows the scientists that the connection between the child sings and the tissue-covered replacements is not solely based on the menu. There was another thing behind the bonding.

In Harlow's experiments, children's monkeys usually clung to the cloth-covered wire "mothers," in a striking manner similar to how they clung to a real monkey mother. The experiment demonstrated convincingly that the critical ingredient in attachment formation is not food but "contact comfort." Since they are gentler to touch, the mother monkey is next best.

The findings of Harlow altered the psychoanalysis of how a mother-child bonds are formed, making physical contact from the skin to skin as important as a newborn baby's oral satisfaction during their mother's nursing or bottle feeder. Harlow's study also opposed the position of conductual theorists, who emphasized food itself as the primary strengthener of a baby's behavior.

Harlow's rhesus monkey trials powerfully revealed that grave adverse consequences occur when a human baby in the first year of his life is deprived of a strong bond with a mother. Bowlby then confirmed that hypothesis by observing children in orphanages after the Second World War.

Many lessons gleaned from such studies concerned the long-term adverse effects of this deprivation on the emotional and physical wellbeing of the monkeys. In order to compensate a missing mother, these monkeys would suck their own bodies obsessively. They stayed in corners and rocked with a distant look in their eyes. Later, they became hostile, aggressive, and rarely mated with other monks. Later experiments on other monkeys helped clarify the importance of timing for patterns of human mother-baby attachment. Monkeys who had been with their mothers for at least three months before being separated exhibited fewer behavioral abnormalities than those that had been separated from birth. At six months of age, Monkeys separated from their mothers showed no long-term negative behavior. Researchers found that the period among monkey's mothers and babies is susceptible or crucial and will last for six months. In humans, it is estimated that this critical period lasts three years, with any deprivation that is most harmful in the first year of life.

Even with mothers' and babies' instructions and parental awe, attachment is not a direct method that begins and ends in the maternity ward. Even with mothers' and babies' instincts. It is more like a dance that starts before birth and lasts for the first year of a baby. While the mother is usually the primary object of a baby's attachment, it's also likely that anyone who provides consistent and affectionate baby support-whether his father, grandparent, or adoptive parent-will have the same secure attachment to the baby. Factors that increase safe attachment include:

One baby primary, regular caregiver, rather than a series of irregular caregivers for the first six months of the year.

Synchronized feeding, sleeping, and stimulation routines with this caregiver, especially during the first few months of a baby.

The primary caregiver's constant smile, touch, and love.

They are consistently behaving with ease, warmth, and integrity in response to the baby's distress.

The responsiveness of a caregiver to the distress of a baby is necessary, but too much is counterproductive. Research shows that, when super-attention mothers immediately reacted to the humps, screams, and hiccups of their babies, their children became less secure. The lesson is that children respond poorly to smothering. This hampers their freedom and hampers the cycle of self-soothing learning.

The attachment chemistry, the biochemistry behind parent-baby bonding drives and behavior is a further perspective for attachment. Using brain scans and hormone levels and heart rate testing, researchers can now see the biochemical results when a safe fixture is produced, and when it is not carried out.

A woman's hormones prepare her for the conception, and then make her nurse and nurture a newborn baby. Her brain circuits will be rewired during pregnancy, and her senses will be adapted to the additional physical and emotional demands of caring for a newborn. Because of her evolutionary instincts in this intense preparation of chemistry for birth, she will focus almost all of her attention and energy on this small person until her survival is secured.

The hormone oxytocin is essential to people and throughout the animal kingdom for the first mother-child bonding that

happens after a baby's birth. Many of the knowledge of the role of this hormone in human relations are based on animal studies. Female rats and sheep (ewes) will take even care of young rats and lambs they have never seen before with oxytocin injections.

During human labor, the uterine contractions of a mother cause a brain to produce an oxytocin flood and the dopamine neurotransmitter. The pain-removing effects of these hormones become necessary after a woman has worked 6 to 36 hours. When the baby is born, the first minutes after conception, when the new-born baby is put to suckling, they produce a trace of euphoria as a chemical flood high.

It is well understood that a mom who has decided to adopt her baby should not touch the infant since the touch and scent of the baby release oxytocin. Most mothers also reconsider their decision to take an adoption program.

During the last month of pregnancy, the mother starts to manufacture the hormone for nutrition and lactation: prolactin. This hormone triggers her breast to secrete milk. Oxytocin helps by allowing the liquid to be released from the breasts of a woman, and by sensitizing the new mother to the touch of her child. Yes, the baby's hand or lip brush of his mother's breast activates oxytocin. While breastfeeding, oxytocin grows, and the mother is happy and comfortable, and the mother or baby bond deepens.

Chemistry of a father in recent studies, when a man becomes a parent, the brain changes too. Soon after listening to the news that he is about to be a dad, a man starts producing cortisol, a stress hormone. The amount of cortisol tends to increase four to six weeks after a man hears the news, and then decreases with the progress of the pregnancy. So, about three weeks before the kid arrives, his testosterone level falls by about 30%, making him more cooperative and less competitive.

In people, the hormone vasopressin plays a vital role in preparing a baby to be born and allowing them to make the new fatherhood emotional connections.

CHAPTER 4

HOW INSECURE ATTACHMENT AFFECTS YOUR LOVE STYLE



Are you an insecure person? Are you shy? Do you fear the thought of being in front of people or speaking to someone special for fear of being rejected? The reality is that we all have felt this way many times during our lives. Fear of rejection and social anxiety is much more normal than we think. You can see it at school when peers don't want to come in front of the class to give a presentation. You can see it during the teenage years when your friends struggle to ask someone for a date, even asking the teacher seems like they want to avoid at all costs. But why? Where does insecurity come from?

There are many reasons why a person is insecure. The environment where he was raised plays an important part. Perhaps this person was born in a family where social skills were never emphasized. Parents tend to a lot of emphasis on academic achievement, which is not bad, but sometimes, they make the mistake to put more emphasis on academic skills than social skills. The kid grows up believing that all he needs to do is study or comply with the house's rules to be completely happy. This idea is only further emphasized when the kid is rewarded with presents that only fuel his desire to be in a bubble. After all, why would he have to go out if he has everything he needs to be entertained while at the same time being supervised by his parents?

Overprotection seems to go hand in hand with what has been described. Again, it's not bad at all to protect the people you love, but can a person realistically shield someone from all harm? The outcome is going to be the same in any case. What do you think will happen when the kid finally grows up and has to face the world? Do you think he will be prepared to tackle life's problems? Or do you think he will shudder at the first problem? Do you think he will continue trying after failing? Don't you think it's more reasonable to believe that he has gotten used to his parents' help so much that he might crave for someone's help? It will be so easy for him to be attached to someone who helps him navigate life. Wasn't that the way his family raised him? He was always being watched and his goal was always to make someone else happy so it's only natural for him to find a significant other who makes him feel like "home" again.

Another reason for insecurity is the fact that people are taught by society that it's wrong for them to speak out because no one will care what they say or because of fear of being criticized or even harmed. They grow up in an environment of fear and isolation, which is the perfect breeding ground for anxiety. Ongoing ridicule is also a factor. Teased due to their physical or cultural differences, these people grow up with the idea that they are somehow inferior and nothing they say can be really taken seriously.

In the context of a relationship, people can become insecure if they have recently faced rejection or even unfaithfulness. They convince themselves they don't have any value in other's eyes, an idea that's very damaging to one's self-esteem. They ask themselves how this could ever have happened to them when everything seemed to be right. But here there's another underlying issue: perfectionism. Perfectionist people want their friendships, academic goals, relationships, to live up to their own unreasonable standards. They think that by doing so they will achieve a greater goal and be happier, but in reality, they are setting themselves up for failure and heartbreak.

When expectations aren't realized in a relationship, one can suffer tremendously. "I thought we were perfect, why this is happening to me?" is one phrase that has been voiced by people with high and unrealistic expectations. Thinking that love and companionship will solve all their problems is a beautiful idea, but it's an unrealistic one. These people will end up disappointed and might easily give up when the relationship goes encounters difficult problems. Not being able to find the

relationship they have always dreamt of makes them wonder if they can ever be loved, and so the insecurity of finding someone they can share life's moments takes hold of them.

How Insecurity Undermines a Relationship

A relationship is the union of two people who willingly accept each other's fails and learn how to put up with one another's differences. To some, this definition of a relationship might sound too cheesy, but there's much that can be found in this saying.

Accepting each other's fails to mean you understand the other person is as imperfect as you are and so he's bound to make many mistakes. There might be times when his words might hurt you and you might rightfully feel indignant or angry. But what about accepting your own failures? Is it easy for you to be modest and admit to your own mistakes?

Differences in upbringing might also show that both you and your partner have different communication styles: he might be someone who prefers discussing an argument after the water had calmed down, while you may be someone who wants to address any issue that seems to threaten the relationship. Therefore, finding a balance is key when dealing with problems in a relationship, whether they can be considered "minor" problems or "serious" ones.

Insecurity lends itself to the doubts and uncertainties you see in the relationship. He is not in the mood for talking much lately. "Must be something I did" is what you wonder. But what if he has told you already that it's because he feels much stressed out and he needs some time for himself to feel recharged. Will you happily admit that he also needs time to relax or will you continue guessing why he doesn't feel like talking to you?

Do you like double guessing your partner's intentions, no matter how good they seem to be? Do you think he's always trying to hide something from his life? Do you think he doesn't trust you anymore? It's easy to let yourself be consumed in these ideas, after all, there are many things that you just don't know about his day, you don't know what he's thinking. But what all of these questions only do is foster more insecurity in you. If you let yourself fall in the trap that the answers to these questions are worth scrutiny on your part, then you will be undermining one of the bases of any healthy relationship: trust.

If you've only dealt with the type of person that's always open to you and tells you everything, how will you be able to deal with a partner that's not secretive, but prefers to keep some things to himself?

Some measure of privacy and respect will always be appreciated in all relationships. Your partner will be grateful for showing respect and you'll be able to see that you also need some time for yourself to grow and develop as a person. Relationships other than the couple also need to be maintained to have a healthy environment where both know they are respected and interested in one another.

In the worst-case scenario, a relationship can even be destroyed if one makes a pest of himself by always checking the other's relationships and by thinking that there cannot be any uncertainties in their relationship. It's all too common to see how a relationship is brought to an end just because someone doesn't trust his partner and doesn't respect his right to make his own choices.

You don't need to become the one who will destroy the relationship. Avoiding that is possible if you learn how to manage the behaviors that lead to more insecurity and jealousy.

One manifestation of insecurity is being overly attached. There's nothing wrong with wanting to spend some time with our partner; actually, feeling connected to someone and demonstrating it is vital if you want to have a healthy and loving relationship. This becomes a problem when it's taken to an extreme. Being overly attached poses a danger to your relationship and you need to learn how to manage this.

You're in no better position if you feel you're the one commanding. In a relationship, both will suffer. The one commanding and examining every movement is just showing how insecure he or she feels. The truth of the matter is that the relationship is not healthy. Just as an unreasonable boss is never satisfied with the explanations of his employee, the one demanding constant explanation from his partner will never be quiet, rather, he'll be finding excuses not to believe any explanation.

A mother might think that she's shielding his son by maintaining him in a "bubble" where he is safe from threats, temptations, and danger. But the son will have to grow and mature. He will have to understand that life is also enjoyable outside the "bubble" where he was raised. By being overly attached to your partner, you might think you're protecting him from temptation or danger to your relationship, but you're just stifling his enjoyment of life. You're just making him wonder what it feels like being outside of your relationship. In other words, by being overly attached, you're giving him more reasons to end the relationship.

A prisoner might reassure himself by thinking about the day when his release will come. Don't let your relationship be like a prison where your partner finds reassurance only when he thinks about the day when he leaves the relationship.

You feel overwhelmed, worried about what is happening, but find it difficult to actually pay attention to what is happening. When this occurs, your partner may feel as though you are not present. When you are anxious in your relationship, you may find it difficult to express your true feelings. If you don't express what you truly feel or need, anxiety becomes more intense and your emotions may begin to run out of control if you keep bottling them in. This leads to you feeling overwhelmed and defensive.

Intimate relationships are able to reflect the best and worst of us all. They are mirrors that can fuel our struggles or calm them. Anxiety is a poison that can steal the joy and connection between two people who belong together. Perhaps you have been with your partner for a long period of time, yet you constantly wrestle with the notion that your partner doesn't live up to your expectations and will not be able to fill up that void in your heart.

Maybe you also suspect that you are a part of the problem. Perhaps you are insecure in love; you feel terribly lonely and desire a companion and lover to accompany you through the adventure and journey of life. You constantly wonder if anyone would be truly there for you if you let down your guard and are yourself. Would you be able to find comfort, reassurance, and support from them in your vulnerability? You ponder over these things at every opportunity.

CHAPTER 5

ATTACHMENT AND FRIENDSHIP

It should be evident just how deeply our attachment style can affect our romantic relationships, along with our relationships with our parents and/or children. But our attachment style can also have a significant impact on our friendships and wider social networks. This includes our interactions with friends in person, along with our behaviors on social media sites such as Facebook.

Friendship for Secure Attachment Personalities

People with a secure attachment style have a heightened emotional intelligence which allows them to communicate effectively with those around them. They are able to interpret both verbal and non-verbal cues, giving them strong empathetic skills. For this reason, people with secure attachment styles generally have no problem instigating and maintaining friendships. They make reliable friends and colleagues and flourish in group environments.

Friendship for Anxious Preoccupied Personalities

The anxious preoccupied desperate need for attention and validation within romantic relationships also shows itself among friends.

People with an anxious preoccupied attachment style often feel as though they are giving far more to their friends than they are receiving. As those of us with these tendencies can be very emotionally expressive, we like to show our friends just how much they mean to us – and can occasionally overdo it. Anxious preoccupied often see themselves as less valuable than their friends and will behave accordingly. But for secures who don't view their friend as a "lesser person" than themselves, this anxious preoccupied behavior can be difficult to understand. As a result, anxious preoccupied often have difficulty building close connections with their friends.

If you have this attachment style, you may find yourself drawn towards friends who also exhibit anxious preoccupied tendencies. This will result in a friendship in which you both go out of your way to ensure the other knows how much you mean to them. While this can work, it is often characterized by desperation and neediness, and does not lead to the healthiest of relationships.

People with this attachment style are unlikely to maintain friendship with avoidant types, as the anxious need for attention is likely to drive the other person away before the friendship has time to develop.

Friendship for Dismissive Avoidant Personalities

While the way dismissive avoidant relate to their friends is completely opposite to anxious preoccupied personalities, the result is the same: a lack of close friendships. As we have learned, dismissive avoidant prize themselves on their independence and their perceived belief that they do not need anyone else in order to prosper. This can cause them to be distant and dismissive – something their secure friends will perceive as coldness, disinterest or even rudeness.

Friendship for Fearful Avoidant Personalities

While we all have versions of ourselves that we put out into the public eye, fearful avoidant personalities are adept at presenting a carefully cultivated persona, or false self when showing themselves to the world. This façade is a defense mechanism to prevent any spontaneous display of emotion and to keep their innermost feelings hidden away.

People who consider themselves friends with a fearful avoidant personality can often find themselves surprised and hurt when distress causes the fearful avoidant's "mask" to fall away. Their friends will then discover that the true personality of the person they had believed themselves close to was little more than a lie.

As a result of this false self, the fearful avoidant often has a group of friends that has been attracted to his or her fake persona and has little idea who they really are. When their true self is revealed in times of crisis, they may find they have no one who truly understands them – or perhaps even likes them – and consequently, they have no one on whom they can really rely.

Not being able to be vulnerable with friends who are vulnerable with you puts a strain on the relationship, making close friendships a challenge for fearful avoidant. It is important for people with this attachment type to recognize that real intimacy and friendship are based on loyalty and honesty. Pretending to be something you are not – while it can be an effective defense mechanism – will leave you with few friends you can count on in times of trouble.

Tie Strength and Multiplexity

Researchers at Australia's Deakin University and the Middle East Technical University in Turkey have determined the role of attachment styles as related to our friendship groups and social networks.

Their study examines "tie strength" and "multiplexity" within their subjects' social networks.

"Tie strength" refers to how close the ties in your network are; in other words, how comfortable you feel going to your friends for love and support in times of emotional distress. It also takes into consideration how often subjects interact with those in their network.

"Multiplexity" refers to having many different roles fulfilled by the same members of a subject's network. For example, a person who is both a colleague and a fellow member of a sports team has a high level of multiplicity. Similarly, if a subject feels close enough to a work colleague to go to them for advice and support, it also shows a high level of multiplexity.

Within an Avoidant Style...

The study shows that people with avoidant attachment styles have a weaker tie strength to members of their social network. This makes sense, given the avoidant's tendencies to shy away from affection. Similarly, avoidant behavior also leads to lower multiplexity within friendships, meaning the bond an avoidant has with their friends and colleagues is weaker and less reliable. They are less likely to actively maintain ties and are more likely to actively dissolve their friendships.

Within an Anxious Attachment Style...

Those with an anxious preoccupied attachment style are also likely to see the frequent dissolution of friendship ties. However, in their case, it is likely to be instigated by their contacts, rather than by themselves. As we know, people with an anxious attachment style have a need for constant attention and validation. This behavior can be smothering, leading to their friends and contacts to step away and dissolve the friendship.

Size of Your Social Network

You may assume that the larger a person's friendship network – either on or offline – the more popular and secure they are. However, this is not always the case.

Think about the size of your own social network. If you have hundreds, or even thousands, of connections on sites such as Facebook, think about how often you connect with the majority of people in this network. In all likelihood, not very often. The sheer numbers involved usually make this far too difficult. Similarly, if you have a huge circle of friends in "real life," it can be difficult to maintain close and meaningful relationships with all of them.

Studies support this, proving that the larger the friendship network, the weaker the ties and multiplexity of those connections.

Does this mean we should cull our Facebook pages and cut down our number of friends? Not necessarily. But it is important to recognize social media connections can never take the place of real-life friendships. While it can be easier to cultivate friendships behind the safety of the computer screen, putting yourself out into the real world and facing the challenges thrown up by your attachment style is the only way to build valuable, long-lasting friendships.

What Makes a Good Friend?

Knowing what we look for in a friend can go a long way towards helping us build long-lasting friendships. It reduces the potential for conflict and drama and helps us manage any problems that may arise due to our attachment issues.

Firstly, take some time to determine what makes a good friend in your opinion. Perhaps they are those who:

Show genuine interest in you and your life

Are always there for you in times of need

Don't judge you, even when you make mistakes

Never deliberately hurt your feelings

Never put you down

You enjoy their company

Are loyal and trustworthy

You can laugh and cry with

Will tell you the truth, even when it is hard to hear

Will always listens

You feel comfortable sharing your emotions with

Ask yourself how you feel when you're around a particular person. Does spending time with them make you feel better or worse? Are you yourself when you're around this person, or do you put on a façade, uncomfortable of revealing your true self? Does this person treat you with respect? Do you feel as though this is a person you can trust? (Incidentally, these are all excellent questions to ask yourself when navigating early romantic relationships too.)

How to be a good friend

The best way of maintaining lasting friendships, of course, is to be a good friend yourself. Think back to the characteristics that you determined make a good friend, and ensure you are exhibiting these traits in your own relationships.

Here are just a few of the ways you can work towards being a good friend towards those you care about:

Listen: If a friend is sharing his or her problems with you, ensure you engage in active listening; concentrate, do your best to retain information and offer a well-thought-out response. Ask questions. Do your best to see the situation from your friend's point of view. If you don't have all the answers, don't worry. Likely, your friend is not coming to you for a solution to their problem, they just need a sympathetic ear on which to unload. This can be a particularly difficult thing to do if you suffer from an avoidant attachment style, which is characterized by a lack of empathy.

Ask What You Can Do to Help: If your friend is facing a difficult situation, don't wait for them to ask for ask help. Instead, actively ask them what they need and what you can do to help. This will lead them to reciprocate when you find yourself in a challenging situation.

Show physical affection: This can be another big challenge for those with avoidant attachment styles. But hugging your friends is a great way to show you care, and the physical contact increases the bond between you. All humans need physical contact with others in order to survive. An act as simple as a hug can prevent both you and your friend from feeling alone.

Keep in Touch: Keeping in touch with our friends can be difficult at times, especially for those of us with large friendship circles and social networks. But taking time out of your busy schedule to connect with a friend is a great way to maintain closeness and strength in the friendship. It doesn't need to be a long-winded phone call. If you are short on time, send a short text or message on social media, just to let your friend know you are thinking of them.

Share Your Feelings: Tell your friends what they mean to you. Just as in romantic relationships, your friends can't be expected to know how you feel if you have not told them. This is especially true for friends with anxious preoccupied personalities. This kind of honesty and openness goes a long way towards building lasting friendships. And for those of you who feel uncomfortable opening up and sharing your feelings, remember that the more you do it, the easier it will get.

CHAPTER 6

DATING AND INSECURE

ATTACHMENT



Do you find yourself on an endless cycle of awkward first dates and relationships that fizzle out before they've even begun? Can you see the same patterns of behavior emerging in all your relationships – both your own behavior and that of your partner? Do you find yourself always dating the same kind of men or women? Or do you constantly find yourself sabotaging relationships the moment they show any kind of promise?

If your answer to any of these questions is yes, you've likely come to realize that your attachment style is to blame. Depending on our own tendencies, we are drawn to people who exhibit particular characteristics, which explains why we can constantly end up dating people with the same damaging traits and behaviors.

So, what are we to do? Sit at home in front of the TV every night? Resign ourselves to a life of being alone? Not at all. Even for those of us with an insecure attachment style, dating doesn't need to be a struggle. It all comes down to understanding ourselves and, wherever possible, our partners.

By now, you're familiar with the traits of each attachment style and the love styles they give rise to. So, when you're next with your partner, or on a date, use this information to determine the attachment style and corresponding traits, of your partner.

We will take a look at what you can expect when dating people with each love attachment style. We will then look at all the possible attachment style combinations and some of the challenges that each coupling may face – along with methods for managing conflict and working towards building a healthy, long-lasting relationship.

Anxiety is a real challenge as well as a mental health disorder, which can lead to a lot of other problems if not properly checked. However, everyone develops anxiety from time to time, and it only becomes an issue if it is severe.

Anxiety can impact your relationships negatively, especially if you spend a great deal of time worrying and thinking about everything that could go wrong or has already gone wrong with the relationship. Here are some questions that may run through your mind when you are too anxious in a relationship:

What if they don't love me as much as I love them?

What if they're lying to me?

What if they're cheating on me?

What if I'm not good enough in the future for them?

What if they find someone else more attractive?

What if their family doesn't love me?

What if they die?

What if they bail out on me?

It is normal to have some of these thoughts, especially in a new relationship. However, when thoughts like these come to your mind frequently, it might be a sign of anxiety issues or an anxiety disorder. The intensity with which you constantly ruminate over the questions listed above and other questions that are similar determine how far gone you are into an anxiety problem. It will also determine how insecure you are in your relationship.

These anxious thoughts are manifested in diverse physical ways and present as symptoms such as shortness of breath, insomnia, and anxiety or panic attacks. You may discover that whenever you think this way, you trigger a panic attack in which your heart may begin to beat fast, a hard lump forms in your chest, and you begin to shake all over your body. These are the physiological signs that you are suffering from an anxiety disorder.

In some cases, these anxious thoughts encourage your partner to behave in ways that further stress you out and strain the relationship. This is because you are transparent enough to your partner that they can see you are very insecure. This gives them a manipulative edge over you, to twist and turn events in ways that normally should not mean a thing but will eventually hurt you and confirm one or two of the anxious beliefs you have.

For example, you are worried and anxious about being the first to initiate a conversation all the time. You become sick in your mind that your partner doesn't like you because they don't take the first step in communicating as often as you do. The anxiety builds up and gathers momentum, and you begin to believe they might never chat with you or call you up if you do not reach out first.

To address this anxiety, you decide it is a good idea to go mute on them for a while. This forces your partner to communicate with you, reaching out a few times until you feel reassured knowing they will make the effort. This evidence allows you to challenge your anxious, irrational belief that they will not reach out first. This, however, is not a healthy strategy. Dealing with the root cause of anxiety and regaining your confidence is the best way to overcome anxiety disorder and leave you with a free and joyful life.

Intimate relationships are emotionally intense. This is due to the closeness that you share with another person. Alas, that closeness makes you powerless at times and can lead to anxiety and insecurity. Anxiety is fear of the unknown, while insecurity is self-doubt and the absence of self-confidence. Most times, insecurity graduates into anxiety if not properly managed.

It is also important to note that when you worry constantly in your relationship, you develop low self-esteem and ultimately insecurity sets in. You begin to see your partner's intentions or actions in a negative light; you view your partner as intimidating or critical.

Some symptoms of intense anxiety disorder can include:

- A feeling of restlessness

- Tensed muscles

- Difficulty concentrating or remembering

- Procrastinating or having trouble making decisions

- Worry that leads to repeatedly asking for reassurance

- Inability to get enough sleep and rest

Inasmuch as relationships are very beautiful and pleasurable, they can also breed anxious thoughts and feelings. These thoughts can arise at any stage of the relationship. If you aren't in a relationship yet, the thought of meeting the right person and being in a relationship can already generate anxiety for you, which you must deal with.

Severe insecurity steals your peace and prevents you from being able to engage with your partner in a relaxed and authentic way. The resultant actions arising from insecurity may include jealousy, false accusations, snooping, lack of trust, and seeking reassurance and validation. These attributes are not conducive to a healthy relationship and can push your partner away.

Most people believe that insecurity stems from the actions or inaction of their partners. The reality is that most insecurity comes from within you. You build insecurity when you negatively compare yourself to other people and judge yourself harshly with your inner critical voice. A lot of the insecurities in your relationship are based on irrational thoughts and fears that you are not good enough and that you are not capable of making someone else happy. But these aren't true!

When you start to notice that uneasy feeling of being insecure, one thing you can do is to begin taking stock of your value. Insecurity makes you focus on something you feel is lacking within you. In most balanced relationships, each partner brings different strengths and qualities that complement each other. In order to conquer your insecurity, take stock of the value you offer to your partner. Personality and a great character are important qualities to the overall health of a relationship.

Building your self-esteem is also crucial to surmounting any insecurity you face in your relationship. It is important that you feel good about who you are on the inside in order to not constantly seek validation from someone else. You are complete within yourself and you must let your independence and self-worth shine brightly through your deeds and actions. When your well-being depends on someone else, you give them the key to your joy and you empower them. This may be quite unhealthy for your partner to bear and certainly does not work well for a relationship. One way to build your self-confidence is to silence your inner critic and focus your mind and attention on positive qualities. Look in the mirror and speak positive affirmations to yourself - looking yourself in the eye when you do this makes a greater impact than simply telling yourself in your head that you're worthy of love.

You should also be able to maintain your sense of self-identity and be able to cater to your personal well-being. If before

the relationship you were doing a great job of tending to your physical, mental, and emotional needs, this should not stop now just because you are in a relationship. You should maintain your independence and not allow yourself to turn into someone who is needy or attached. Being an independent person who has a life and identity outside of the relationship also makes you a more interesting and attractive partner. Your life must continue to move forward and make considerable progress when you are in a relationship. Being in a relationship is not the final phase of your life, and you should continue to be driven and achieve more goals, which can further endear you to your partner.

Some ways to maintain your independence include cultivating and nurturing great friendships, making time for your own friends, interests, and hobbies, maintaining financial independence, constantly improving yourself, and setting high standards for your dreams.

CHAPTER 7

HOW TO FIND YOUR PARTNER?



You may have learned it from friends or co-workers a few times. They talk about how beautiful their relationship is. They're new and new, and they're excited. Some months later, they begin to say things like, "I'm just not sure he's the one for me." They can't put their fingers on it, but for them, something doesn't work. You begin to think about your relationship. Is he the right person for you? How are you?

One of the most important issues to find someone you like is how they treat you. Are they kind, compassionate, caring, or respectful about you, do they keep the conversation on the floor, or do they stand up? Such definitions are now quite straight forward. There's a more profound way somebody's treating you. Here are some tips for searching when you start dating somebody to see if they fit you well.

Next, ensure that your relationship is consistent with your values. Most people conform to the ideals of the person they are dating. They don't know their principles, so they just try and fit what they're given. Take some time to consider the beliefs. When you love fun and speak to someone who is severe, it couldn't match well most of the time.

Secondly, make sure you know in a person what you want. Sure, you want them attractive and kind, but what else in a human do you want? Is your job something that matches what you want? For instance, you meet a great person, you start dating, and things go well. The only thing is that they always go to work. They are more out of the city than in the city. Is that something with which you are comfortable? It is essential to know the answer. When you say "I'm OK, but it's not my dream," then you might need to explain your needs. You can raise your children with a partner who has gone quite often if you continue the relationship and end up married.

Thirdly, similar interests are significant. Now, this doesn't mean that you have to join the hip, but you should enjoy joint activities. If you have different interests, one of you will still sacrifice your happiness. Think about how long you want your partner to invest. If you're going to be with somebody most of the time, you have to enjoy yourself, and vice versa.

Fourth, understand that not necessarily every person you meet is the person you want to marry. Just because someone is sweet and seems perfect for you when you begin to experience other things that do not match your standards can be exposed. It's all right to let them go and move on. Understand that every person you meet gives you valuable information. It is essential to understand that you can find a particular person one step closer. You can KNOW when you meet somebody with more details about what you want and do not want.

First, you can't understand that you can't be too picky. The above step appears to be a contradiction, but it is indeed an add-on. Nobody, not even you, is perfect. You may have many qualities in a person you want, and they have most, but not all of them. This is all right. Find those who are most important to you and keep them close to your heart and make sure your partner has these features. Let the other person want to slide.

All these steps help you to decide whether this partner is right for you. You deserve the best friendship, and there's one for everyone if you're prepared to do the internal work you need to do.

Building Healthy Relationships

Cupid bow and arrow in hand is often used as a representation of magical love. What can be more romantic than some

twist of fate bringing you together with your significant other for a happily-ever-after ending? You may be one of those hopeless romantics who believe in soulmates and “the one”, or you may be a believer in making your own destiny.

It doesn't really matter which of the two notions you subscribe to because when it comes right down to it, all healthy relationships require effort and a willingness to create the reality you want. There is no harm in being romantic or believing that there is a soulmate for everyone. However, you must be willing to do the work to create your own happily-ever-after. The honeymoon phase does not last forever and after it has passed, you will need a lot more than romance to keep your relationship healthy.

Healthy and happy relationships are built on commitment, finding freedom in that commitment and awareness. Most people think of commitment as the ball and chain that signals an end to their freedom. Actually, this assumption is quite far off the mark. In a healthy relationship, commitment signals freedom. Freedom to be yourself, freedom to be vulnerable, and the freedom to give in to your innermost desires.

If your relationship feels like a ball and chain, then you need to rethink the kind of reality you have created for yourself. Being in a relationship should make you feel like you have found the person you want to share your life with. This should free you from the anxiety of constantly dating or trying to find someone you can connect with. Unfortunately for most people, this reality is forgotten when they get into a relationship.

Ironically when it comes to relationships, those who are in them are trying to get out and those who are outside are trying to get in. This is especially common when you find yourself in a relationship where you feel trapped or like you are no longer free to be yourself. Fortunately, creating a healthy relationship is a skill that can be learned. No matter how many failed relationships you have had, there is nothing standing in the way of you having a successful relationship.

Any relationship that is worth having can be fixed if the two parties in it are willing to do the work. The awareness part of being in a healthy relationship requires that no matter what is going on in your relationship, you always try to remember why you got together in the first place.

You can get so caught up in the troubles you are experiencing that you forget that the person you are fighting with, was once the person you considered “the one”. Remember why you fell in love in the first place and resolve to work through your issues. Sometimes it is better to rebuild what you have than to keep jumping from one relationship to another hoping that the next one will be better.

Open Communication

If you want a healthy relationship, communication has to be one of the first things that you get right. By definition communication is the transfer of information, this implies letting the other person know what you are thinking or feeling. In a relationship, communication goes beyond just the words that are coming from your mouth. It defines how you connect with your partner and how you understand each other.

If you are with someone and you have no idea what they need or how they are feeling, how would it be possible for that relationship to work? It would be well near impossible because you are not on the same page. Communication affects all aspects of your relationship including intimacy. The more you are aware of each other's needs the better you will be at fulfilling them.

Overcoming Jealousy

The green-eyed monster can destroy even the strongest of relationships. It breaks down trust and creates tension in the relationship. One partner takes on an offensive role while the other becomes defensive. In this kind of dynamic, both parties are miserable, and the relationship begins to feel like a burden.

Jealousy is in most cases driven more by your insecurities than by your partner's actions or behavior. It can lead to people making rash decisions that end up causing more harm to the relationship. Lashing out, revenging and even aggression are just some of the ways in which jealousy manifests.

At some point or other we all experience jealousy. Sometimes it is founded while in others it can be as a result of an overactive imagination and fear. Whatever the case may be, jealousy becomes a problem when you start giving in to it. Learning to manage your emotions is one of the most effective ways of overcoming jealousy and its effects on your relationship.

Emotional Connection Done Right

How do you ensure that you avoid codependency and that your attachment style is positive? When you are in a relationship it is possible to get too attached and forget yourself. This happens when you make the other person the center of

your universe and neglect your own needs. This kind of over dependency damages any chance of having a healthy relationship.

On the other hand, you do not want to be emotionally unavailable. People who are afraid of deep emotional connections tend to be closed off and detached. This again makes it impossible to have a healthy relationship. The trick to healthy emotional connection is finding the fine line between becoming overly dependent and being emotionally detached. This can only happen if you cultivate healthy independence while still maintaining an emotional connection to your partner.

Trust Building Tips

Never make promises you cannot keep. No matter how much you want to please your partner avoid making promises that you cannot keep. When you break them their trust in you will start to waver.

Do what you say when you say. No matter how little or petty it seems, honor your commitments. Call when you say you will, show up when you promised to, and always stick to your word. No one likes a flaky person and trusting one is almost impossible.

Stop being a people pleaser. Be clear on where you stand on things so that your partner knows what you are feeling and thinking. Learn to say no when you cannot honor a commitment, it is better than saying yes then failing to do it.

Honesty is the best policy. Be truthful, nothing undermines trust faster than lies. Be upfront with your partner and tell them the truth no matter how difficult it is.

Own up to your mistakes. When you are constantly blame-shifting and scapegoating, it becomes difficult for anyone to trust you. When you have the courage to own up to your mistakes, it tells people that you are not just honest with them but that you are also honest with yourself.

Be consistent. Do not be so unpredictable that your partner has no idea what you would do in any given situation. People trust you more when you are consistent in your behavior and actions. It shows them that you have certain values that you operate within.

CHAPTER 8

HOW TO FEEL GOOD WITHOUT RELATIONSHIP?



Everyone's story is different. You may be a Jenny who needs just one wake up call to spur them into action or your detangling process may be more gradual.

Once you come to this realization, then your battle with codependency is halfway won. In the larger scheme of things, it is not the scars from your past that define you, rather it is the lessons you choose to take away from those scars. Do not be ashamed of your past, wear your experiences with pride and as a sign of just how far you have come.

No journey is ever completely smooth and there are a few universal truths that will help to keep you going. These truths are the tools that you need to carry with you to remind you of just where you are going, what you have freed yourself from and more importantly what you need to keep going.

The trick to real and lasting change is to do it in small and manageable doses. Do not overwhelm yourself with long lists of things you need to do or not do. Pick your struggles one at a time and take them apart one by one.

Self-Assertion

If you are a play-along to get-along kind of person then you probably do not like conflict. People who shy away from conflict or having to differ with others prefer to just accept other people's opinions even when they do not agree with them. This is especially true for codependents who are natural people-pleasers.

If you have a problem with self-assertion you will often find yourself feeling resentful and angry and not have a clue why that is happening. When you constantly suppress your needs in order to accommodate and please other people, sooner or later the frustration of not having your needs met will start to show.

This frustration will manifest itself in the form of emotional outbursts over petty issues, moodiness, and feelings of resentment toward your partner. None of these feelings are recipes for a good relationship so it turns out that play-along to get-along does not really work in the long term.

The first thing you need to understand is that there is a world of difference between compromising and ignoring your needs. In a compromise situation, you and your partner acknowledge each other's needs and agree to both compromise and meet halfway. Compromise is a healthy part of any relationship. However, when you ignore your needs it means you have not made the other party aware of your needs and you simply choose to focus on their needs. This is the classic trait of many codependents who feel the need to accommodate and people-please.

Self-assertion is being able to clearly articulate your needs and let the other person know how you feel. Being assertive is part of open communication in a relationship. It lets your partner know what you expect from them and also what they can expect from you. This kind of communication is crucial in building better relationships.

You cannot blame your partner for not meeting your needs when you have not even communicated to them what those needs are. This means that as you recover from codependence, self-assertion is one of the skills that you need to develop.

The benefits of being assertive:

It helps you to get things done

It earns you respect from the other party

It makes compromise and conflict resolution easy

It makes you less prone to anxiety and stress

Being assertive is not just better for your relationships, but it also makes you more confident. If you struggle with being self-assertive here are some simple strategies, you can use to become more assertive.

Being Your Own Best Friend

Recovering from codependency is only possible if you are able to establish healthy self-esteem and a sense of self-worth. A person with a low sense of self-worth will naturally seek to get their validation from the other people in their lives.

This is what fosters codependency habits such as enabling, caretaking and many more. If you are to escape the trap of codependency, the first place you need to look is inward. A healthy self-esteem will solve most of the insecurities and fears that lead to the development of codependency in the first place.

Fears like the fear of rejection and the fear of abandonment are all stoked by low self-esteem. To fight these fears, you need to cultivate a sense of safety and security that is tied to your own self-worth and not to other people. This will free you from the need to seek validation and approval from others.

When it comes to building self-esteem, this is pretty much an inside job that depends on your ability to change your opinion of yourself. This change is only possible if you learn to practice self-empathy and become your own best cheerleader.

Consider how you treat your friends. You compliment them, buy them gifts on their birthday, support them when they need you and help them celebrate their victories. You defend them from other people and feel protective over them. This is completely natural and healthy for a good relationship.

Here are simple tips that will help you practice self-love and being your own best friend.

Spend time doing the things you love

Make time for your passions and the things that make you truly happy. Do not feel guilty about wanting some time to yourself to do something you love.

Get rid of negative energy

Free yourself from people who are always dragging you down and stealing your joy. Be selective about who you allow into your inner circle and life. Be ruthless when it comes to safeguarding your inner peace.

Focus on the positive

Don't be your biggest critic. Focus on the things you love about yourself and accept your flaws as just a normal part of human nature. No one is perfect and constantly focusing on your weaknesses will only undermine your confidence.

Take care of your body

Stay healthy and active. A healthy body builds your confidence and self-esteem. Take time to exercise and eat well. You only get one body in this life so take care of it. Avoid over-indulging in unhealthy habits that damage your health in the long run.

Stay true to your values

Keep your values close at heart and make decisions that are in line with your core values. Your values will help you to make better choices and to avoid following trends and other people's opinions just to please others.

Saying No to Toxic Relationships

Perhaps one of the more challenging aspects of codependent tendencies is the tendency to soak up another people's distress. When you do not have sufficient boundaries to safeguard your emotions. You end up making other people's problems your own. This effectively leads you to a codependent situation where you are unable to separate yourself from the other person.

Such toxic relationships bring out the worst in you because the other person knows exactly what buttons to push to get you to toe the line. You will find yourself often doing things you would otherwise never consider doing just to keep the other person happy. This dysfunction if left unchecked becomes a self-repeating cycle that takes over your life.

Toxic relationships poison you from the inside out. In extreme cases, they may even drive you to coping mechanisms such as addictions to help you process your unresolved issues. This potential for self-harm is one of the reasons why freeing yourself from codependency requires that you eliminate any toxic relationships from your life.

Whether you are dealing with a narcissist who thrives on attention and being the center of the universe, or with more covert manipulators, the damage to your self-esteem is hard to repair. Toxic people will come in many different shapes and forms and you need to be able to identify them by their characteristics.

Here are some of the warning signs that you need to be on the lookout for if you are to identify toxic people and weed them out.

They like to control you

They like to shift blame and never take responsibility for their actions

They are overly critical and always trying to find fault

They use threats and intimidation to manipulate you.

They try to gain sympathy by playing

They are always complaining

They often use emotional abuse to make you feel worthless.

Perhaps the most toxic relationship for a codependent is one with a narcissist. Narcissists have no consideration or interest in other people's feelings or needs. When it comes to empathy and compassion, the narcissist is the polar opposite of the codependent.

Here are the classic signs that point to a narcissistic personality.

They lack empathy and never try to meet your needs

They manipulate you to get what they want

They expect you to cater to their every need and whim without question

They demand to have the best of everything

They are constantly making you feel inferior

They have a compulsive need to be the center of attention.

Knowing Which Walls to Build

When you think of walls, you immediately think of protection and safeguarding something. That is exactly what walls do in your emotional life as well. They keep the good stuff in and safeguard you from the negative. That is why you need to build walls around the things you need to keep protected.

Your values, your self-esteem, your interests, and your goals are some of the things that you need to protect at all costs. When you are in a codependent state, these pieces of you get lost in the relationship as you put all your energy into meeting the needs of the other person. In that case, you get lost in the relationship and lack any sense of self-worth or individuality.

To avoid falling into this trap, walls help you to create boundaries that set limits for yourself and the people in your life. These walls say to you and the people in your life that these are things that I will not compromise on. Retaining your values, passions, and interests is important in the journey of recovery from codependency.

Tips for building better boundaries

Identify your limits

Identify what you want to protect and where essentially your limits are. Decide what you are willing to compromise on and what a deal-breaker is for you. You can base these decisions on your values and the things that are important to you.

Be assertive

Communicate your boundaries clearly and let the other person know what you expect from them and what they can expect from you. That way both parties are fully aware of what they are getting into and are fully prepared for it.

Cultivate self-awareness

The only way to set good boundaries is to understand yourself first. When you appreciate what your needs are, you can set reasonable boundaries that will help you meet your needs.

Consider your unresolved issues

Only you can know where your triggers and weaknesses are. Set boundaries that will help you cope with these weaknesses and make it easy for you to escape the traps that made you codependent in the first place.

Prioritize your needs

Boundaries should be about ensuring that whichever relationship you are getting into, your needs are being met. This means that your primary consideration when setting limits should be your needs and what you want from the relationship.

CHAPTER 9

DEALING WITH INSECURE

ATTACHMENT ISSUES



Insecurities come from the past. Each time your insecurity is triggered, you are reliving past events that are holding you back. It's time to move forward and make peace with the past in order to live a happy, fulfilled life with your loved one. The path to achieve a healthy relationship is not an easy one, and it will take time, effort and persistence. Understanding all the aspects about your insecurity is an important part of moving forward. Without understanding, you wouldn't be able to make the first steps and invest effort in getting better. Bringing your insecurities to your awareness is already doing wonders, if nothing else, then in motivating you to fight them. Insecurities come as subconscious fears, parts of our defensive mechanisms, tricks and traps of our mind that are holding us back. It is hard to be actively aware, especially in stressful situations and in those first moments when insecurity is triggered. But now you can be aware that it is your inner critical voice speaking; it is not the real you. It's a distorted perception of yourself that is playing with your emotions, using your insecurities to deepen the fear and defend you from being hurt. These defensive mechanisms were useful when we were infants and children. They got stuck with us in adulthood, but now they are bringing more harm than help, and it's time to overcome them.

Learn to Accept

What you've been doing wrong thus far is that you put your effort into controlling your core belief. While doing so, you created new pains that pushed you in behaviors that are harming your relationship. You might have isolated yourself, felt uncontrollable anger, or tried to control others. Your efforts to control the uncontrollable pain were hurting you more and more. It's time to consider changing your tactics. Instead of fighting, it is much healthier to allow yourself to feel all the negative emotions that come when your core belief is triggered. It is time to stop fighting and accept defeat in order to be able to transform. It is hard to accept the defeat, and even harder to understand that you need to feel the pain. But if you do this, you will also feel relieved because you won't have to put all the emotional effort needed when battling an enemy, you can't defeat. All the useless struggles you went through trying to control your core belief will go away. The pain will remain, but now that you don't have to fight it, you can listen to it and you might learn something from it.

Live by Your Values

As we all have imprinted core beliefs, insecurities, we also have imprinted values, characteristics we found useful and that make us happy. These are imprinted on us by our parents, society, and the culture we live in. They are based on morals, personal, and by the society where we grew up. Values vary in different parts of the world, and they can seem pretty personal. It is important to recognize the values you have so you can consciously decide to live by them. Here is a short list of values: Duty, fun, commitment, confidence, affection, clarity, enthusiasm, honor, courage, family, creativity, imagination, freedom, pleasure, loyalty, teamwork, truth, virtue, openness, security, sexuality, wisdom, peace.

Emotional intelligence is much more than a set of approaches and strategies that serve to better identify and manage our own emotions. Above all, we are talking about gaining a true emotional awareness with which to build stronger, more respectful relationships, and being a power key with which we feel safer, more successful, and happier.

Well, actually long before Goleman published his famous book "Emotional Intelligence" in 1995, this term had already appeared in the scientific world at the hands of Michael Beldoch in 1964 and in several articles. They spoke of communication and emotional sensitivity, their implications, and how they determine our relationships and personality. Since then, the theme has advanced remarkably, giving rise to different approaches and criticisms.

There are many experts who do not see scientific rigor in the subject, who do not accept the idea that emotional intelligence is "another" type of intelligence, but rather a domain of it, a skill. However, the implication that this psychological, social and motivational perspective has on our daily lives goes beyond the possible gaps that may or may not exist in Daniel Goleman's theory.

Emotional intelligence improves our quality of life, interpersonal relationships, our own perception, and even our professional competence. In addition, it is an approach that should structure most school curriculum areas to educate more competent, safe and happy people.

The importance of applying this approach and this emotional awareness is key to improving our own personal and social reality. Let's see why.

Emotional intelligence, the key to a more fulfilling life

Already in childhood, many of us were guided along the path of emotional restraint. Almost unknowingly, our parents and educators advised us not to cry, "You are already a big child," "If you are angry, hang on," or that common phrase "you take everything very seriously."

The scarce sensitivity to one's own or others' emotional world still determines many scenarios that we go through in our daily lives. In the family context, this persecution to camouflage emotions is still very present, not to mention our own work, where the hierarchical organizations led by leaders continue to triumph, aiming to achieve immediate goals and creating an oppressive and stressful professional climate.

Goleman points out that emotional intelligence is present in any relationship, and that, in turn, has a fundamental goal: to offer us a life of more fulfillment.

Reasons Why Emotionally Smart People Are Happier

Think for a moment of Emotional Intelligence as an antenna. An antenna with double pickup: indoor and outdoor. Thanks to her we learn to know each other better, to understand the ball of our emotions and, in turn, to understand that of others.

Thanks to emotional intelligence we are more aware of ourselves.

We deal better with our own emotional universes.

We develop greater emotional and cognitive empathy.

We are more committed to ourselves.

We build greater social awareness.

Emotional Intelligence Skills at Work

The work paradigm is changing. Realities as close as the possibility of more automated work or performed by machines or robots lead experts in this area to alert us of something very feasible: in the future technical knowledge will not be valued, but personal skills will be prioritized.

Therefore, skills such as creativity, critical thinking, ingenuity, and emotional intelligence are key to a more automated professional world. A field in which professionals need to be good that until now was not very considered.

Emotional intelligence as "fuel" in children's education

Emotional intelligence is a key power with which to develop in children their ability to build more positive relationships with their families and peers, to develop a more balanced view of life, and to achieve good academic potential in turn in school. In the end, being able to manage and understand one's emotional world means having an exceptional channel for learning, attention, memory, to control frustration...

Reasons Why Emotionally Focused Therapy Works So Effectively to Restore the Love and Connection in Your Relationship
EFT addresses universal attachment needs

We now realize that the need for attachment is universal and works at all ages. Indeed, recent research shows that relationships of adult attachment have the same function of survival as the parent-child bond—providing a safe person to contact, comfort and reassurance in order to meet the challenges of life and take risks necessary for personal growth.

EFT gets right to the heart of the conflict

Conflict and disconnection between partners are the number one reason people seek advice. Conflicts over jealousy, sex,

finance, parenting, in-laws or other issues are not just about the specific content about which you argue. Such challenges are about your partner not being noticed, understood and respected at their heart.

There is no question that the latest neuroscience research indicates that we all need our partners to be open, sensitive and emotionally engaged with us. When the most important person in our life is not present or our need to feel near and protected does not respond, we feel distressed and often get angry, anxious, afraid, distant or numb. Regardless of the content, the underlying truth is that we all need assurance that we are cared for and that when we need them, our partner will be there for us.

EFT heals what matters

We all need to ask in our close relationships, "WHEN I NEED YOU THERE FOR ME?" EFT was designed to help you fix the deep hurts, disrespect, losses that couples experience. Pleas for affection, acceptance, encouragement, security and comfort are just under harsh words and angry voices. Over time, you will start hearing and understanding each other with encouragement and respond effectively to each other in a safe and loving manner.

EFT builds security

Emotionally Focused Therapy's primary task is to help you and your partner become the safe haven and stable foundation for each other. We will help you understand and improve the way you and your partner interact, feel close to each other, and experience each other in a more loving way. The effect is a more constructive pattern that fosters affection, confidence, and attachment as you change your negative patterns of communication.

EFT fosters effective communication.

After alteration of the destructive pattern, each of you starts to calm down and feel comfortable with the other. Without so much of the past defensiveness, each of you will be better able to send clearer messages to each other, feel free to speak from the heart, consider the viewpoint of each other, and really solve the conflict.

EFT is based on extensive research

Emotionally Focused Therapy (EFT) is a pair therapy research-based approach founded by Drs. Susan and Les Greenberg Johnson. It is based on attachment theory and extensive research in neuroscience about the innate need of humans to feel attached and comforted by their significant others. The techniques used in EFT to mend and improve relationships between couples and families are built through ongoing research on approaches and processes that most effectively restore faith in relationships and reinforce the intrinsic bond of connection at the heart of all successful relationships of love.

EFT produces results that last

Even after the completion of counseling, research shows that most people are more capable of communicating with effectiveness and affection. Also, when they occur, you will be better able to work together, solve problems, and repair relationship conflicts. You will build a true partnership and appreciate the continuing friendship, warmth, passion, and love of a relationship that is firmly attached to you.

CHAPTER 10

THE NEW SKILLS YOU NEED TO LEARN



Communication skills in a love relationship

In the face of problems that may arise from conflicts in a love relationship, the good communicative ability is perhaps the best antidote for giving a joint and agreed solution. On the other hand, the best ingredients for cooking this solution are respect, understanding, and kindness to the other person.

Besides, it is essential to learn to communicate appropriately, as we sometimes say things out of time or at the least convenient time. This sometimes makes our treatment of the other person inappropriate.

Another problem happens when we try to guess the other person's thoughts or feelings, as we often make mistakes in the conclusions we draw. Besides, we tend to generalize - "You always do the same thing," "Never listen to me," "You're a grandpa," rather than specifying what we like and what not clearly. But not only that, it is good that the nonverbal conduct coincides with what we are talking about and not contradictory.

What aspects can we improve when we communicate in a love relationship?

Regarding this nonverbal conduct, some aspects need to be considered. Firstly, in interpersonal communication, it is important to maintain eye contact, as well as to adapt facial expression to the situation and what we are transmitting. It is good that body posture represents attention toward the other person. And finally, it is recommended that both the volume and tone of voice be quiet and smooth.

Spontaneity: Be spontaneous, smile and don't be afraid to laugh at what you find funny or not. Have freedom with your love, as if it were just with you. Don't get caught up in the doubts and uncertainties that surround your mind. Be you in any situation without being ashamed of the wonderful person you are.

Don't expect to suffer, don't create monsters in your head, don't choose to live under fear. If he doesn't call, wait the next day without anxiety. Living a relationship expecting to suffer is long-term suicide. Let freedom strengthen this relationship.

Don't make up fights for anything. Think carefully about whether this or that is worth fighting for. Ponder and always, always, analyze before you explode. When you fail and feel you have hit the ball, apologize. It's beautiful to apologize.

Put yourself in the other's shoes. Imagine if it were with you the discussion situation, how would you react? What words would you use to explain yourself? How would you handle all this? Once you have this insight, you are ready to resolve this conflict.

Don't fill up with messages, but send a message from time to time, saying you miss it. I wish he or she were here right now to see your face swollen from the dentist's anesthesia. Finally, connect with your love and your partner's love.

Surprises and mysteries are the great aphrodisiacs of the relationship, they keep that flame alive that makes a life for two so delicious. So, create moments. Schedule a surprise trip. Make a romantic dinner. Buy a gift and play clues.

Cultivate habits together. Whether it's taking a walk or watching a movie over the weekend. Create and cultivate a habit that is done together. This will create harmony and bring complicity. It will be your moment, and nobody comes in, nobody leaves.

Don't take everything so seriously, laugh at life and life together. Did that quarrel last Saturday continue to this day? Raise the white flag with a lot of humor.

Be more tolerant of each other's mistakes. We are human beings, and everyone is wrong. Don't want to put an end to every blunder that happens. Evaluate the conditions and see what really suits you; If it really is unbearable, then it is better that it comes to an end, but if it is silly mistakes, forgive.

Don't cancel yourself out for your love. Have your privacy, your date with friends, your time to be alone or alone. You, even though you are in the same boat, have independent lives and that life must remain unique for the union to strengthen. No one can stand to be a rut from anyone for a long time, because we all have problems, sadness, reasons that reason does not know, finally, everyone has a life. Do not invent crutches, walk with your own legs.

Practice unconditional acceptance

Occasionally, we secretly want the other person to change to suit our wishes or standards. That is, we somehow want it to be different than it is. The problem is that this attitude can lead us to feel a lot of frustration, since the other will not always act as we expect, in fact, if he did, he would stop being himself.

Learning to love the other as it is, accepting their way of being is essential if we want to maintain a relationship. Of course, this does not mean that we have to accept disrespectful behaviors or generate suffering. There are impassable limits.

Now, it is important that we keep in mind that the other person acts in the best way he knows based on his experience - except for toxic and abusive relationships. As a rule, most of us do not act with bad intentions. Therefore, it is best to try to understand and talk about what we feel uncomfortable with.

Having this in mind helps to nurture an attitude of kindness towards the other, even in the most complicated moments.
Learn to be with yourself

When the indifference towards the couple has ended the relationship, many wonders: what now? Some people are inclined to look for another person, that is, they feel the need to fill that void by initiating another relationship. Others prefer to be alone for a while. However, when a relationship ends, the best option is to learn - to learn or to reappear - to be with ourselves. In this way, we will avoid falling into another relationship by dependence.

There are a large number of people unable to lead a life without someone by their side. However romantic it may seem, what lies behind this generated need is a high factor of emotional dependence.

Many are terrified of being with themselves, having no one to hug, listening to their thoughts or identifying what they want and don't want. There is an inner emptiness that they intend to fill with external affection. In this way it is very difficult to wait for a person who really fits, thus condemning the new relationship to an upcoming end.

Learn to be alone

Life is prettier with love, but it comes healthy when we feel good about ourselves. Therefore, to eliminate emotional dependence, it is necessary to learn to be alone. Enjoy yourselves. Understand us, understand us. Delve into how we are, what we want and whatnot.

When one loves oneself and does not need others, it is when one is prepared to love in a healthy way.

We would all like to have an ideal partner, people to love. But one thing is "need" and another very different "desire." When we need it doesn't work? When we have to have someone by our side to feel good, it is very likely that the relationship does not develop in a healthy way.

One must learn to enjoy life without a partner. There are countless things to do, such as discovering and developing our skills, carving our future, dedicating time to hobbies, making friends with good people, traveling, enjoying little things. And above all take care and love as we deserve.

Learn to deactivate the ego

We need to understand that the ego is a way of "disconnecting" completely from the axes that move conscious love, the mature love that is offered in freedom and fullness to the other to form a couple, to have a common project always respecting the personal growth of each one.

If your partner is a skilled artisan of "selfishness" set limits from the beginning and make it very clear that love is not to judge, control, or even fill in the gaps and insecurities of your own through manipulation. To want is not to offer burdens, but inner growth. Fullness.

We need to begin to enunciate to do things as our ego wants and enjoy as they happen. It is then that our true awareness of love will wake up, that which stops fighting to give way to the spontaneity of everyday life, to freedom where there are no attachments and where each one is the owner of himself, and in turn, part of a common project.

Is it possible to change the attachment pattern we learn in childhood?

We could define attachment as a bond created between two people that makes them want to stay together in space and time. This union is created in the first months of life with the primary caregiver and governs the kind of relationship that will guide us in future relationships with emotional involvement that we will establish. However, is it possible to change the attachment pattern set in childhood?

Psychoanalyst John Bowlby has devoted himself to the study of attachment and has established that the process begins shortly after birth, but it is not until about eight months that the first attachment bond between the baby and the primary caregiver can be considered.

Unsafe preventive attachment: The baby has learned that the power he has to produce reactions in the people around him is very limited. Thus, the most common is that it is not very expressive.

Insecure-ambivalent-resistant attachment: The child has had crying episodes in which he has been comforted and others in which he has not received the same attention. It is unclear the stereotype of the attachment, sometimes yes sometimes no, which creates uncertainty in facing the world. She feels she has the power to produce an effect on others, but she also "understands" that effect is unpredictable.

The attachment makes us create a first image of what surrounds us, what we internalize very deeply. Unless we can learn other patterns later, we understand that this is the way we relate to the people we love.

CHAPTER 11

CHANGE YOUR BEHAVIOR



The success of a relationship is dependent upon the willingness of the partners to equally put in the effort. When it's only one person that seems to get it right it cannot work, because they eventually become frustrated.

Being in a relationship with someone that struggles with insecure attachment issues can be problematic because they have poor attitude and suspicion; and these two factors are unforgiving agents of ruin. The following are some of the ways that their poor attitude and suspicion comes out.

You can't change your emotions that are product of your insecurities, but you can change the way you behave to answer those emotions and core beliefs. There are two things you need to do so you can manage to change your behavior successfully: be aware of your current behavior and how it influences your relationship and do the opposite.

Become Aware of your Behavior

Our behaviors that come from insecurities are nothing more than patterns that we must break in order to change the influence of insecurity on our relationship. If you look back on your past behaviors, you will get the best possible chance to change them in future. Don't be ashamed of your past behaviors, and don't think of them as something bad. They were unhelpful, for sure, and that is the only term we need to be aware of. Now we want to change our behaviors to helpful.

Think back to what situations trigger your insecurities. Do you have a response to those situations that repeat themselves? Maybe it is a combination of responses. If you have abandonment insecurities, are you prone to withdraw from your partner but suddenly become clingy and dependent? Do you notice such pattern in your behavior? Feel free to write down your insecurities, what triggers them and how you behave in response to them. Notice the pattern and become aware of it. Don't judge your past behaviors, true they might not be pleasant, but behaviors are coping mechanisms meant to deal with emotional pain. They didn't work, but they were the only mechanisms you had. Now you will learn new ones, the helpful ones, and you will see your relationship become more enjoyable for both you and your partner.

To better understand your past behaviors, try to remember how your partner responded to them. Think how your partner behaved immediately after your insecurity triggered and what his long-term response was. Did he get angry? Was he sad? Did he stop calling you? The insecurities are making you behave negatively, and your partner has no other choice than to respond negatively. This is due to something that's popularly called vibes. It is your behavior that projects onto your partner. Your emotions are transferred onto him, and he doesn't have control over his emotions and behaviors. Seeing you in such negative light leaves him without options. He might be coping with his own insecurities, and to help you need to become the image of calmness, security and peace that you want to see in your relationship.

It is very difficult to change unhelpful behaviors because they become habits, and as any habits it is easy to go back to them. But now that you observed how those behaviors influence your partner and your relationship, you are aware that you need to change them. Focus on your values and the change will be much easier. Your values are what comes naturally to you. They are the morality that guides you through life. They are not something you think about; you feel them as part of you. You need to learn how to behave according to your values, not your emotions.

Do the Opposite

It will take a lot of energy to resist old habits and change your behavior to helpful ones, but as you practice and access new adopted behaviors, it will become easier. At one point, it will come without effort, almost automatically and naturally. This will make you feel better about yourself; it will be a great accomplishment. Instead of feeling unworthy, you will start to boost your self-esteem. Even your partner will recognize your effort and will reward you with even more love.

, let's look at some usual responses and behaviors you might have.

For example, you have abandonment insecurity and emotional deprivation core belief. You are dating your partner and you really like him. A situation happens at work that triggers your insecurities and you need reassurance; it's only natural to seek it from your partner. You call him, but he doesn't answer. You call him three more times to no avail. You start thinking that he doesn't like you as much as you like him; he is going to leave you, otherwise he would answer the phone. You start feeling anxious, depressed and scared, and you are already hurting. You have a strong urge to find out why isn't he answering right away, and you keep calling. He finally answers the phone; he is in panic and asks what's wrong. You explain it's nothing, just your job and your need to hear his voice. He then informs you that he was in the middle of meeting with an important client and your constant calling disrupted it. He hangs up. You feel bad about the situation and text him asking for forgiveness and say you panicked, and it is not your usual behavior. But it is; it is the behavior pattern you have when you feel insecure. Soon enough, your partner will have enough and will want out of the relationship.

You seek unnecessary communication.

You need reassurance.

You are clingy.

You are in need for certainty.

This would be helpful, opposite behavior:

Do not initiate communication and if you must, be sure you are not intruding on your partner's privacy.

Instead, pick up a distracting behavior. It can involve hobby, a quick exercise or simply organize your work desk.

Instead of thinking about yourself, do something for a colleague, volunteer, or walk a neighbor's dog. Be helpful to others, shift focus from yourself to someone else.

Be aware of situations that trigger your insecurity. Stay in the present and don't give into the traps of our minds. Meditate or have a relaxing cup of tea while contemplating a present experience. Remember, you have insecurities coming from your different core beliefs. Your situation might be different, but the steps you need to take to overcome it are the same as shown in the example. Be sure to use your personal values as guidance for helpful behaviors. This way, you won't feel like you are going against your nature and it will be easier to master newly adopted behaviors.

We humans continually adapt as social, mental, and physical beings. Just as our bodies reflect things like climate, food, and exercise, our spirits and psyches reflect our paths.

On the one hand, this adaptive ability allows us to manage future situations more effectively. On the other side, it can keep us from taking on new opportunities. Our past experiences determine how we behave rather than see a person or circumstance as something different. Our memory ends with us, rather than the other way around. Maybe the best example is trust?

If a friend betrays us, when a business partner switches us quickly, when a lover becomes unfaithful, our willingness to trust is shattered. The next time a friend makes a vow, a business partner proposes, or a lover asks us where they are, the error is assumed by our unconscious minds.

Even if we believe that everything is ok, our perception is clouded by the reminders of the past. Worse still, bearing this emotional residue will keep us in friendship, company, or relationship from creating healthy new connections.

So how can we once again learn to trust? Can the words of the past be silenced and genuinely open to others? The solutions are more accessible than you could imagine. You can see people and situations through a more straightforward lens through regular practice and adherence to a few basic principles.

You have all the courage and strength to go through any challenges that occur in your life. You have a vast reserve of energy that you may not be sure of. You have the wisdom to know what you have to do in the situation in which you live. You can and can trust yourself to deal with what needs to be done. Confidence, confidence, and moving through every condition, one step at a time, will give you the trust and strength to move forward in your life.

If trouble or challenge comes in your path, when you are troubled and anxious, this is the time to put your trust in the Spirit, the Divine Presence, and to realize that now you can relax knowing that God is in charge of it. You should trust and trust that everything will be all right.

At the right time and in the perfect way, our success always comes to us. Our life keeps rising in perfect timing. As we learn to believe and trust in spiritual peace, we find that we can let go and allow our lives to work for us. We are much more valued than we would have expected. God is Divine Wisdom and resides in each one of us. We always have that wisdom at our fingertips. Know now that God wants for us everything that is good and perfect.

Be mindful that the critical step in learning to trust is to look carefully and carefully at your own reactions. You don't have to criticize yourself or try to change your behavior. Only listen. What are the things you have had in the past? If you experience mistrust, where does it come from specifically? Once past feelings surface, you will have a better understanding of why trust is hard for you. This perspective is going to inspire change.

Trust yourself. A great deal of mistrust of others is the incapacity to trust others. The subconscious minds assume responsibility when someone harms or betrays us. I was stupid enough to believe them. It's my fault. "While it's true that we

co-create our world, the reality is that many things are beyond our control. Forgiving and believing in our actions is a fundamental aspect of maintaining faith in others. Simple statements are a high starting point. In a reflective position, think, or say to yourself: "I trust in myself. I trust in my ability to make the right decisions. I trust in the world to lead me to where I need to go." Repeat such statements as often as possible using whatever terms and strategies.

Find your natural state. We trust life entirely in our hearts. We know that we're on the right path for us already. Yet our mental and spiritual powers don't always share this feeling. Restore faith is a matter of linking our hearts and opening up in us the root of love. We instinctively want to feel satisfied, secure, and willing to trust others, whether in the bedroom or the boardroom. It may take compassion, validation, and good old-fashioned hard work, but it's really invaluable to be able to trust again.

CHAPTER 12

HOW TO HEAL YOUR ATTACHMENT WOUNDS?



A home health agency can help you to cure your wounds and live a healthier and more complete life. Home health is an ideal treatment option, as many bacteria or viruses are less in the home than in a hospital or other facilities that contain a large number of sick and infected people.

Serious implications may occur if injuries are neglected or do not cure, such as:

The tissue around the wound may die (necrosis) that could lead to foot, leg, or arm amputations. The wound could become a septic infection that could cause death.

The following services can be provided to you by Patricia and other medical personnel:

Diet education and care. Through education, a WOC baby will allow patients to take part in their responsibility and be confident in their ability to continue their daily lives. For instance, a nurse can advise on nutrition to heal your wounds. Did you know that extra protein helps, and zinc prevents healing wounds? A nurse may explain why smoking doesn't enter the wound for cleaning because smoking clamps down vascular flow.

A home health agency can clean and treat your wound regularly to help you heal it.

Wound care. This may involve establishing an evidence-based topical treatment program, such as wound VAC or sharp conservative debridement if ordered and indicated. The hypertrophic tissue and closed wound edges of cauterization are also sometimes ordered and indicated.

If appropriate, diabetic foot and nail care. If you have diabetes, you may find that wounds on your body heal more slowly. Some home health agencies specialize in wound treatment. This is one of the reasons. They can evaluate the sensor, vascular, and skin or nail status and clip the cords and pare-corns to prevent injury.

Management of ostomy, if appropriate. An ostomy refers to the operating opening in the body to remove body waste. A nurse can help you establish an efficient pouching system and educate you on yourself and your lifestyle. They can provide rehabilitative and supportive counseling and treat peristomal problems if appropriate.

Fistula management, percutaneous tube control, and incontinence management (medical procedures where access to internal organs or other tissues is made by needle-puncture).

One case manager tells this rewarding story of how one of her patients has been helped to manage her wound.

After Mary, a 70-year-old woman, had a back operation, she went to a trained center to heal.

Unfortunately, the wound opened in her back, and she developed a fever. The wound was as deep in her back as a palm. She returned for immediate treatment to the hospital. Then Mary was sent off with a home health prescription and VAC wound care.

The nurse worked with Mary, cleaned the wound, and taught her about her diet. Since Mary could not see the burn, the nurse showed her pictures to see improvement in healing.

The wound was healed within three months. Mary exercised and led a healthy normal life.

Chronic wounded people often don't understand why they don't heal their wounds. A health care provider will work with

your doctor to determine why your injury may not cure you and create a customized care plan for you.

Heal Your Wounds, Lower Your Armor, Show Your Light If we have our 'armor' up and are mindful of our 'hurts,' we cannot quickly, easily, or 'show our light.'

There are two essential doors to pass before we can understand our intellectual independence of mind, emotion, and spirit.

The first door is against the grain of our human nature-to be sufficiently weak to lower the armor of our self-productivity. In a situation that is exposed to the elements of a critical environment, it is not surprising that we have first produced the shield.

But we must try to understand what we are covering before we go forward.

Each of us, if we remove the protective armor, is gravely injured. The truth of the wounded self The door to the true self is easily locked and fortified. No matter how amazing our parents were, they failed in their humanity. Likewise, it did not protect us from the hurts that cut our hearts sinews despite the quality of our education.

Every one of us has our past unresolved hurts and disappointments.

Over the true self of complete faith, this wounded self turns fun into harsh gravity and easiness into hardship. This is the armored self that protects us.

However, the armored self is not always an ally. It often works to our interests, because it is fueled by fear.

To become more of the person, we are deep within-the one who lives free of spirit-we must cope with or at least be honest about our wounded ness.

We can't do this with our armor, so we have to remove it. But it must be said that it can be even more harmful if our wounded self is exposed to rolling attacks without the right preparations.

Because of this, we are blessed to build up stocks of courage on loans to help.

Imagining an eagle soaring in the sky, wholly allowed in his flight, without the weakest fear and no fear, we look at ourselves-yes, each of us at our best.

We know our glimpses from time to time, trust is high, and the world is rolling in our bowls. In our little demographic, we are the person of the moment; we are the "world-beaters."

However, we're not like this so often. We're far less too many times.

Each of us is a divine being with the light potentials that the whole universe will captivate. But first, our armed selves and wounded doors have to be opened.

It is not until we prepare with courage, the wounded self, and then turn the armor into the truth that we reveal our true selves to the opportunities of development that prevail every day.

We need healing and a healer-distributed to the need of God's Spirit. This facilitates the decrease of our armor and our recognition of our wound, which leads to irrefutable light that flashes through the darkness of fear.

How to Heal Your Child Wounded?

When you permit your wounded children to live, you have a damaged or blocked archetypal pattern. The injured infant makes reference to the broken emotional patterns of stressful experiences or events of childhood. You continue to experience the same design of negative experiences repeatedly as adult. In partnerships or at work, it is impossible to achieve success.

You confront the archetypal power in your psyche by healing. You challenge your inner child's voice instead of stifling it. Since you cannot turn the clock back, you take a number of symbolic gestures to show your child's love and appreciation.

Here are some steps to cure your wounded child:

Understand the programming of Your Childhood. Any distorted self-images can be found in your childhood stories. Actually, your perception and relationship with others are greatly influenced by what happened in your youth. Do you need a picture?

The training of children is primarily influenced by caregivers. As you were young, your caregivers, like your parents, represented the world to you. You look at them as examples of behavior. You then form relationships based on what you learn from your parents and observe them. Your parents learn from their parents in turn. So, you have built up layers of convictions, patterns, and behavior from one generation to the next.

Recognize Life patterns repeated. At first glance, your experiences now may not look like those in your past that has traumatized you. Negative patterns, however, ultimately have the same emotional pain capacity. You must be able to recognize them in their different forms.

For example, a history of sexual abuse can result in our own children being abused by emotion. Of abandonment years ago, rejection has a root cause. Anorexia, obesity, or depression can be traced to our younger parents' negative self-images.

Not many of us are brave enough to succeed in their childhood trauma. Instead, most of us are carrying our negative baggage. Every aspect of our lives shows the same patterns, whether with oneself, at home, or outside.

Recognize the pain. Your wounded child's needs have been stifled for the longest time. Healing the injured child first allows you to recognize the trauma and damage you have endured fully. You understand that you are motivated to take many of your decisions, behaviors, and convictions because you had to avoid pain. It is essential to know that much of it is based on fear and, therefore, does not serve you in your highest good.

Self-judgment refrain. Neither do you judge yourself harshly? You realize that your childhood programming has helped you cope and navigate a confusing time in your growing years with your behavior, attitudes, and beliefs. Then you were a child. You had to endure the idea that the world wasn't very healthy.

Embrace the wounded child. The wounded child. Using the injured child is an act of self-love. When you think about it, you realize you were forced to grow up too fast. Somehow, you have to leave the baby behind so you can cope with the speed. The kid you left behind never had the opportunity to play or be alive.

When things cannot be changed again, you heal your injured child by making a symbolic gesture. You are now visualizing the acceptance and love of your wounded child. You also thunder that you will not ignore your injured child's needs any longer.

Practice bravery. The idea of letting go of your childhood story may initially scare you. You have been connecting with your account for so long that you believe that without you will be lost. You feel a just rage at your parents, your family, or your friends for the person you are now. You have someone to blame or something for your dysfunctional self.

Okay, you have to realize that your ego must stick to a shape, a plot. Its fact, the childhood story is a collection of ideas from the past. You can't hope to build a life of dignity unless you first release your allegiance to an old script. You must stop feeding a mentality that is "poor me." You must be bold if you want to move forward.

Forgive Fully. Forgive Fully. You must forgive with all your hands. It's not only about redemption for oneself. You forgive everyone who contributed to the situation in which you now find yourself. Taking one or two steps back, you can see that your parents have also been influenced by their own children's experiences. We have inflicted unwittingly on you what we suffered as adolescents.

When you find it challenging to practice full redemption, ask yourself if you want the mental slavery to be safe. Mental slavery prevents you from constructing your worthy life. You can unstick yourself by taking control of your life from now on-the wounded boy.

CONCLUSION

Were you thrilled to see that you are not the only person dealing with the feeling of insecurity? “Why would that make anyone thrilled?” you might ask. Well, the answer is simple: you’re not alone. Never feel like you have to walk this world all by yourself without someone to turn to. In this book, we have seen how you can make the best out of all the relationships that you have and how to avoid behaviors that might not help grow your relationships. Whether the person you turn to is a family member, a friend, or your partner, you’ll be ready to leave your insecurities aside and be open to them.

Of course, being insecure in love has its challenges. Even your partner might not understand at times why you do certain things. But this doesn’t mean that the obstacles are insurmountable. You can unlearn bad and harmful patterns of behavior and acquire new ones that will improve your relationship. Your partner will be very happy to see how much you changed. What is more, that change for the better shows how much you love yourself and him. Your love on display will certainly impress your partner.

You have seen how frank communication is necessary for a relationship to flourish and at the same time how you need to give your partner a measure of privacy. Find a balance between these two. Continue talking to your partner about your feelings, voice your opinions and thoughts. Don’t forget that your partner also has a voice and so he will also convey his own ideas and opinions. When confronted with disagreements, treat him kindly and avoid assuming your partner has hidden motives. He understands that he also makes mistakes and is trying to improve like you are right now.

Learn to let go of the past. Focus on the present and on what lies ahead for the relationship. Realize that your partner is your greatest confidant. Cherish the moments you spend with him and you’ll have a great treasure of memories to contemplate in the future.

Safety in a relationship is not to look back at what it was in nostalgia or to what it might be but to live and accept the current relationship, as it now is.

Jealousy will ruin your relationships absolutely. From where does it come, and what can you do? Relationships have four options: none of you is jealous of your partner, but your partner is not envy, your partner is jealous, but you are not, or you are both envious. The first example does not stress the relationship, while the last three are stressful.

You are jealous, and your partner isn’t: if you are jealous and you don’t feel jealous, and you don’t know that you cannot trust the one you love. You doubt his or her actions and blame him or her, either openly or in your own head. You have no confidence and offer very little, if any, privacy to your partner.

Your partner has faith in you. He or she won’t bombard you with ten thousand questions about who you were and where you were. This is possibly perceived as evidence of how little he or she cares for you when the opposite is exact, in fact.

Your partner is jealous, but you aren’t your partner nuts! He or she’s going to smother you. You love your partner, but you can’t breathe. He or she needs to be with you regularly, asks you questions about who you are with, and what you are doing, may want to check your cell phone and e-mail to see who you interact with, and does not necessarily trust her.

The first thing you have to remember is you can never change your partner. Many couples think that if they marry together, the jealous partner will lose his fear. This vulnerability follows a person regardless of marital status. If a person has a burning desire to change their jealous attitude, he or she must work hard to complete that, but a marriage certificate is not a cure for jealousy.

So ask yourself, is he still the one you want to be with if your partner never changes and maintains this jealous conduct forever? If the answer is yes, then you have to learn how to deal with the relentless doubt and intrusions in your life. If the answer is no, you must formulate an end strategy or at least decrease the amount of time you spend in the relationship.

In this case, both of you work either from the need for strength or from the need for life. You are either afraid to be alone or want to control the behavior of your loved one, which is not particularly healthy.

Your relationship could last for a long time. As you both work at the same place, you probably would not notice the chaos. Nonetheless, you need to be able to see what life would be like if you were in a relationship with your partner or someone

else, and trust existed between you. You should know something stronger and deliberately committed to action that generates that kind of confidence in your life.

When the problem is that one or both of you have been unfaithful in the past, then there are some real trust concerns. If you were the one who lied, try to grasp the fear and fears of your partner at least briefly. The person who has cheated causes his life to be an open book for his wife. Enable them to access your coming and going to help them develop the protection again in your relationship.

If you were the person whose partner fooled, you're not out of the loop. If your partner gives you the opportunity to really know all the time what he or she is doing to restore confidence in you, you must also work together to regain faith. You must be open to the idea that your partner makes improvements and really sorry for his indiscretion. You have to give up your desire to punish or pay him or her and really start rebuilding your relationship. Let your anger go and go ahead.

Real love does not work on the principle of scarcity. To receive love, you have to give it freely. Trust is the only way to go if you love someone and want peace of mind. You have the decision to make if you later learn that your partner was unfaithful to you, but the surest way to keep your partner from cheating is to keep on accusing him or her.

Celestial is like a disease that invades your friendship. It has the power to be devastating. Do not allow envy to erode your relationship's honesty, love, and respect.

Extending your faith and confidence is a gift to the person you love. If he or she is an honorable person, the reward is preserved, and well looked after. If it isn't, it won't be long, and you'll discover the real character of your friend. And you're going to have a decision to make when you do while living with trust.

Your envy jealousy always comes from the wrong background of being something externally activated, but it's 100% internal programming in realistic terms. It can be daunting psychologically to understand what triggers envy, but there can be a systematic approach to understanding why you feel the way you do. There are a lot of things that cause jealousy, and as many individuals have found that the treatment will not occur externally when it cannot be fix it. Jealousy also comes from low self-esteem or self-image. The underlying principle is that our whole universe is mediated by our filters of perception. If we have a bad image of ourselves, or if we do not feel strongly about ourselves, our cleaners are compromised. All we see on the outside are modified, and our emotional responses are incorrect.

For example, if we are profoundly addicted to the affection, love, and appreciation of our lovers but don't feel like we deserve it for any reason, then we start worrying about them leaving us or moving on. That understanding is just in our minds, and we like to analyze things and give them non-existent significance. Their own fear of leaving us for a better-looking man lets us see every guy who we think looks better. Although he can approach her, and a normal conversation takes place, envy worries us about the exchange. Each little he or she does, for or against us, is measured. Such things don't happen, but our anxiety occupies us in our heads. Jealousy is a symbol of our own fears and worries, and often we can create a self-fulfilling prophecy that we lose the one we love and need if we don't get it inside ourselves, not outside of the world.

While your lover is 100% dedicated to you, just think about you, even if your paranoid doesn't know. You will also apply this more or less equation to her movements to infer that she doesn't like being with you if she doesn't pay her full attention. The acts of fear may frustrate her, and you may change her mind about what she thinks about you by your own actions. You tend to make her want to avoid the discomfort that your manipulation causes her, and when she leaves, you only affirm your suspicions when it really just occurred because you did not deal with the emotions at their heart.

Jealousy can be repaired, ripped apart, and uncovered, but you must accept that it is a problem, and you want to change it. You have to focus on the way you see yourself, your self-esteem, and you're thinking or internal conversation. The real problem is inside, and once all external factors are resolved; you create some fantasies to streamline your feelings.

It's important to realize that a relationship riddled by anxiety and insecurity doesn't have the greatest outlook attached to it. Whilst it's not always doomed to fail, it's not going to be a happy and close relationship; how can it be when your partner is always thinking you're doubting them and you're always reading into things? Being at the mercy of your fears won't make you happy, and if you want to ensure that your fears don't come to fruition, the best thing is to overcome them and simply live in the moment, enjoying your relationship for what it is, in the here and now.

There is no shame in admitting that you need help in this regard, and if you really feel like you have a past problem that is affecting you in the here and now, or you simply can't get past your fears, asking for professional help and assistance is a must-do. There is no failing or weakness attached to this, and it is actually one of the strongest things you can do.

There are many options for help and support but talking to your partner as the first port of call is a great idea. This helps them to understand what is going on inside your head and allows them the chance to try and help you deal with your problems at the source. In many situations, this is enough. If that doesn't work, there are other options, such as couple's therapy, individual therapy, and self-help methods to help you overcome anxiety. Your doctor may also be able to discuss medications with you if anxiety is a huge issue in your life generally.

Don't let fear win, don't let it derail your life for no good reason at all. Face your fears, overcome them, and look forward to a future free of constant relationship insecurities and anxieties.

CODEPENDENCY

*Why Do You Attract Unhealthy People? No More
Falling Into Toxic Relationships. Break The
Suffering Cycle And Learn How To Love Again*

INTRODUCTION

Do you find it difficult to sustain a healthy relationship? Do you feel as if there is too much going on around you, and the people that you love and care about? Do you see their problems and want to help them by any means necessary? Do you feel that your loved ones are being guided by all the wrong people, and that you are better able to solve their problems? Although you feel the need to intervene—the need to convince your loved ones that you have the best solution, these feelings that are compelling you to take concrete action can be resisted. You don't understand why they don't listen to you, and why they sometimes tell you to back off. Why can't they understand that you, and only you, see the big picture, and the optimal solution? Why do they resent you for that? You're only doing what you think is best! You are always there for your loved ones, but your loved ones aren't there for you. You ask yourself, why? Maybe is time for you to read this book and find out.

Being codependent is an extremely difficult emotional state and we will deal with it in this book. Unlike simple dependency, where one person is dependent upon the other, the codependent person is equally dependent upon the person who is dependent on them. As a result, the codependent individual cannot make their own decisions and they require constant emotional support. A codependent person is a dependent person that needs another person to depend on them. That is the problem we will address in this book. Codependency is a serious condition that deserves more attention than it is usually accorded.

This book will bring into focus the paradox of this condition. A dependent person, due to various factors, is an incomplete personality, extremely insecure, and thus paralyzed when faced with the prospect of making a decision or choosing a course of action.

Here is one ordinary example. An electrician, although trained in his craft, can't bring himself to turn on the electricity after installing a switch. Why? Because he is insecure and simply does not trust himself to turn on the electricity until consulting his colleague. His colleague does not possess greater skills nor superior training, but our electrician needs to hear confirmation that his work is good before he can proceed. So, you see, the problem is that such individuals are insecure and can do nothing without adequate support and confirmation. This problem is not physical, it is mental, and the causes, as we will discuss, are numerous, and either have their roots in early childhood, or result from a trauma experienced later in life.

For the codependent individual, the problem is greater than that of the dependent individual, although frequently given less attention by mental health practitioners, because codependency is a relatively new concept. What exactly is a codependent person?

Codependent or relationship dependency is a recent concept, so it is useful to explain what codependency entails. The codependent person is one that requires another's positive reinforcement, while at the same time, feeling compelled to control the behavior of the person from whom they seek that positive reinforcement. It is a dynamic to which both become accustomed over time. As a consequence of these needs, people in such relationships move away from one another, rather than growing closer. Do you find yourself in this scenario?

Earlier, in the introduction, we explained the principal difference between the codependent person and the classic dependent person. This is of paramount importance, because many people suffer from this condition, and such persons need to understand that their condition is more complex than the classical dependency condition, because it is one that involves interpersonal relationships, which can cause greater emotional damage.

You feel the need to control, consciously or unconsciously, but you also have the feeling that something is wrong because, although you are sincerely trying to help someone, you are being told that you have crossed the line. If you hear that sentiment frequently, please continue to read this book.

It is best to start at the beginning. It is essential to make the right diagnosis. That is the first step, identifying the problem. Another significant step is an acknowledgment of the problem. Many people are inclined to deny the existence of this condition, and this is understandable, because all mental conditions something of a taboo topic and it is not easy for anyone

to say "I have a problem". This book is written to help you understand the nature of your condition, and through that understanding, assist you in resolving the problem.

As we said, this is not a condition that affects only the person suffering from codependency, it is a condition that has complex social ramifications as there are always other people involved. That is why this book is not intended exclusively for codependent persons, but also for those who are in this type of relationship, and feel the pressure, but may not understand its cause, much less have the capacity to identify it.

Codependency can be treated, but first you must recognize it. If you feel the need to exert control over another person because their actions do not suit you, even when these actions are not your concern; if you feel that person is "reserved" only for you, and that others are trying to "steal away" that person from you; if you often feel that you are being criticized; and if you constantly feel the need to justify yourself to someone close to you, such as where you were, what you did, or how you behaved in a given situation; and, if you fear how the other person will react, then maybe it's time to learn about a problem known as codependency by reading this book.

In situations where you see a problem on the horizon that you cannot fully understand, and you feel a pressure that you cannot clearly describe, and you feel that something is wrong in your relationship, then this book may be your salvation.

Codependency is a difficult problem because it affects more than one's self. It creates a barrier between the codependent person and the rest of the world. Moreover, it can often be mistaken for classic dependency. In short, it isn't always easy to detect this condition.

Do you have a constant feeling of guilt? I know you do. That guilt has no basis in fact—right? If you ask yourself what is the specific reason for your feelings of guilt, you cannot find a rational answer. You will find the answers you are seeking in this book.

A codependent person often suffers greatly and feels guilty about everything. If they please themselves in any way, they feel guilty. The codependent person has a need to help everyone, and rarely refuses to provide help. Their personal motto is, "I am only good when I am needed." Those who do not suffer from this condition have a different perception with respect to interpersonal relationships. Whereas a codependent person manages to draw the worst from the relationship. Codependents are often rejected, and end up alone, leaving them no choice but to try once more to build a stable relationship with another person. The problem with codependents is that they expect too much, and at some point, they invariably suffer a huge disappointment. A codependent person loves deeply, and they are always ready to sacrifice themselves for their loved ones, in the context of providing them with aid, comfort, and support, but a problem surfaces when these loved ones distance themselves. The codependent *needs* to help, to control, and, in their view, do what they deem best for the other person. This is exactly the point where these relationships fracture, because no one wants that kind of pressure.

Dependency from relationships emotionally "kills" a codependent person, and therein lies the problem. Codependents feel that they are guilty of everything that goes wrong, both in their lives, and in the lives of the people they love. So, if you feel empty, if you see people leaving your life without explanation, and if you feel that they are ungrateful for everything you have done for them, then this book is for you. If you have the feeling that people are not there for you when you need them, that they are not there for you, but you have always been there for them, if you feel that other people are insufficiently grateful for everything you have done for them, if you constantly have relationships that cease to exist, and if you can't keep a friend, then this book is for you.

Of course, you feel unhappy and lost after these events, but the real cause is not the old saw, "bad people, bad times", the cause is the codependent condition from which you suffer. You need a new perspective on the world. You need to look after yourself. You need to stop blaming yourself for everything. Remember that you are not *always* the culprit in a failed relationship.

So, take this book, and start over. Recognize the problem and understand the true source of your dysfunctional relationships. Let this book be your guide. It will reveal the truth regarding your codependent state, and if you pay attention, you can change, have normal friendships and loving relationships, free of guilt, and without feeling that compelling need to be in control.

If someone you care about suffers from codependency, this book will help you to help that person. It could help you rescue your friendship and also the person suffering from codependency.

PART 1

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTANDING CODEPENDENCY

Codependent individuals are very difficult to understand. They suffer from complex emotional problems, to which the scientific community largely turns a blind eye. The bulk of the attention is given to dependent persons. It is easier to analyze a "classic" dependent person than a codependent person. The differences are not that large, yet it is difficult to draw an exact parallel—but possible.

You have a problem trying to understand how the world works. You're like the watchmaker who knows how a clock works, but is confounded by the missing part that can't be found to get the clock ticking again.

This book will help you find that missing part.

Codependents display all the characteristics of the classic dependent personality, but codependents carry additional burdens. Many suffered an early childhood trauma, and the development of their personality is incomplete. Low self-esteem, a feeling that something is missing, depression, and an enhanced need for the approval of others, are characteristics of the codependent individual. Problems arise in their relationships because codependents want to please others, want to help, and continuously offer to help. While at first blush, these traits may not seem problematic, one must realize that these desires—to please, to help, to offer help—are obsessive! The sensitivities of these individuals are high, and they want "everything to be good always". They want that for themselves and they want the same for others. As a result, they try to *help* them and *control* them in every situation. This is where things fall apart, because people feel pressured in such circumstances, and that pressure drives them away from the codependent individual.

We know that it's hard for codependents to understand themselves and most reading this will be in some stage of denial, but that's normal. Know that you are not alone. If you notice this behavior in the person you love, read this book in order to help that person.

The codependent person lacks that inner sense of fulfillment. You feel the void inside, right? That inner void is felt constantly, which is why most experts think that the cause of this condition is either genetic or due to trauma in early childhood.

We know that you suffer from within and that you think you are not as worthy as others; you think you are inferior to others. That's why you're trying to create a sense of dependence in others—you think that is the only way you can keep them. Your problems are deep. Your mental state is such that you fail to realize that you are the victim.

I'm going to tell you something here and you need to understand it, and understand it well. Everyone is responsible for their own decisions. This is not to say that you are not to blame for everything that happens. You need to remember that. So, snap out of this wrong-headed notion, and dismiss that sense of responsibility and guilt. Accept that you cannot control all the facets of your life, much less the lives of others.

Codependent persons feel responsible for other people, their choices, their decisions, their behavior, their needs, their wishes, and their feelings. They feel compelled to help others solve their problems. It is impossible for them to set boundaries and say, no.

Learn to say, no. Learn that there are times when you need to turn away from other people's problems, because they are not your problems and you have no obligation to solve them.

You have a difficult time identifying your wants and needs. You try to please others instead of pleasing yourself. You feel insecure or guilty, and when someone helps you, you are overwhelmed with a sense of obligation. You are often angry, feeling underappreciated and exploited. You fancy yourself the victim. Codependents let themselves go; I am sure that is the case

with you. You blame yourself for everything. You expect to be perfect—no one is perfect. You feel guilty about having fun or pleasure. Ask yourself, why? Why do you fear rejection? Rejection never killed anyone. You constantly try to prove your worth to others. You relate to people who lack control, and who have a tendency toward addiction. You are attracted to those with an egocentric, narcissistic personality and then you fear of losing control.

You are naive, whether you want to admit or not. Not everyone is like you. Many people have a stone where their heart should be.

Your biggest mistake is in failing to see that not everyone thinks as you do. Not everyone feels compelled to help others. Most do not care about others at all. That's why you're constantly hurt. Even superheroes don't always manage to save everyone. Why do you think you can save everyone?

You fall for lies, and tend to lie to yourself as well. Don't hide behind lies, face the truth. Making other people the center of your life is not the answer. You must live your own life.

Codependent individuals fear losing the person who makes them happy, subvert their personal lives, lack confidence in their ability to care for themselves, fear speaking directly regarding their needs and wants, often feel hurt, scared, and worried, and fear their own anger even as others display theirs. Codependents rarely openly display their anger (which is not good), because they fear it will tarnish their image in the eyes of others. We say, so what? It is always better to be loved for what you are, than to be loved for what you are not. Codependent individuals either fail to take themselves seriously, or take themselves too seriously. They avoid conflict to maintain appearances, or they place blame on the other person. They are depressed, prone to illness, and overindulge. Although comfortable in sexual relations, in the progressive phase, they can become depressed, isolate themselves, forfeit their daily routine and structure, neglect commitments, and suffer chronic exhaustion. They may also become violent, develop an eating disorder, or acquire an addiction to drugs or alcohol.

Why would you condemn yourself to such a life? You're wasting your life for the sake of others. You have to change that now.

2.1 You have to understand what caused this problem in the first place.

So, what is the root of this condition? How does one begin to understand the nature of a codependent person? Codependents need to acknowledge themselves as victims, because they are. A bad childhood is the most frequent cause of the codependent condition. Neglect and a constant sense of guilt, foisted upon children by irresponsible parents, is the principal reason people suffer from this condition, and research confirms this.

Codependence begins with basic misconceptions regarding one's self, relationships, needs, and sexuality, which result in systematically misguided perceptions.

2.2 You must change the view of the world around you

Codependents develop feelings of worthlessness. They perceive themselves as unloved and undeserving of love. Such perceptions distort their reality, so they refuse to confront problems and shun personal responsibility, often denying their concerns and becoming preoccupied with another person, which leads to their controlling behavior and their tendency to blame others.

A codependent person tries to effect change in the other person. The other person resists, frustrating the ability of the codependent individual to control the situation and the relationship. This reinforces their initial perceptions, and the cycle repeats.

As we stated earlier, the causes of such behaviors and feelings stem from childhood, and are the consequence of parental malfeasance. Examples include inadequate displays of affection, a rigid family atmosphere, controlling parents (one or both), neglect, emotional blackmail, psychological or physical abuse, alcoholism, or drug addiction. The presence of one or more of these factors can be a precursor to the development of codependency. Biological factors, such as neurotransmitter-level disorders can also be causative factors in codependency, or, at the very least, a contributing variable.

2.3 There is always a way out

The complexity of the origin and symptoms of addiction dictates the complexity of the treatment. In the initial stages, the inclusion of pharmacotherapy can help stabilize a person's general mental state. The emphasis is certainly on continuous psychotherapy, because only in this way can deeper and lasting changes of personality be achieved—at the emotional level, behavior, thinking, beliefs, and, most importantly, basic self-image. It is necessary for a person to learn ways of functionally reacting in relationships, to develop spontaneity and independence, to focus on themselves, their desires and goals, to be emotionally literate, to stop taking responsibility for others, and begin taking responsibility for personal choices, emotions, and behaviors. They need to stop feeling like victims for trying to save others, to develop confidence in their thinking and competencies in communication, to learn how to adequately stand up for Themselves through assertive behavior. Finally, the goal is to develop a capacity for closeness that will help them build healthy and functional relationships that can stimulate their further psychological growth.

If your parent was incapable of fulfilling the parental role, you may have taken over the parental role to fill in the gaps. You took care of your parents and/or siblings, paid the bills, cooked the meals, and now, you are repeating this pattern of behavior in your relationships. You may also learn that people who loved you can (or did) hurt you. If your parents abandoned you, lied to you, failed you, it is very likely that you have become distrustful of others and that you tend to believe that the people you love can hurt you. Therefore, through excessive control, you are unknowingly protecting yourself from being hurt again, and this is where you create the emotional gap between yourself and others.

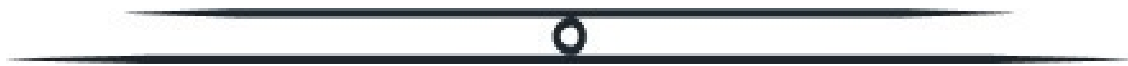
If you grew up with parents who blamed you for everything and if their behavior toward you was such that you began to hide within yourself while doing everything for everyone, then there is a high probability that you developed a codependent condition and became a person who is addicted to relationships that are unhealthy and toxic. That is why you must read this book and start healing, so that you can begin to understand the world and the people around you from a normal perspective.

We want to emphasize that people who suffer from codependency are victims. They should not be condemned; they should be helped. That is why it is important to read this book. If you are a codependent person or someone you care about is a codependent person, it is important to help them and prevent this condition from escalating into severe depression, anxiety, or worse.

CHAPTER TWO

WHAT IS NOT CODEPENDENCY

CODEPENDENCY VS DEPENDENCY



You are insecure about yourself but think you know what is best for others, and that is a problem. Read this chapter carefully and you will be able to understand yourself much better.

This is one of the most important chapters in this book. The difference between a codependent person and a classical dependent person is difficult to see, but the differences are significant. Here, you need to pay attention to all the factors that characterize both conditions. We will clearly show you what codependency is and the twin key elements for distinguishing between these two conditions.

As we said, regarding the classic dependent person, the dependent state is a topic that has received much more attention, while the codependent state has remained in the shadows and is remains under-explored. Even the best psychiatrist can confuse a codependent person with a classic dependent person.

The consequences are great in both conditions, but we can say with certainty that the consequences in codependent persons are greater, and that if left untreated they can escalate to disaster.

In the previous chapter, we wrote about a codependent person and what their characteristics are and now we will discuss the main features of a classic dependent person.

A dependent personality disorder is recognizable by its general pattern of dependence, and the tendency to submit to others, without which submission, such persons believe that they cannot survive. The dependent personality's dominant characteristics are, fear of abandonment, chronic lack of self-esteem, and constant reliance on other people. Below that manifest submission, lies a large amount of aggressiveness that is expressed passively—that is very important. Because these individuals do not allow their aggression to surface, but rather turn it inward, a common symptom is anxiety. This anxiety is often expressed as health concerns—hypochondria. Dependent, obsessive-compulsive and avoidant disorders, belong to the broader group of anxiety disorders.

The person with the dependent personality disorder does not usually recognize the problem. This disorder is more common in women than in men. It is typically recognized in early adulthood. According to statistics, the incidence of this disorder does not exceed 1% in the general population, although it is reported to be even rarer in practice (around 0.6%).

Although psychotherapists believe dependent personality disorder to be easier to treat, effective treatment involves a lot of time and many challenges.

3.1. Dependent personality - clinical description and conceptualization

The trigger for manifestations of addictive behavior typically arise in situations in which a person thinks they will be left to manage themselves or to rely upon themselves. Then severe anxiety ensues, followed by an attempt to allow others to solve their problems. The dependent personality manifests behavior that is obedient, passive, non-assertive, and characterized by a significant lack of self-esteem.

In interpersonal relationships, the dependent personality is recognized by behaviors that manifest their willingness to sacrifice for others, attach to them, and, above all, their expectation that others will take responsibility.

The way a person with this problem thinks, is characterized by suggestiveness, and preoccupation with interpersonal relationships. They tend to think of loved ones as would a constantly worried or overprotective parent.

Anxiety is the dominant feeling, although people with this problem are often shy (or so they seem). Under stress, they respond with depression.

Their temperament, that is, their reactions to this condition are reflected in lower energy levels, fearfulness, and palpable withdrawal during childhood. We would best characterize their temperament as melancholic. Dependent personality is also recognized by a pattern of emotional attachment best described as preoccupied. They are preoccupied with maintaining the emotional connections that represent their security base. This preoccupation is reinforced by the fact that they see themselves in a bad light and view others in a favorable light.

The basic message that people with this condition received from their parents during childhood could be summed up by the phrase "You cannot do this alone". As a result, these individuals began to see themselves as "fine and cultured, but incapable and fragile." Also, the entire pattern of their upbringing has led them to view the world as "a place full of other people who will care for them, because they cannot do for themselves."

One of the most important criteria, against which professionals make a diagnosis of dependent personality, is that they tend to rely on others to take responsibility in all important areas of their lives.

3.2. You are afraid but you don't run away from responsibility easily like a classic dependent person.

Individuals with dependent personality disorder are convinced that they cannot function independently. So, if one significant relationship in their life ends, they will quickly find another that they will be able to rely upon. Most of their energy is dedicated to maintaining relationships with people, without whom, the dependent person believes, they cannot survive.

3.3. Dependent people have difficulty making everyday decisions without advice and reassurance.

The key lies in everyday decisions. If you are planning a significant life change, of course, you will discuss that decision and exchange views with your family and friends. But the dependent personality type faces their everyday decisions from a position of hesitation and fear. They are terrified to make a mistake. They need others to take responsibility for multiple facets of their life.

It is one thing to seek help another person's help, but is entirely another to expect that person to take responsibility for you. People with dependent personalities turn over broad swaths of their lives to others... out of fear. Life's challenges can seem insurmountable and, therefore, make it appear impossible to face them alone.

Have you ever heard a person say "Everyone has the right to their opinion, as long as they agree with mine?" The dependent has a slightly different view: "I have the right to my opinion, as long as it agrees with yours?" An addicted person does not feel worthy enough to express an opinion different from that of the person that they feel they need.

3.4. They struggle to start projects or do things themselves.

Dependent people fear exposure, because others may realize how worthless they are. They fear failure, and weakness. They will avoid failure by taking no initiative. If they believe that a task is doomed to failure, they will not be motivated to take part in it; they will be motivated to avoid it. In short, they will not risk success, because that success threatens their dependence.

3.5. They feel anxious or stressed when they are alone, or when they think they will be alone.

Dependent people often expect the worst. They do not feel competent enough to live their own lives absent other people. Being alone means being unprotected and vulnerable. The thought of being alone and facing the worst of what life can offer, is simply overwhelming. Dependent people believe wholeheartedly in Murphy's Law: If something can go wrong, it will go wrong.

3.6. They take responsibility when bad things happen - otherwise they run away from responsibility

Life is happening; things are happening. Sometimes those things are bad. Dependent people, who do not love themselves or trust themselves, quickly take the blame for those bad things, even if that judgment is unreasonable. They will take the blame for events, circumstances, and for the actions of other people.

3.7. They feel responsible for meeting other people's expectations.

Also, dependent personalities adopt the expectations of the other person as their own. So when a dependent goes wrong, she not only failed to live up to the other person's expectations but failed her own. Each failure reinforces the dependent's warped self-vision.

3.8. They have an increased need for validation and approval from others.

Dependent persons desperately crave confirmation and approval, as alcoholics crave drink or gamblers seek jackpots. When they get confirmation and approval, the planets align and everything is fine within that person's universe, at least until uncertainty knocks once more. Well, any "victory," though desperately brave, is suspected of being a mistake, at best.

3.9. They are incapable of creating or defending personal boundaries.

The only realistic boundary a dependent has, is within the desired relationship. All other personal boundaries are fluid and negotiable, in order to maintain the desired connection. A willingness to negotiate personal boundaries in a relationship creates vulnerability. Some personality types exploit this type of vulnerability. They are too willing to find out how dependent a person is willing to be. And that need is never filled; the dependent cannot provide enough to fulfill it.

So these are some of the main characteristics of dependent personalities. Do you now see how difficult it is to completely separate the two? Both conditions have many similarities. However, we can point to one specific indicator that separates these conditions, and that is aggression.

Yes, you read that right—it's about aggression. It is the first and primary indicator expressed in codependent personalities. In almost 90 percent of cases, aggression is absent in the classic dependent personality. It is the main factor to look for in the codependent personality. I don't mean classical aggression, which is present in almost everyone, but by the robust and frequent attacks of aggression characteristic of codependent personalities. In contrast, dependent personalities, due to lower levels of self-esteem, and their great respect for others, aggression is, if not absent it is hidden. However, this may not always be the case, because psychology is not an exact science and each person is unique.

3.10. More important features of the dependency state

When a child is born, it is completely dependent on the parent/guardian. Rarely does any other creature in nature have that privilege. As a child matures, they become more independent and less fearful of being alone.

Here, we are referring not only to existential needs, but also to emotional needs. The ability to cope with new and challenging emotional situations is very similar to developing other abilities, such as emotional intelligence. A friend told me how "rude" it was for me to tell my daughter that she had to stand up on her own when she fell, and criticized me for not running to her aid.

I would not reconsider my decision. My inner emotions and parenting instincts allowed me to process the information, determine that she had not been hurt, and recognize that she needs to learn to "rise when she falls". From a child's perspective, the world looks a little different than it does when we grow up. When a child falls and scrapes his knee and his Mom says it's okay "you can" stand up, that is different. The child will love for his mom for making him stronger. Feeling your mother's closeness and being able to rely on her warmth, love, and care are very pleasant emotions. But, if mom does it every time, the child gets the message that "mom knows better / mom knows everything", which means "I can't / don't know".

These "rude" moms tell us that life is not always pleasant and that sometimes it will hurt when we fall, but that we must learn to rise. The mom is still at a decent "distance" to respond "in case of an emergency", but at the same time, she tells the child "I believe you can" and when the child rises and sees that he can, well, that's a great feeling. Children are "proud" when they learn to accomplish things on their own.

Overprotective parents take away the opportunity for their children to feel that way, and this is where the development of dependent personality disorder can begin. This diagnosis cannot be made early, because dependence is a normal developmental stage for a child, but if this dependence persists after adolescence, then we can describe that as dependent disorder.

3.11. What do dependent persons look like?

These are people that can never make a decision and shoulder responsibility. They are frequently in dysfunctional relationships where they are often mistreated. Choosing the option is to remain alone is too frightening, so they remain in these dysfunctional relationships for too long, sometimes forever. They have no tolerance for criticism or disapproval, which they associate with rejection. They rarely show initiative, and you get the feeling that there is no respite for them, because they are under constant stress and anxiety.

3.12. Being their friend is not a bad feeling

They experience their happiness solely through the happiness of others, so they do whatever is necessary to make those around them happy. They pay an expensive price for that happiness. They lose their identity. That doesn't sound nice, does it? The fact that they are not aggressive does not mean that they do not feel aggression. Instead they turn their aggressive feelings into passive aggression. This gift with a bow, makes the person they depend on feel helpless and suffocated. It is not always easy to separate those people who sacrifice for the people they love, and those people who have a dependency disorder. Let's say it's a matter of measure, frequency, and intensity.

What these people provoke in their counterpart is the feeling that they need to be taken care of. For example, the mom leading the dependent home to be nurtured when they scratch their palm. It is quite a challenge to resist that cry for help. It is especially difficult to resist if they happen to be one of those individuals who tend to fall into the role of Savior (in terms of transactional psychoanalysis).

Dependent people pay the price for having others take care of them, and that price is obedience and total subordination. None of us are comfortable with a situation where we have to make a difficult decision, take a stand up for ourselves, or, ultimately, defend ourselves, but when they do encounter such situations (which may not have any objective weight at all), panic develops.

3.13. Partnerships

Persons who are “hooked” by a dependent person must provide strength and support for them. The dependent’s partner may get the “goods”, but they pay a price, because the sympathetic relationship will eventually suffocate them. It is difficult to know where it begins or ends, because the dependent person does everything to avoid being left behind and rejected. Their life is designed and organized in such a way that they will not have to be left alone.

However, if their partner chooses to end the relationship, they quickly find their next host, because it is unbearable for them to be alone. This means that while the relationship lasts, there is excessive closeness—one that is neurotic, because the need for closeness stems from the fear of being left behind, not because they see the person for who they are and accept it. Being close to a partner is, of course, essential and desirable for building a relationship. However, if the partners lose themselves and feel like one person, they risk their relationship.

How do we recognize this in partnerships? If the partnership is excessively idyllic and without any conflict, essentially untested, there is a risk that any conflict could end the relationship, and so it is avoided. When we look at the dynamics of relationships from the outside, all is not as it seems. When / if a conflict does occur, the dynamics are as follows. Partner expresses disagreement about something, or seeks his space. This reinforces the dependent’s role as the victim, causing increased anxiety in the partner, who is thinking, “I did everything for you and you want to leave me.” As a result, the relationship becomes painful and troublesome.

The problem is that these relationship dynamics are hard to spot. This type of personality selects people who will take care of them in return for their subordination. They demand to be protected instead of seeking solutions. Needing someone, and in turn, receiving gratitude, is not necessarily an unhealthy need. The question is one of whether the relationship is based solely on the need for one side not to be alone and the other side needing someone. The need for one side to be a victim and the other side a lifesaver. The need for one side to depend and the other side to depend on it.

3.14. An addictive disorder in the business world

The impression they make is that they are gentle and pleasant, kind and peaceful, and never come into conflict at any cost. What a colleague of mine would say, "those are the people you feel you want to hug for no rational reason." Not getting into conflicts at work only serves as a prelude to creating dependent relationships. It's hard for bosses to give them a dismissal for obvious reasons.

They will never show initiative, and if forced to enter into something new and challenging, they will sabotage their success in advance. They are never motivated by work; they will be hesitant, and will give up the battle before it even begins. They live with a deep-seated belief that they are inadequate and they rely solely on external protective figures and they rarely hold positions of leadership.

3.15. Combinations with other disorders

Dependent personalities are predisposed to anxiety disorders. Generalized anxiety can develop due to their obsessive concern that they will be left alone. Also, they may suffer panic attacks when left alone in unfamiliar situations, because they believe they will not be able to cope. Expressing anxiety, possibly even panic, serves to keep the supportive person close, and the dependent will continue to receive their protection. This also prevents the dependent from having to take responsibility and be independent. The development of agoraphobia is a common characteristic, as anxiety attacks occur in situations in which the dependent leaves a familiar and supportive environment. Often, hypochondria also develops, and the dependent personality uses this affliction to attract the attention and care of others. They may also suffer from depression, which is a form of self-aggression, that helps them remain in the victim's role. Of course, these disorders are not the exclusive province of dependent personalities.

In combination with their histrionics, passivity can be transmuted into seduction, which serves their need for addiction. When addiction is linked to narcissistic traits, arrogance is somewhat mitigated. In the case of avoidance disorder, the fear of rejection and ridicule is more pronounced, and the need for support, however inadequate, is increased.

3.16. Symptoms and diagnostics

In practice, dependent disorder occurs in 1% or less of the population. Although anyone can find something on this list that applies to them, this does not mean that they have dependent disorder. You need only be concerned if you have all of the following eight symptoms:

1. Difficulties making everyday decisions without the direction, approval, or reassurance of others.
2. The need for others to assume the responsibilities that they themselves should shoulder.
3. A reluctance to disagree with others for fear of condemnation and/or disapproval.
4. An unwillingness to begin any project or task without first gaining the support, assurance, and approval of others.
5. An obsessive, compelling need for support, that the dependent perceives as the means to avoid inconvenience, disapproval or, rejection. The dependent personality will pursue this need without regard to the fact that it may place their support person or persons in harm's way.
6. When lonely, the dependent feels vulnerable, exposed and helpless.
7. When a relationship ends, the dependent personality will immediately seek out a partner with whom to begin a new relationship. They will not engage in any introspection to discern the reasons for the break-up.
8. They have an unhealthy preoccupation with the thought of being left completely alone, that in such circumstances would not be unable to take care of themselves.

So, the dependent personality, is characterized by a compulsive desire for others to take care of them, and the codependent person, has the opposite desire . A codependent person needs to take care of others and, there is another significant difference.

To accurately define the differences between these two states, we must recognize two crucial factors. The first is aggression and inverse desires is the second; In short, I help others - others help me. These are the two principal factors that differentiate these conditions.

3.17. You hide the anger until you explode and you want to help everyone.

In this way you destroy yourself, because you become the victim. You never run out of challenges, which means you are "behind the wheel" all the time. However, other people don't see it that way. Other people only see you imposing your views. Not everyone listens to you. Try to remember that you don't always need to have help. Even when people exit your life, you need to accept this as a normal process. You need to believe in yourself. There are so many people in this world, and each has a unique story. Eventually, you will find someone who suits you, but first, you have to recover from this condition. That will be possible only if you believe in yourself, and you have already made the first step. You know what I'm talking about.

CHAPTER THREE

HOW TO SPOT THE TRAITS OF CODEPENDENCY?



If you still have doubts about this being the right book for you, read this chapter carefully. This chapter will help you resolve any lingering doubts you may have.

Experts agree that there are three basic patterns of codependent behavior. These three patterns that can be easily discerned and are strong indicators that a person is suffering from codependency.

The following list of behaviors will assist you in your self-assessment. They will be of great help to anyone trying to understand what codependency is. The list will also help those who have been in recovery, and need to determine which behaviors still require attention and correction.

- First pattern: Denial

"I have difficulty identifying my feelings. I minimize, alter or deny how I truly feel. I consider myself a selfless person, fully committed to the well-being of others."

- Second pattern: Low self-esteem

"I have trouble making decisions. Everything I think, say or do is rigorously assessed and always falls short. I feel uncomfortable when I receive compliments, awards, or gifts. I never ask others to satisfy my needs or desires. I do not see myself as a worthy human being...worthy of love."

- Third pattern: Compliance

"I realign my personal value system in order to avoid rejection and alienation by others. I am hypersensitive to the feelings of others. I am extremely loyal and remain in situations that I know not to be in my best interests. I often hesitate to express my feelings and opinions if they differ from others. I neglect my interests and hobbies to do for others. I accept sex as a substitute for love."

4.1. Denial

The human mind possesses one surprising, but useless, ability. Our mind has the ability to distort reality to the point it becomes capable of believing that the distorted version of reality is the truth. This should help to explain the meaning of the first sentence of this chapter.

The phenomenon of denial plays a critical role in the formation of bad habits and unhealthy behavior. People deny that they have a problem with alcohol, pills or drugs. The elements of denial are easy to spot: the girlfriend convinces herself that her boyfriend is busy, and so does not return her calls for days; a cancer patient lying in a hospital bed convinces himself that this is just a viral infection, and that he will be discharged in time for the weekend; a man with alcohol addiction negates the real source of his inability to concentrate, stating that it is because he is overburdened with work; a man having a problem with emotional attachments explains that his insecurity in meeting a girlfriend due to his lack of money and that he does not have his own apartment.

As you read the statements above, I know that you will *deny* the possibility of ever succumbing to such dramatic denials—you're far too self-aware. Yet, denial is pervasive; it is present in each of us. It can be very awkward. What is interesting about the function of the psyche, is that it is much easier to recognize denial in another than in one's self. Denial is a strategy we use to avoid dealing with unpleasant realities, and difficult events.

4.2. How do we deal with reality?

I'm sure you hear comments like this one, "I don't have time to deal with that, I'm too busy." We are constantly doing something, going somewhere, cooking, buying something, and planning what to do next. It seems that overwork is becoming the norm, which provides us with another alibi to slip from reality.

People who practice denial as a defense mechanism often use sentence constructions of the type: "I understand I should, but this is not the moment." We have examples like, "I should get a check-up, but I have a backlog of responsibilities at work." Certainly, these reasons can be legitimate, but it is equally possible that they are justifications for distancing ourselves from the things to which we should be paying attention.

Some people respond with anger when they are trapped by the truth. A husband with an alcohol problem is willing to vent his anger at his wife, insulting her, and calling her derogatory names when she demands that he begin treatment.

People are angry when they are displaced a comfortable existence, and forced to confront that which they have worked so hard to avoid. They feel they are under attack, and they quickly counter-attack. Denial, coupled with anger, makes us blind to the truth, blind to the good intentions of others, and blind to seeing our own scars and our own desires.

In our attempt to avoid the truth, we fail to realize how much energy we invest in being unaware, un-seeing, un-feeling, an un-knowing. One thing is certain, "If you don't pay at the bridge, you will pay at the crossroad." When we use our time, energy and will to escape the truth, we draw on our physical, emotional and spiritual resources. Many codependent persons are neck-deep in denial. So if you are reading this and you are avoiding the truth; you can be sure that the truth will catch up to you eventually. No one ever manages to escape the truth. So if you see the signs of denial, don't ignore them.

This pattern of behavior is easy to discern in codependent personalities, and they pretend that they are t doing best they can. But with the symptoms and the patterns of behavior we have just described, you will be able to recognize individuals with this condition. Do you understand now?

4.3. Low self-esteem

People with low levels of self-esteem are always self-righteous. Often, they cannot accept a compliment, because they question the motive behind it.

4.4. The most common symptoms of low self-esteem

- An inability to trust one's own opinion
- Overthinking everything
- Fear of accepting challenges, concerned that they will not be met
- Austerity towards oneself, but indulgence toward others
- Frequent anxiety and emotional restlessness

4.5. Some lesser known symptoms

- Workaholic:

At work, expectations are set. Pressures at work are less challenging than the pressures in private relationships, where everything is less certain. In contrast, work is more peaceful. Meeting expectations at work is easier, because those expectations are well-defined. We frequently see people lacking in confidence shift their attention to work, and invest all their energy into that.

- Too much or too little success

Most of us understand that people with low self-esteem do not achieve the success they should, because they fear the challenge, and fail to fully utilize their talents. However, there is the other extreme. Because they harbor such an intense fear of failure and rejection, they strive constantly to prove their worth.

4.6. What Are the Causes of Low Self Confidence?

In most cases, everything stems from early childhood. Negative experiences lead to low self-esteem later in life. They are:

- Frequent punishment
- Neglect
- Abuse
- Bullying at school
- Lack of praise, warmth, and care
- Belonging to a minority group

Childhood is the period in which we form our "ultimate boundaries" and "rules for life" that determine our path through life. Consequently, early negative experiences will impact the second-round of our development.

4.7. What is the "ultimate limit" and how does it affect your confidence?

I define the "ultimate limit" as how you feel about something, based on your previous experiences. For example, how you felt when you first left home, becomes the ultimate frontier for everything you have left in your life.

When it comes to self-esteem, the limit is defined by how the people we grow up with treated us—the voices of the people who mattered most to us. For example, did they tell you that you 're beautiful or did they make you feel ugly? As a child, were you made to feel worthless? This manner in which those you love treated you as a child affects the way you see yourself and therefore your level of self-confidence.

This pattern is easy to see. This contributes to the symptoms of codependency we've already discussed. Have you found yourself?

4.8. Compliance

Conformity is the compliant behavior of an individual with respect to the norms and expectations of a social group. Such behavior includes agreement with valid, generally accepted, group norms that are typically enforced through peer pressure. In practice, individuals and groups aspire to fully adapt to their environment and behavior that might be regarded as eccentric or unusual by the group. Conformism excludes creativity, leadership, and activism, and opposes change and progress. This term often has a negative connotation in the sense that it implies losing one's independence and self-worth.

People often opt for security within a group—typically, a group of similar age, culture, religion and/or educational background. This is often referred to as group think, a pattern of thinking characterized by self-deception, coerced conformity to group values and ethics, which ignore the pursuit of alternative courses of action. Reluctance to obey is accompanied by the risk of social rejection. Conformity is often associated with adolescents or youth culture, although it strongly affects people of all ages.

While group pressure can have negative manifestations, conformity is usually considered to be a positive. For example, driving on the correct side of the road is a beneficial conformity. With the appropriate influence of the environment, conformity during the early years of childhood enables a person to learn and to adopt the appropriate behaviors necessary for positive interactions and development within society. Conformity influences the formation and maintenance of social norms and allows society to function spontaneously and predictably through self-elimination of behaviors considered opposed to the unwritten norms. In this sense, conformity is a positive force that prevents acts that are disruptive or dangerous to the group, but conformity can be very dangerous if the conformity to the group is counter to the broader norms of society as a whole.

Compliance is an easy pattern to see, because conformists exhibit practically no personality of their own. They can be dangerous to themselves, because they are submissive, and will do anything for a little attention. For the codependent persons, this compliant pattern of behavior is the worst. Codependents have no limits when it comes to maintaining control. However, they can be spotted quite easily if you combine the pattern with the symptoms.

How many times have you agreed to something you knew to be wrong? Why did you do that? I'll tell you why. Because it's much easier for you to push problems under the rug than it is to deal with them.

But on the other hand, that's why you need control in the relationship. Through that control, you are replacing all that you have accepted but shouldn't have.

CHAPTER FOUR

HIDDEN SIGNS OF CODEPENDENCY



Just as every man has secrets, every condition has secrets. Some signs can act as a guide for you to determine whether this condition exists in you, or may tend to develop.

Codependent conditions can have hidden signs as the condition develops, and there are warning signs that you must not ignore in order to avoid severe consequences.

5.1. Common symptoms of the Codependent condition

Prolonged sadness; chronic lack of will; loss of interest in once-favored activities; feelings of helplessness or hopelessness; feeling trapped in time and space; and feeling empty inside. Is this how you feel?

Of course, possible these signs may be irrelevant, but they may also indicate the development of a codependent condition. This condition is very severe and you must not ignore the signs. The signs may not represent anything serious, but you never know. This condition is almost always a result of early childhood trauma, and many people manage to overcome it. However, some small thing can act as a trigger, unleashing an avalanche of despair, and you don't react quickly and ignore the signs, you may be headed for trouble. No problem in life stays under the rug forever—remember that.

The codependent condition begins, in most cases, with a subtle depression. However, depression can manifest itself in a completely different way than we expect, making it more difficult to detect. These are examples of the least obvious, yet important indicators related to this condition that need to be addressed:

5.2. Violating behavior and aggression

Have you ever experienced a sudden onset of anger? Have you ever tossed your cellphone, fisted the wall, or cruelly attacked someone? Depression and aggression are often fellow travelers.

5.3. Aggression usually serves as a valve to release the deep sadness you feel.

Depression can be expressed in different ways; both physically and emotionally. For example, feelings of constant sadness, combined with strange behaviors. Depression can find alternate means of manifesting itself. Men often externalize their depression in this way. Psychologists suggest that excessive consumption of alcohol, love affairs, increased aggression, or withdrawal from loved ones can actually be symptoms of depression, and possibly, the onset of a codependent condition. Physical symptoms are characterized by decreased sexual desire, chronic fatigue, insomnia, and changes in eating habits—starvation or overeating, for example.

5.4. Irritability/Anger

Sometimes depression manifests as irritability or anger. It is a lesser-known fact that irritability is not only a sign of depression, but may often signal the onset of a codependent condition, especially if it manifests itself in the long-term relationship with a partner or family. Angry moods and unpleasant behaviors are also associated with a codependent onset. Other emotions, such as sadness, shame, or helplessness, are often masked by anger, but anger is an unanticipated emotion in people suffering from a codependent condition.

5.5. Perfectionism

You just can't stand the mess at home. This is because you have a mess in your head, so you clean the one that is obvious to you. You do almost everything like that; you strive for perfection in everything. That is compensation for your inability to clean up your emotions.

Numerous research studies over the years have highlighted the correlation between perfectionism and codependency. Codependents feel that to be loved and accepted is possible only if they are perfect. For a perfectionist to make a mistake is a "mortal sin", and the sign of a personal flaw. As a result, these individuals are easily depressed. To counter the fear of failure, and the shame that comes with it, they need to work on their self-esteem, which is difficult. This is why they should see the help of a professional.

5.6. Inability to concentrate

Are you always remembering the right words too late?

Everyone has trouble concentrating from time to time, especially if something is on your mind. But if the issue of concentration affects your work or your relationships—they may be a sign of codependency. Difficulties with concentration directly impacts how effectively a person functions. This can impede their work, interfere with schooling, and lead to missed tasks or deadlines.

5.7. Extreme guilt

Guilt is a normal feeling. But if you feel guilty about the direction in which the earth spins, that is not a normal. As I said, everyone is responsible for their own decisions. And you can't stop someone you love from making mistakes. You're not a superhero, and even if you were, the superhero doesn't always succeed in catching the villain—right?

Although guilt is a natural emotion, a deep sense of guilt in too many facets of your life can signal that codependency is developing. Psychotherapists call it pathological guilt. Guilt is pervasive for codependents. They scan the past and see only a series of failures. A codependent person can feel guilty for myriad reasons—for their birth, for being depressed, for not achieving an important role in life— everything engenders feelings of regret and guilt.

5.8. Moving from sadness to happiness and vice versa

Frequent, though short-lived switches, from states of sadness to states of happiness, and vice versa, can be a telltale sign that something more serious is occurring. When you are depressed, a joyful event can snap you out of it, and things may seem fine, but only for a short time. Then the depression returns, uninvited, and for no apparent reason. Psychotherapists cite this as an "interesting" symptom of depression, in which someone temporarily "rises" from their depression, because of a positive event, opportunity, or interpersonal relationship. It is briefly alleviated, but soon, they return to a depressed state.

5.9. Self-healing by the wrong methods

I know you suffer but never try to "drown your sadness in alcohol," for example, or to do self-medicate by any means.

This is not such a subtle symptom, but it is worth mentioning. The codependent person often carries addictive behavior as a fellow traveler. People with a codependent condition are more likely to drink alcohol, smoke, suffer from eating disorders, and other addictions. It is important to note that they may become depressed, because they sense that they are losing control. When you are depressed, it is natural to use the tools at your disposal to deal with the condition. The problem is that people don't usually choose the proper tools. It's much easier to smoke or drink than to go to psychotherapy or exercise. The former will make the depression gloomier and allow you to develop the condition, while the latter will allow you to recover. If you find yourself engaging in any type of substance abuse or you change your lifestyle for the worst, seriously consider consulting an expert.

While in many cases the symptoms are highly visible, there are also cases where the person is unaware that they are beginning to develop codependency.

"Mostly, thoughts and behaviors cause significant stress and anxiety," says psychiatrist Dr. Kashmir Rastomji. "However, in some cases, it may be a pattern that is so normal and common for someone that the person does not even recognize the signs of the disorder. Also, stigmatization is often why people do not seek help."

In the early stages, the codependent disorder is difficult to diagnose if a person has other mental health problems— anxiety, depression, and bipolar disorder—because the symptoms often overlap.

Of course, the diagnosis must be made by an expert, but it may be helpful to re-examine your thoughts and behaviors. Here are some things you may be doing that signal you have this condition without even realizing it.

5.10. You do every task to perfection

If even when doing something for yourself, you struggle to complete the task to perfection— a sign of the codependent state.

"We often think of such individuals as ambitious, but the compulsion to achieve perfection can be a sign of codependency," says psychologist Dr. Joshua Klapov.

5.11. Do you make different lists and reminders?

If your time is filled with making lists and notes, and if you are afraid of forgetting something, it is possible that you are suffering from codependency. These may signal that you are trying to achieve control over the situation.

"We consider people like this organized and we think they just want to make sure the work is done," says Dr. Klapov. "But the obsession with thinking that they might forget something, and the compulsion to write it down so they don't forget can grow into a vicious circle, where more time is spent writing than performing the tasks. This could be an important indicator that this is a codependent person", says Dr. Klapov.

5.12. You are cleaning your space often

Codependent disorder means you not only feel that you have to do the cleaning, but that you also fear what may happen if you do not complete that commitment. If you are cleaning your space, not because you want it to be clean, but rather because you fear chaos, it may be a sign of codependency onset.

"An obsessive fear of clutter in the home or space that is unpredictable leads to the rearrangement of furniture, clothing and everything in the home to keep everything nice and serve a purpose," explains Dr. Klapov. But lurking in the shadows may be an obsession that will later manifest itself in a certain individual and a specific connection with that individual.

If you are constantly organizing and reorganizing things around the house, it would not be a bad idea to speak to an expert.

5.13. You check everything twice

Double-checking is a common symptom that many fail to notice they have. If you check everything two or three times, to make sure you have done everything you need to do, you should consult an expert to see if there is the possibility that a codependent condition may be developing.

5.14. Make sure everything is symmetrical

Symmetry in the space you live in can be very aesthetically pleasing, but if you spend your time arranging everything to be symmetrical, even in other people's homes, it can be a combination of an obsessive-compulsive disorder and a codependent state in its early stages.

5.15. You endlessly re-think situations

Alright, most of us have had head-spinning experiences. However, if you cannot overcome a situation, and re-think it over and over, when you are alone, it can be a sign that your need for control is evolving.

"People suffering from this disorder can sit alone and rethink a particular situation, talk or interaction, or they can practice for an upcoming situation over and over," says psychiatrist Prakash Masand. If thinking about something prevents you from participating normally in your daily activities, see your doctor.

5.16. You need constant reassurance

The unrestrained "buzzing" of thoughts is a common symptom of the codependency condition in its early stages. If, when you are alone, you cannot "turn off" your thoughts, you may suffer from this disorder. If you cannot halt your thoughts without inviting friends/family to distract you, seek professional help.

These symptoms do not necessarily prove you have the disorder, but it is certainly important to know that you need not have live under such stress, and that an expert can help you.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE DIFFERENT FACES OF CODEPENDENCY – TYPES



The human mind has always been an enigma. The condition you have may be one of several types, and you need to learn what your "type" is. This will help you to focus your recovery on that specific type. This chapter will help you as much as the watchmaker's tale at the beginning of this book. You need to find the missing part of the clock. This is the only way your clock will begin ticking again.

There are different types of codependent disorders and it follows there are different types of codependent persons. This is a very important chapter because you need to understand that this condition occurs in different forms. Codependency can take many forms.

It is helpful that you have learned what the patterns of codependent person are, and that you know the symptoms of this condition. However, there are variations of this condition, which is why this chapter is important.

What all codependent conditions have in common, are the consequences, and they can be devastating, so it is important to see the range of this condition.

According to most studies, there are three basic types of codependent persons. It's almost the same as a behavior pattern. The three basic types of codependent persons are, 1) the codependent addicted person, 2) the codependent abusive person, and 3) the codependent timid person.

1. Codependent addiction - Once codependence exists, it generates the dynamics of betrayal. You are convinced of your partner's love for you. When you learn the truth, you will feel, in some sense, betrayed. There may be lying, false promises, threats and everything else that results from dysfunctional communications. You will begin to provide an accommodation for the manifestation of another person in the relationship to preserve some sense of control. Over time, these adjustments will become a progressively unhealthy form of relating to someone. You can lose yourself in this vicious circle and not know what is happening.
2. Codependent abuse - When abuse is involved in a relationship, it engenders a disproportionate controlling factor into the relationship as well. The abuse is typically sporadic, so you think "This is not always bad." But you are wrong. Interpersonal interactions are shaped in a manner designed to pacify the offending codependent person. This results in progressively shallow relationships.
3. Codependent fear - Codependent persons will always feel fear, irrational of course but there, nonetheless. This form of codependency is marked by a tremendous lack of self-confidence, and is rooted in the ethics and beliefs of the codependent. This manifestation of codependency is frequently exacerbated by peer pressure, and feelings of insecurity. Codependent individuals will live their lives to please others, because they are in constant fear of losing the other person in the relationship.

These three codependent types always end the same—broken relationships and tremendous emotional suffering.

Codependency is a form of addiction, relationship addiction, so we will refer to it hereafter as an addiction. How painful and dangerous can emotional addiction be? Relationship addicts regard their desperate need for someone as a measure of true love. A disconnection for these emotionally unstable individuals, means endangering their identity, integrity, and personality.

Have you ever loved someone to the point of becoming addicted to that love? Have you ever so wanted to love that you couldn't control your emotions and surrendered to them? Although love is the most beautiful feeling, it can also be painful and devastating, not unlike a vice.

That is what it's like that for those who depend on it, and who do everything and anything to avoid being alone. Codependents may remain in a relationship for months, even years, in spite of the fact that they do not feel good about the relationship. It's as if you think you see, but you actually don't, or when you think you love, but you don't love at all. This is codependency—all kinds of love, for partner or friend—it matters not.

6.1. Being too busy doesn't mean you will never meet the right person

Recent research has shown that relationship dependence is the most common type of dependency in the modern age. The reason, experts say, is the modern way of life, in which there is less free time for socializing and making new acquaintances. As a result, people are increasingly afraid of being left alone. Consequently, the codependent individual clings to each relationship vigorously.

For example, it is quite possible to be in passionate love with an unhealthy codependent individual. However, when a relationship is not based on healthy love, understanding, and mutual respect, the relationship develops into a painful and devastating one. Codependent people will break ties, suffer, and become depressed. They blame their partner for everything that went wrong. But you must be honest with yourself, was it all your partner's fault?

Some unhealthy relationships also end up in marriage or cohabitation, and they torment one another for the remainder of their lives. All three types of codependent people are the same when it comes to consequences, so, it is very important that you spot the problem before it is too late.

6.2. Who are relationship addicts and how do they perceive the relationship?

People who are relationship dependent desperately seek love, and a partner who will always be by their side, and complete them. In stable emotional relationships, there is no needs based component, which means that it is possible to love someone regardless of what needs and desires are met or not met. Nor is there an obsessive need for the partner's constant physical presence. People who are addicted to relationships do not have an intrinsic connection to their loved one, but instead, define true love in terms of how desperately *they* need that person in their life. Regard it is a warning when you hear someone say, "I can't live without you", or "I would die without you". Codependency compels its victims to do many destructive and self-destructive things, largely to prevent the pain they would feel upon separation or, because they hate the partner they dependent upon, or both.

Loving someone doesn't mean that you own them. In a relationship where you constantly demand your partner to justify their whereabouts, no one will be happy. Remember, it usually better to let them off the leash. I believe that everything happens for a reason. You need to restore your self-confidence, and practice introspection. Remember just one more thing—if you don't respect yourself you will never gain the respect of others. Humans, like other animals, have a sixth sense—fear. They can feel it in you.

Addiction is synonymous with a desire for partner control, mainly manifested in possessiveness, which results in following, spying, or forbidding the partner to work. The codependent may also withhold any information that they believe may threaten the relationship. Nevertheless, these relationships are difficult to leave. It sounds paradoxical. It is preferable to accept the loss of a relationship than to struggle with someone who has a codependent condition.

6.3. When does relationship dependence arise?

The predisposition to future addiction is created very early—around the age of three. To establish our future emotional stability, our early relationship with our mother must comprehend her physical and psychological availability, her role as a "constant" in our lives, and the quality of her interactions. If these needs are met, the child can absorb their mother's positive image, and mirror it later in life. This solid foundation enables the child to distance itself from the mother, leave the nest, so to speak. This is only possible because of the emotional stability provided to the child in their formative years. The child does not feel powerless or abandoned, and they learn the ability to be alone, and to have fun when they're alone. However, this ability is guaranteed to last a lifetime. It is often tested in various stages of our lives.

Experts tell us that this emotional addiction is heavily influenced by the romantic fantasies of love we encounter in books, music, and movies.

Do romantic stories affect addiction? Do the authors of such works lack emotional stability in their creative expressions? As they say, art imitates life. Unstable individuals may build fantasies that are fueled by the descriptions they encounter in works of art. They may act upon them, assuming that these are normal relationships. They may expect that idyllic love is possible, or that pain and suffering does not exist— only "they lived happily ever after." Life is not a fairytale, but codependent people rely on these fantasies, because they do not have a healthy perspective on interpersonal relationships.

Were you aware that the brothers Grimm, who authored countless fairytales, found their inspiration in horror stories and medieval myths? Many of those stories did not originally have happy endings, they were re-written with happy endings. As I said, life is not a fairytale.

What characterizes individuals who experience relationships in this way, and how do they behave with regard to the partner?

Allow me to illustrate this behavior through this example. *For fear of being left behind, the girl began to scour her boyfriend's letters, Facebook and messages. She was doing so discretely, knowing that he would be angry, and leave her if he found out. When the boyfriend discovered her treachery, the girl friend displayed none of that fear. On the contrary, as a defensive reaction, she counterattacked, displayed anger, cried, and accused him of being unfaithful. Protesting that she would never do something like that, and that he had made her act that way, which of course was simply not true. She would not do that if he was a man who could be trusted.* When they lack confidence in a loved one to remain faithful, when they face solitude as a result of their partner leaving, they are motivated to control him in a covert, violent way. They will do anything to avoid being left behind. If they believe they cannot live without this person, isn't it logical that for them to do everything possible to keep them? But just because it's logical, doesn't mean that the phrase "I can't live without you," should be taken literally. That is not normal behavior. Would you want to be that girl?

Psychologists tell us that such relationships are difficult to recognize, because many people interpret such behavior as normal and acceptable.

The truth is that many fail to recognize that they are in an interdependent, unhealthy relationship. However, some do recognize it for what it is, but cannot, or will not admit it to others, or to themselves. If they admit it, then they might be forced to make changes. They are extremely reluctant to do anything because uncertainty and separation anxiety. So, their adopted philosophy is, "better any connection than no connection."

Why would anyone choose a relationship they don't enjoy from a fear of being alone? It's often said that a good divorce is better than a bad marriage. However, this is out of the question for the codependent, who cannot feel whole without them, because they serve as an extension of them. They feel as though they would fall apart without them. If such a relationship is broken, the inability to move on is a sure sign that the loss will not be accepted. Emotionally unstable and dependent people who lose their loved one's despair for years, and live for the day to come when they will, once again, find bliss with their partner. This fantasy, along with self-denial regarding taking blame for their partner's departure, leads them to the belief that "everything will be good."

6.4. Can relationship addiction be dangerous?

Relationship addiction goes hand in glove with other addictions. Drug addicts, for example, do not feel emotionally stable, lack control, and need something to complete them—in this case, drugs. Opiate addicts often report that they are complacent, and need no one. This is because the drug fills their emptiness. If one is codependent, then the partner is the drug, hence the statement "I cannot live without you." Relationship addiction can be very dangerous. For an emotionally unstable person, disconnecting means compromising one's identity, integrity, and personality. Such a person is prepared to execute various manipulations to prevent the connection from being broken.

6.5. How can this vicious love cycle be broken, or can this type of addiction be cured?

Emotional stability is something that is built over time and maintained. Those who succeed in doing that have no concerns regarding the “vicious circle.” Codependent individuals repeat the same patterns in all their relationships, continuing the vicious circle. Although friends and a supportive environment can be helpful, few can overcome their addictive behavior on their own, and then, psychotherapy is beneficial. In such situations, the client-therapist builds those abilities that the client failed to sufficiently develop as a child. It is a certain kind of “re-education” or “corrective emotional experience.” The codependent, in some way, needs to be reborn.

They need to hit the reset button, and learn about the world and about relationships again—this time, in the right way. Believe me, it can be done and you will finally heal and be able to live a normal life in which people do not run away from you.

So, whatever type of codependent person you have a relationship with or, if you are that person, all these indicators of a dysfunctional relationship will materialize and, it is incumbent upon you to see, with the help of these examples, whether you are at risk or whether you are, in fact, a person that suffers from codependency.

CHAPTER SIX

WHICH ARE THE CAUSES OF CODEPENDENCY - DEEP ROOTS



I can say with certainty that we are living in a time of "renaissance" in the field of human psychology. Countless books have been written and extensive research has been undertaken, some of which would not have been possible without today's technology, but we are still just scratching the surface.

The human mind is so complex that no matter how much we research; we will always be at a new beginning. Any illness or condition of a psychic nature is always an enigma. In psychic conditions, new questions are constantly asked, which usually leads to a fresh set of questions. Psychic conditions are, at their core, extraordinarily complex and extremely difficult to understand. No matter how answers the experts give us, there will always be new questions.

Earlier, I noted that codependency is a relatively new term. It was first recorded, relative to other psychic conditions, in 1941. While other psychic conditions have been studied for centuries, and receive much attention, codependency is still barely explored. However, this emotional state and its roots can be found, as is often the case with many conditions—in early childhood.

7.1. The deep roots of codependency

Did we come to the question of why? I know, so that you have been reading and you have been patiently waiting for the answer to why "your watch is not working" and what is that missing part? You will find your answers here. After you find all the answers, you can finally begin to assemble that watch, and it will start to tick again.

The deep roots of codependency are typically the result of early childhood trauma or, in very rare cases, genetic predisposition.

In relationships, friendships, and ordinary day-to-day interpersonal relationships, it is very important to find a *yardstick* to measure the manner in which we seek and receive emotions, closeness, and intimacy. Emotional dependence, or excessive attachment can be a big problem in relationships.

Research shows that anyone can be addicted, and not only in love relationships. Addiction can occur in a variety of relationships, parental, and so on. We can become dependent on our children, parents, relationship partner, best friend, or work colleagues—basically to any social construct. Interdependence in our interpersonal relationships can make it difficult for us to establish stable relationships with others, feel contentment.

Love, in male-female relationships, is often displaced by dependence on the other person, without whom, one's own life seems empty, meaningless, or worthless. What does a codependent relationship look like? What drives us to give ourselves to give infinitely to loved ones, or to demand something unconditionally? The crux of the addiction is the erroneous belief that "I can't stand being without them." Bonding in an immature way, by completely surrendering yourself to a partner, leads to addictive love. This type of relationship occurs when one believes that they cannot function without the other. This brand of love is marked by sacrifice, self-pity, and passivity. The only pleasure codependent person can experience, comes from their partner's affection and emotional response.

7.2. Affection without limits

There are myriad unhealthy reasons why people stay together. On the psychological side, people who are preoccupied with their relationship are characterized by a negative image of themselves and a positive image of others. We call that that, partner idealization. We call the party who fears rejection, a codependent person. They ignore their own feelings, needs, and wants, and instead, focus on the feelings, needs and wants of their partner, their friend etc.

Partner dependence is far from harmless, often causing the same physical and psychological consequences as other addictions, psychiatrists claim. We may be emotionally and unrelentingly attached to certain people in our lives, but this is an immature form of connection. Such behavior can make life difficult in all its aspects and foster unhealthy relationships, which can rarely survive.

The common trigger for that addiction, is a paralyzing fear of losing love and support, the fear of loneliness that is deeply hidden in the subconscious, and the constant search for guarantees that cannot be given. At first glance, addicts appear calm and gentle, but hiding beneath that façade is a person who views themselves as helpless, and who fear taking any initiative. Not only does this type of personality seek support in difficult situations, but they also require someone to rely on for the most routine of decisions, while, paradoxically, feeling the need to control them. Over time, partnerships are marked by endless anxiety, and panic over the possibility of losing control. They easily fall into a vicious circle, gradually losing touch with their environment, their friends, and their family.

7.3. Basic characteristics

Codependent personality traits are not always clearly identifiable. Emotionally dependent persons are characterized by preoccupation with relationships; excessive need for closeness; the desire for total unity; social and emotional isolation; remaining in relationships for fear of being alone; easily falling in love; idealize their partner and new relationship; a rapid and intense start into relationships. Their characteristic feelings in codependent relationships are anger, passion, jealousy and an obsessive need for control. Do you understand the issue here?

Codependent personalities *always* need to control the other person in the relationship. There is always possessiveness; unrealistic fears of being left behind; a sense powerlessness, and helplessness when left to themselves; and an inability to express grievances of any kind. The relationship becomes a maelstrom of stress, depression, guilt, and regret. And the biggest cause is a bad childhood.

7.4. Formation of trauma

You may or may not remember, but close your eyes and think deeply about why you such emptiness. Remembering why will serve you well, because, but for that *why*, this problem wouldn't exist. Close your eyes and try to recall how you felt in your childhood. Somewhere in the past lies the core of your problem. You experienced trauma, and now we must see what that trauma was, and how it has manifested itself in later life. In this way, you can return to the moment when your watch was broken. Now, it's up to you to find that missing part.

As we've said before, the formation of addictive behaviors may be the result of some childhood trauma, or parents' overly critical attitudes. Usually, these people were raised by overly strict parents, or parents who placed conditions on their love: For example, they might say, "I don't love you because you weren't good." When such a child grows up, they see that image of themselves in the eyes of others, especially those they are close to, as in a relationship or marriage. Unsure of their value, they strive to keep their partner by their side. This invariably leads to the deterioration of the relationship, and usually to its end. As many as 80 percent of young women and 60 percent of young men believe that it is better to stay in any relationship than to be alone—they believe that the meaning of their life is contained in a partnership. That is a frightening statistic.

7.5. Childhood

As children, most codependents relied on their parents, grandparents, or older siblings. Most were obedient children who accepted advice and the opinions their parents imposed upon them. As children, they did not have the opportunity to make their own decisions or undertake responsibilities. They were not permitted to make their own decisions, and so they were deprived of experiencing the frustration and tension that is inherent in the decision making process, and this is responsible for creating that feeling of emptiness. Another possible scenario is the pre-codependent child confronting their parents, and creating drama around every decision or choice. Everyone must be involved in the dilemmas and the problems, whether it is buying shoes, choosing a school, getting married—family, friends, neighbors... *everyone* must be involved. Then there are codependents who practice a substitution strategy, replacing the family relationship with a relationship to their chosen partner.

7.6. Meaning

All children are entitled to a good start in life. We know that the experiences that children gain in their earliest childhood have a tremendous impact later in life. New developments in neuroscience tell us that the infancy through six years' stage of life is crucial, as the cerebellum grows and more 1,000 brain cells connect every second. These changes directly and indirectly define the child's health, capacity for learning, future success and, ultimately, future happiness. This development is taking place at this stage of the child's life and cannot be recreated at some point in the future. This is why it is so very critical.

Experts in neuroscience assure us that early childhood development is the future of the modern world. They explain that recent brain research indicates that the early years, from birth to eight years, and prenatal development (before birth) are periods of heightened sensitivity to the development of brain capacity. This means that there is a period when it is "most desirable to encourage the development of certain capabilities and functions."

For example, neuroscience tells us that the period of heightened sensitivity for the formation of basic brain architecture is before birth, and for the development of emotional control from six months to the second year (previously it was thought that this period began in the second year). Also, science has shifted the period of heightened sensitivity to the development of symbolic thinking to the age of 18 months, which significantly changes the view of regarding the importance of play for a child of that age, and the need for adult participation in organized support for development and learning.

This is unambiguous evidence that investing in early childhood development is the cornerstone of societal progress. To paraphrase the old adage, "the first years last forever" has been proven to be true, because their impact persists throughout the child's life.

It is also the period of greatest sensitivity. If the child is not offered a developmental environment, but instead experiences neglect, violence, poor family relationships, exposure to either overwhelming or inadequate stimuli, a rigid upbringing, an unstructured upbringing, a lack of emotional support, poverty, isolation, and/or discrimination, the child will be at risk for the onset of developmental disabilities, and personality disorders, one of which is codependency.

7.7. Those years

In early childhood, children build the neurological and psychological foundations for the future, and it is very important that the pillars be strong and stable, so that it can bear the burden of the abundant superstructure needed for lifelong physical, social, & emotional health, and academic, and economic success.

7.8. Parents

Parents represent the first human contact and communication in a child's life. They are the child's most important teachers. Parents must pay attention their needs, to learn to interpret and recognize the child's signals, sent by voice, gestures, and gaze. Parents must respond positively to these signals. The child needs to feel welcome in this world, and feel that their environment is safe, as these are the conditions for successful learning. That's why a child needs, from day one, a smile on a familiar face, touching, pampering, kissing, hugging, swinging, singing, and talking. Children need stimuli in their environment, such as colorful pictures, mobiles, interesting objects, etc. Interacting with the child through play, reading, coloring, games and other activities is crucial to healthy development.

A child that is raised in a colorless environment of negative emotions, passivity, loneliness, and limited interaction with its environment, does not develop the same number of brain synapses and neural connections as the child who is exposed to various positive stimuli. Learning and memory capacities are stunted. The absence of stimulation during periods of heightened sensitivity to development in later years (beyond the age of eight) can be offset by increased activity (e.g. learning), but much more effort must be made by the individual, family, and community. How successful a child will be, in any field, depends largely on the quality of their early development, the extent to which the brain's potential was enhanced by positive stimuli, the relationships built in the family, the family atmosphere (supportive or overwhelming), and whether or not the child was respected as a person, and accepted & supported by unconditional love, so as to develop in the direction of his natural capacities and interests.

7.9. It all starts with trauma

Trauma is defined as an existential threat or overwhelming situation that surpasses one's ability to cope. An event that triggers a traumatic reaction is beyond the ordinary human experience and poses a threat to one's own life (earthquakes, wars, refugees, illnesses, injuries, loved ones' loss, traffic accidents, etc.). A traumatic event breaks down common response systems that give people a sense of control, connection, and meaning. Common reactions to trauma are intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and fear for one's life. Children are also exposed to traumatic events. However, their psycho-physical make-up and limited life experience, necessarily means that children face trauma differently. To an infant, the world is their mom. Through her, the world is decoded, as dangerous and scary, or as motivational and supportive. In the event of exposure to a traumatic event, an infant will instinctively become alert, and rely on their evaluation of the parental signal. The child's subsequent reactions will be based on its understanding of the signals sent by the mother, or other parental figure. A supportive and competent mother can make the world a comfortable place for her baby even when circumstances are not the best. It is equally true, that a mother overwhelmed by her own fears, even though in fairly decent life circumstances, can send her child a dark picture of the world.

A child who has acquired solid cognitive-emotional competencies, is more likely to enjoy a good life than a child who has not.

Hypothetico-deductive scientific models are increasingly being used to explain the occurrence of codependency.

Researchers tell us that separation from family is possible both because of the increased psychic autonomy of the adolescent and the broader psycho-social support system formed through peer friendships. These are important resources for developing psychic activity.

On the other hand, those suffering the psychological consequences of childhood traumatic experiences are encouraged to seek out professional help.

Maybe you will remember and maybe you won't, but I want you to close your eyes and think deeply about why you feel emptiness. Remembering will certainly serve you well, because, absent that trauma, this problem wouldn't exist. So, close your eyes, and try to remember how you felt in childhood. Somewhere in your past is the root of your problem. You have experienced trauma, and now we must determine the nature and scope of that trauma, in order to understand how the trauma has manifested itself. In this way, you will be able to return to the moment when your watch was broken, and find that missing part.

7.10. Let's talk about the trauma a bit more

Trauma is defined as the mental consequence of one or more serious, negative external events, which leave a person temporarily helpless, destroying previously successful defense mechanisms and coping strategies. The "kick", so to speak, is always external, and it causes several mental changes that persist over a long period. There are four characteristics most childhood traumas have in common, regardless of whether a person is diagnosed with codependency or, another disorder in adulthood. Trauma is expressed in one of the following four ways: 1) visually, or through other senses, 2) repetitive behavior, 3) fears related to trauma, and 4) altered attitudes toward people, life, and the future.

Trauma related dreams or nightmares are an almost obligatory component of trauma in adults, but are not often seen in children, especially those under 5 years of age.

1) The tendency to relive the traumatic experience, often triggered when encountering a circumstance or an event the reminds one of the trauma. However, it can occur at any time, during school hours, before falling asleep, during play, or other activities.

2) Through play or behavioral reconstruction of events, aspects of a horrific event are repeated. Post-traumatic play, which a child perceives as fun, is a gloomy, long-lasting and particularly addictive form of repetition. Children are often unaware that their behavior or bodily reactions is trauma related, that they are, in fact, a repetition of thoughts or responses to the sudden shock they experienced. These repetitions can be so persistent and time-consuming that they can become a permanent aspect of their personality.

3) Specific fears, stemming from trauma, are relatively easy to identify, once we understand the nature of the trauma the child has experienced. The specificity and literal nature of these fears are *differentia specifica* from neurotic phobic or anxiety fears. For example, a neurotic child will be frightened of all dogs, but a child suffering from trauma, only of a Rottweiler, the breed that attacked them, and caused the trauma.

4) In traumatized victims, limitations with respect to time perspectives are particularly striking. Non-traumatized adolescents express nearly unlimited ideas regarding their futures, while traumatized adolescents express a desire to live in the moment. Traumatized pre- adolescents rarely speak of the time when they will grow up. Instead, they express their fear that more terrible things will happen. Their belief in themselves and others is shaken, and "basic trust" is broken. Traumatized children and adolescents view the future as terrifying.

7.11. *Childhood trauma*

Depersonalization and spontaneous self-hypnosis are important consequences of the repeated horrors that traumatized children have endured. As victims of this ongoing terror, they believe that there will be other terrible events to come. As a result of these expectations, they protect themselves through dissociation. In this way, they may fall prey to codependency. These are common findings in abused children. Some of these children, spontaneously master the technique of hypnosis on their own. This mechanism allows the child a mental escape.

Symptoms of traumatic disorder in children usually begin within three months of the traumatic event, although they may be delayed for months, even years, depending on the individual. Symptoms generally involve some form of recurrence, avoidance, or over-sensitivity and may vary over time. On average, one-half of patients fully recover within three months, and the duration of symptoms in the remaining one-half may persist a year or more beyond the traumatic event. For younger children, relief often comes in the form of repetitive play. For example, a child involved in a serious car accident will repeat their traumatic experience by crashing their toy cars together.

Because it can be difficult for children to talk about diminished interest in important activities, symptoms should be carefully evaluated through reports from parents, teachers, and other adults significant in the child's life.

The neglected child will become distrustful and develop mechanisms that dominate or control the situation. This need for control may grow over time and they too will fall prey to codependency.

Whether you remember being traumatized or not, you can be certain that this is the core cause of your condition. All of us are trying to compensate for something. For example, parents may try to accomplish their unrealized goals through their children. And they push their children because they are compensating through them. Do you see where I am going with this? You are also trying to compensate. However, you compensate through obsessive control, because you are lost that little part of your watch due to the trauma you experienced. But you will get better; don't doubt that for a second.

As we have established, trauma plays the most important role in the development of codependency. If, as a child, you experienced trauma in the clinical sense that we have described, and you are experiencing the symptoms we have described, then there is a high probability that you will, unfortunately, become a codependent person.

CHAPTER SEVEN

HOW TO DIAGNOSE IT



Making the correct diagnosis is the first step to healing and returning to a normal life. You have absorbed a great deal of knowledge in the previous chapters. You've had the opportunity to learn about the nature of this condition, its elements, and its symptoms.

Now it is time for you to end your denial. Dismiss the denial phase immediately. You now know your real self. You see the truth that has been hidden from you for a very long time. That's great. Now it is time to rely on yourself, not others.

It is time to accept responsibility, and stop running away from the truth. Now you must be brave, because this is your fight. This is a fight you have to win alone. Others may be around you, but it's not their fight, it's yours. They can help you, but only incidentally. The only ones in the arena are you and this condition.

You have acknowledged that you have a problem that is the first step towards healing.

This is the most important sentence for you in this chapter. ***Your diagnosis should be made by an expert.*** So, a psychiatrist is a must. Most do not want to see a specialist. Most fear being stigmatized by others.

Don't be frightened and don't feel ashamed. I know, that throughout your life, you have sought the encouragement of others. I understand that seeking psychiatric help is, unfortunately, a social taboo. However, you need to ask yourself one question—how do you feel now? Are you a happy person? Of course, you're not, and without diagnosis and treatment, you will never be a happy person.

For the first time in your life, stand up for yourself, and seek professional help. Don't concern yourself with what others may think. You must fight for yourself. Remember, you have always been your own best friend and your own worst enemy. Be a friend to yourself, for once in your life.

Don't make the of using the Internet or, chancing some type of self-treatment. Many people make this mistake, and the consequences are dire. I am going to show you some of the biggest mistakes people made regarding their illness.

Almost every codependent person with Internet access has searched for symptoms on Google least once occasion, and, the most frequent result is panic. Why? Because a symptom search usually ends with the conclusion that the condition is incurable. That's wrong! Your condition is curable, but only with professional help.

8.1. *The biggest mistakes*

To avoid inaccurate diagnoses, I will provide you a few tips.

- Never make a diagnosis for yourself

It is very dangerous to make a self-diagnosis based on Internet searches. Spending time on the Internet will only delay going to the doctor and getting a proper diagnosis. Read this book, which provides you with sufficient information regarding the codependent condition.

- Do not "prescribe" medications for yourself

It is one thing to seek advice for healthy eating on the Internet, but quite another to apply questionable remedies to the treatment of specific diseases.

- Blog Search

Just because someone has a popular blog, it does not mean that they know what they are writing about.

- Contact your doctor

Researching the Internet will make you more anxious, but it won't cure you. You need to see a doctor for a specific diagnosis and treatment.

- Once again—avoid the Internet

Nothing you read on the Internet should be taken as a personalized medical diagnosis. Not even when written by experts. Seeing a doctor is the only smart choice.

When people have a health problem, they often seek an easier, cheaper, and faster path to the information they need, so rather than going to a doctor, they turn to the internet—there is no solution on the internet, believe me. This can be very dangerous. According to a survey conducted in the UK, showed 25 percent of those receiving their diagnosis by consulting Google, received the wrong diagnosis, hence, the wrong treatment.

Dr. Google has become the first stop on the road to healing, but experts warn that people should never make a diagnosis for themselves, as information found on the Internet is often confusing or unreliable.

If you search for your symptoms on the Internet, make your own diagnosis, and determine your own therapy, you only going to worsen your condition.

Delaying a doctor visit only prolongs the agony. surveys reveal many people who admit that they spent days worrying about a problem before reaching out to a doctor, one- third of respondents acknowledge delaying their doctor visit for more than two weeks. Every twentieth patient postponed their doctor for a few years before they sought professional help.

Doctors the world over are confronted with patients who must be persuaded that they do not have the disease Google suggested they had. Physicians warn that online diagnoses do patients far more harm than good.

So forget about self-healing and the Internet. You already know your symptoms, and so it's the time to see a doctor. You will tell him your symptoms, he will make the right diagnosis, and you will start taking medication and going to psychotherapy. After that, the world will be a whole new place for you, trust me.

PART 2

CHAPTER ONE

LEARN HOW TO CONTROL THE EMOTIONS



You've already learned a lot. If you've already started psychotherapy—congratulations. However, you still have a long ahead. This condition requires a great deal of work and self-investment.

Your emotions will not change overnight. It just doesn't work that way.

Emotions are a strong force and you can't simply divert them. If I told you it was possible to turn them off, I would be lying. Emotions are like a river. The course of the river may be changed over time, and that is what you are being asked to do—to divert the river, to make a new riverbed.

Is this possible? Of course! The point is that it takes time. When I told you to press the reset button, I meant for you to change your view of the world around you, not to change your emotions. For emotions, it takes time to change. Maybe you will never manage to change your emotions entirely, but you will learn how to redirect them and control them. The most important thing is for you to change your perception of the world and the people around you. That takes much less time. You will continue to feel all that you felt before, but with help, you will learn how to control your emotions. Until you divert the river...you can build a dam and slow the river's flow.

Practicing emotional intelligence can help you successfully control your emotions, but it also affects the way you deal with stress and tension at work. By remaining constructive, focused and compassionate, you can build relationships that will thrive. These are the three steps.

- Listen to your emotions and be self-aware

Learn how *you* function. Understanding yourself makes it easier for you to understand others. So, focus on yourself.

- Be authentic

People respond positively to people that are comfortable in their own skin. People acknowledge this honesty, they will identify with you, and you will easily gain their trust. Accept who and what you are. Believe me, those famous words, “the truth will set you free” are not meaningless.

- Observe

Recognize the burdens in your environment and try to resolve them. Plan in advance, and be prepared to react. Refrain from intervening in the problems of others, and don't be too quick to offer your help to others. Remember what I said earlier, everyone is responsible for their own decisions. Don't give any advice at all. You must resist that urge, that little voice that tells you everyone needs salvation, and that only you can provide it.

9.1. How to learn to control your emotions?

Controlling one's emotions requires identifying, managing, and responding to them in a manner that allows them to become useful aspects of our inner experience. Controlling emotions is one of 28 transversal skills that can help you rebuild yourself. Controlling your emotions does not mean that you should ignore, *or* amplify them.

You need to understand that no emotion is an enemy, neither anger nor fear, nor is it sadness. There is no bad emotion just as there is no good emotion. Emotions only determine if you feel better or if you feel worse.

9.2. The way we respond to emotions is always a subjective experience

For example, when angry, you may behave inappropriately toward someone. In contrast, when angry, you may be motivated to fight for yourself, or defend yourself. You can easily see how subjective the emotion of anger can be...sometimes a force for evil, at other times a force for good.

Self-awareness allows you to become a cognitive observer, and become more receptive to your inner feelings. When your emotions seem confusing, overwhelming or paralyzing, they cannot serve you well.

I'll show you a great exercise that will help you control your emotions.

9.3. Dialectical behavioral therapy:

Controlling emotions 101

This therapy is easy to follow, and with a little practice, you can learn the skill of managing your emotions. These are the following steps:

1. Understanding your emotions.

Distance your emotional experiences, think in terms of an out-of-body experience. Examine and describe what you are feeling. Don't go for the emotions right away, but instead, take a sensible and prudent pause between feeling and reaction. Pay attention to your experiences.

This may sound like a simple concept, but it isn't. What role do emotions play in your life? Honestly, evaluate your understanding of your emotional experiences. Imagine how much your life can change for the better if you analyze your emotional experiences.

1. Accept your feelings and do not hide them.

The more you choose, consciously or unconsciously, to avoid your emotions, the more likely they are to hurt when you face them later. They will be waiting for you just around the bend. That is why you must be honest with yourself, and acknowledge them. It may be painful, but relief will follow.

If you convince yourself that your emotions are unacceptable or scary, you will succumb to the natural tendency to avoid them at all costs.

1. Use no stress methods.

Try substituting one reaction for another. A substitute reaction can distract you from the previously unfavorable reaction. to an incentive. It is helpful to learn this technique when facing unpleasant emotional experiences that may result from fear, anxiety, anger, guilt, or shame. By actively practicing this relaxation technique, you will be reducing knee-jerk reactions, known to be the frequent companion of unpleasant emotions.

1. Enhance positive experiences.

You've heard the adage; you are what you eat. Try applying it to your inner psychological experience from a different paradigm, you are what you think or, you are what you do.

Focusing on negative, sad, unpleasant thoughts, or behaviors will do you no good. Just as we can create an intense inner state of sadness, so can we create an inner state of peace. Actively direct your thoughts and actions toward positive and healthy endeavors. Express gratitude for everything you experience, good or bad.

Additionally, you should talk to a friend or partner, or take a walk, or take a bath, or listen to soothing music, or you write down the things you are grateful for in your journal.

1. Be mentally present in the moment.

If your thoughts are in the present, your attachment to the past will loosen. Mindfulness allows you to be fully in the present moment. In this way, you can detach from your traumatic past.

Often, concerns about the past or the future distract us from the present moment to a point that we begin to feel that we are not in touch with ourselves. This is why it is important to connect with your inner self and be mentally present in the present moment. Regardless of how intense or unpleasant the emotions of the present moment may be, time will pass. Remember, emotional experiences are temporary. Become a conscious and curious observer of your experiences and you will notice that you have a new connection with your emotions. They have no magical power over you.

1. Be aware of your triggers.

Learning to effectively control our emotions requires regular exercise. Know that when you have mastered them, you will feel like you are the "captain of your ship" and you will realize that everything was worth the effort. Explore your triggers and try to avoid them. Emotions will not take over your life or interfere with your when you learn to understand them, and to manage and respond to them more effectively.

Become aware of what situations trigger certain emotional responses in you. By increasing your knowledge of yourself in

this way, you will be prepared to confidently control your emotions during times of conflict, regardless of the situation. Most parents do not teach their children how to effectively identify and manage their emotions, and when these skills are not learned in childhood and adolescence, they grow up to face emotional confusion and sadness in adulthood. The present moment is the only time you can learn to use your emotions constructively. This is accomplished by monitoring and analyzing the emotions related to the experience you have underwent. With these techniques, you will control the emotions that surge within you—the river will be diverted.

CHAPTER TWO

WHO CAN HELP YOU?

As I've explained, this is your battle. You need to rely on yourself. As a result of your codependent condition, you have driven a good number of people out of your life. But as I told you...the past is the past, and the future is in your hands. The watchmaker does not call on anyone to help him. He is skilled enough to repair the watch himself. Believe it or not, you are skilled enough to start repairing your watch yourself.

Of course, this does not mean that other people cannot help you, such as friends, partners, and family. If you examine your situation with a clear eye, you will realize that it is a result of your insecurity and your lack of self-confidence. However, you're still here, and looking for help. The fact that you are reading this book means you're a fighter. Reading this book means that you have never given up on yourself, that you want to improve yourself and that you want to be a better person—both for yourself and for others. It means that you didn't let fear win. It means that regardless of your fears you are fighting back. That means you're brave.

I will show you a few things that you can only learn when you stop relying on others, and start relying on yourself. You need to help yourself first.

- Things you learn when you have no one to rely upon

1. You will learn that although you can try to explain something to someone, they only understand it when it happens to them.
2. You will begin to realize that at the end of the day, only you can help yourself.
3. It is easier not to talk about things because, then you subconsciously expect it to happen, and you get frustrated when it doesn't happen.
4. You will learn who really cares and who just pretends to care. In difficult times, real friends make themselves known.
5. You will realize that some of your best friends do not know the real you, but only one part of you. In other words, they love you when you're happy, but not when you're sad.
6. There are those who would downplay your problems, because they are not life-threatening. You should run away from these people.
7. You will seek answers rather than the approval of others. This means that you are using your own judgment.
8. You will learn to take responsibility for your own life. You accept the consequences of your failures and do not blame others for your failures. You learn how to fight your own battles because not everyone is on your side.
9. It's hard, but you learn how to accept yourself. It's hard to be alone, and harder still to accept that it's your fault. You learn not to take things personally and to be strong when you are alone.
10. You will learn to deal with loneliness. You embrace your thoughts, your confusion, and your fears, and in the end, you learn to be fearless.
11. You learn that everyone in your life has a role to play, and that some roles are more important than others. You will learn that some roles are only temporary.
12. You will learn to be more cautious in future relationships. You are no longer so trusting, and you do not trust

easily. You learn to set boundaries for those who do not have your best interest in mind.

13. You will learn that it is often better not to tell people everything about yourself, because you never know how or when they might use it against you.

14. You will realize that you can pick yourself up after a fall, and that you don't have to rely on anyone.

15. This is a difficult lesson, but also the most important one. You can survive alone, because some people just want to drag you down.

Why are so many people unable to stand behind their actions? Due to irresponsible behavior, we lose keys, money, jobs, housing, health, and even our lives. Children learn by being given chores, right?

Responsibility is a burden easily transferable to God, destiny, luck, or the next door neighbor. Responsibility was defined by the American journalist and satirical writer Ambrose Birrs in "Devil's Dictionary" printed back in 1911. A century has passed since he penned his definition, but nothing has changed. We still un-shoulder our responsibilities, pointing our finger at external elements that have broken our plans. So, we shift the blame for the delay to traffic jams, we did not continue our education because we had children, and the state is responsible because it does not provide the opportunity for us to move forward.

By definition, coming of age, is the moment when a child becomes an adult, ready to take on the responsibility for their actions. But, in reality, we act on that Voltaire's view that, no snowflake in the avalanche ever feels responsible, and we affirm Virginia Wolf's view that most people feel no responsibility for their actions.

Even the corporations have adopted the keyword of our age, insisting on social responsibility, but paradoxically, while we expect it from a colleague, our spouse, our friends, and our children, we find ourselves alone in giving it. Master psychologist and psychotherapist Danka Djukanovic says that if we belong to a group of overly responsible people, we may endanger our quality of life. But even so, we derive more benefit than harm.

Freud used to say that there are many people who do not want freedom, because they fear the responsibility. That describes you, the codependent—fearful of responsibility and its consequences. Djukanovic recalled the scenario we all experienced in childhood, our first broken toy. When asked by our parents, "Who did it?", we naively acknowledged our responsibility, and were punished.

You must become independent. That is an absolute priority because independence allows you to push back on your condition more forcefully. This is akin to ripping off a band aid, and it will make your recovery much quicker.

10.1. What does independence mean for your condition?

Independence means taking care of yourself without constant support of other people. If you want to be independent, you need to hold your life in your hands and take care of it. Independence brings many responsibilities, but the freedom it brings is priceless.

If you fear independence—look at all its benefits:

10.2. A sense of freedom

Those who have never felt the freedom of independence can hardly imagine what that feeling is. You are completely dependent on yourself and you answer only to yourself. Independence allows you to make your own decisions, organize your time as you see fit, to do as you like, and to walk confidently down your chosen path.

10.3. More confidence

The very fact you are independent suggests progress. You have been able to give yourself the life you want through your hard work and dedication. The result is greater self-confidence as you witness your achievements mount.

The road to independence can be difficult, and scary. But with each step, your confidence builds. Each problem you solve increases your self-confidence.

10.4. Financial independence

Independence means be able to provide for your own needs, without the help of a parent, grandparent, or anyone else. Managing your own money, developing your financial management skills, and other skills you need to make your life as independent as possible, is truly rewarding.

Over time, you will realize that every obstacle you have overcome, and every effort you have put forth has been worth it. Now you can decide what matters to you, what you want to own—and you deserve that.

10.5. Better life decisions

When you are independent, all decisions are yours alone. Of course, you can seek advice, but the final decision is yours. Decision making is one of the more important, and perhaps most difficult thing in life, but over time you will learn how to analyze the problems, and make the right decision in the end.

10.6. Development of personality and character

Freedom, confidence, and financial independence are things that shape your persona, and your future. They bring your personality full circle, and you can make course corrections. Follow your every step, try to avoid mistakes, and make adjustments as you see fit. When you are independent and understand that your decisions are your own—you are ready to accept greater risks and bolder undertakings. This is how character is built. Opportunities are revealed, and so are the abilities that lie within you.

10.7. New value system

When you earn your own living, the value of money and time take on new meaning. You will gain an appreciation for your free time and those with whom you spend it. The more you value yourself and your life, the more you value the lives and decisions of the people in your circle. Going forward, your success will be viewed through a new lens, and your levels of motivation will increase. This brings positive change to your life, making it significantly better.

So get a firm grip, stand up, and face your problems.

But generally who else can help you in this process?

For those who experience substantial difficulties, such as inappropriate or destructive behavior, do harm to themselves etc., professional help (doctors, psychiatrists or psychologists) highly recommended.

Anyone with a mental condition has a better chance for recovery if they are motivated to change, volunteer for help, and have the support of loved ones. However, environmental distractions can sometimes harm them rather than help them. This typically arises from fear, or a failure to understand the nature of the problem. People in your environment may try to force you into treatment, or discourage treatment, either of which can cause you harm. So, first and foremost, listen to yourself.

10.8. About “mental illness”

Take depression for example. You hear about a person suffering from depression, you hear that they are *down* , others suggest “that she has to cope with herself”, or that “only the mentally weak and incapacitated can suffer from depression”. Sympathetic voices will say, “it is a shame to be depressed”, or they have “surrendered.” Still others will say," they are just acting out", or, they are "seeking attention", and similar nonsense. A person facing such prejudices will be "as depressed as depressed is possible ". Such comments compound their suffering, increases their isolation, diminishes trust, and may cause them to avoid seeking help or following prescribed therapies. This can end tragically. Yet another reason to rely on yourself.

10.9. Escape from reality

There is a palpable fear of being labeled, "people will think I'm crazy." If an individual cannot resolve their issues, it is time to contact an expert. If they allow problems, such as depression or anxiety, dominate their lives, the problem will only grow. The sooner you decide to seek help, the better. I will remind you once again, because it is very important, that taking medication on your own, such as tranquilizers and sedatives, achieves nothing beyond short-term relief.

After only 3 weeks of drug use, addiction sets in, and over time, larger doses are required to achieve the same effect. These drugs artificially reduce suffering and as quickly as the drug is withdrawn, you are back to square one. Run from reality in this way, only makes the problem bigger. When used improperly, sedatives can speed up the process of dementia, and they can increase the risk of accidents in traffic and in the workplace. Don't try to escape reality. You can do this the right way.

10.10. What does the connection between the body and the psyche look like and how does the body respond to the signals that emotions send to it?

The brain stores our thoughts and shapes our beliefs, either under the influence of information from the outside world or, our internal world. Thoughts and beliefs are responsible for our emotional experience, that is to say, for how we will feel in a given situation. The body responds to our emotions, preparing for danger if we are afraid, or relaxing if we feel comfortable and safe. Every emotional response has a parallel response in our physical body. Through these bodily sensations, we can judge what emotions we are feeling. For example, when scared or anxious, adrenaline is released, blood vessels in the arms and legs expand as the body prepares for fight or flight, the stomach and intestines experience reduced blood supply, and the secretions of the protective envelope in the stomach are reduced...butterflies. The stomach cramps, resulting in that uncomfortable feeling of heaviness and tightness that we experience when we are anxious. The body, in this example, has established its priorities based on the fact that we are scared and in danger. If we are in danger, our muscles must be ready for action, and digesting food is completely irrelevant at that moment. Our body always respond in our best interests, but, and this is critical, our bodies respond on the basis of our emotional inputs. So, if those emotional inputs are flawed...God help us. Consequently, if our emotional response to the boss, the exam, and other everyday things is fear, then the body will respond accordingly. Stress levels go through the roof! Can you see the damage you can cause yourself if you delay solving your problem?

10.11. What helps you the most in your recovery is a rational view of the world around you

If we have an irrational view of what is happening in our lives, we will not have good outcomes. Every day we use terms with the potential to evoke depression, anxiety, and other unhealthy emotions, such as "I can't stand it!" Now that's a sentence that has weight. Suggesting something like that send our bodies a danger signal, engendering the appropriate. Here's an example, "I can't stand the boss criticizing me". Now that is inconsistent with the reality. If that were true, no one would leave his boss's office alive. It is indeed difficult, but bearable to deal with life's difficulties.

10.12. Look out for “magical cures”

Advertisements recommend products to boost self-confidence, implying that one has no self-confidence unless they use their product. Of course, we need self-confidence when we face challenges, but it isn't derived from a pill. If we lack self-confidence, a new challenge can make us anxious—we may even give up. However, if we approach this rationally, we will say, "Ok I have no experience in this situation, what should I do to gain it?" Then, as our experience increases, so does our self-confidence. Self-confidence parallels our experiences in specific life situations.

Be bold and consult with others as you move forward, but never lose sight of the fact that you are the master of your life. You have, metaphorically speaking, stepped into the ring. Now that you have your gloves on, don't give up. Fight like a lion. Do not hit below the belt, do not use the internet and do not self-medicate. Instead, read this book and consult your doctor. Eventually, believe it or not, you will be able to divert the river, and find that missing part of the clock.

CHAPTER THREE

USEFUL TOOLS



You've been through a lot so far, no doubt about it. But you are a tough and you are strong. Even though you are still missing the part needed to fix that watch, you are take huge strides forward. You have to that you are a victim in this story, and not the villain. I know that over the years you have developed feelings guilt. I know that you believe that you have tried your best to help others, and that you have pure intentions, but unfortunately, you have done the worst, for yourself and others. But don't despair, for every problem there is a solution.

Now you need relief. You understand what you have done. Your desperate desire to control others, thinking this would cure that sense of emptiness you have inside. I know you are suffering, but you have to be brave, you have to stand up, and build yourself up. You have to be emotionally born again. As I've told you before, there are multiple ways to control your emotions and facilitate your recovery.

In this chapter, I'll give you additional useful tools you can use when you experience a rush of emotions. There are ways to silence that voice in your head, even shut it off completely.

Breathing is essential for many emotional states. Believe it or not, breathing exercises might do the trick, and help you quiet that little voice in your head that urges you to intervene.

11.1. Benefits of breathing

There are 3 breathing exercises for calming the nervous system. They will reduce stress, induce relaxation, and restoring energy balance. You can suppress your control urges with these very effective tools.

You can do breathing exercises at any time. Since breathing can be controlled and regulated, it is a useful tool that we can use to a desired state of mind.

I recommend 3 breathing exercises, 1) stimulant breathing, 2) breathing exercise 4-7-8 (also called relaxing breath), and 3) exhalation counting.

11.2. Stimulant breathing

Stimulant breathing is a yogic breathing technique. Its purpose is to increase energy and alertness. Quickly inhale and exhale through the nose. Keep your mouth closed but relaxed. Your breaths and exhalations should be the same length but as short as possible. Don't hesitate, and breathe loudly. Try to do 3 breathe-in, breathe-out cycles per second. This will produce rapid movement of the diaphragm. Breathe normally after each cycle. To begin, do the exercise for a maximum of 15 seconds and increase that over time. The ultimate goal is to have a *stimulant breathing* exercise last for a full minute. Doing it properly will make you feel refreshed after exercise. While performing the exercise, you should feel a strain in the back of the neck, in the diaphragm, chest, and abdomen. The next time you want a cup of coffee, or feel your energy is low, do this breathing exercise.

11.3. Breathing Exercise 4-7-8 (Relaxing Breath)

Breathing 4-7-8 is extremely simple, although time-consuming, and can be done anywhere. Until you learn how to do it properly, exercise in a sitting position with your back straight. Place the tip of the tongue on the palate just behind the upper teeth and hold it there for the entire duration of the exercise. Exhale through the mouth so that air flows around the tongue. If this seems complicated, you can purse your lips slightly. As you exhale, make sure that you also produce sound at the same time. Then close your mouth and inhale softly through your nose, counting to four. Hold your breath for seven seconds and then exhale, only through your mouth for eight seconds. This is one cycle. After completing the first cycle, inhale again, and repeat the cycle 3 more times.

This breathing exercise helps calm the nervous system naturally. The effect of this breathing exercise will increase after prolonged practice. Do this exercise at least twice per day. During the first month, do a maximum of 4 cycles, and gradually increase to 8 cycles. You can do the exercise whenever you are stressed, have insomnia, or experience a rush of anger.

11.4. Exhalation counting

Exhalation counting is a Zen breathing exercise. It is simple exercise, but requires concentration. Sit in a comfortable position. Keep your spine straight and tilt your head slightly forward. Close your eyes, and take several deep breaths. After that, allow the breathing to flow naturally and try not to interfere. It is ideal to breathe quietly and slowly with deep sighs at different rhythms. To start the exercise, count the first exhalation as one. Count the second exhalation as 2 and continue until you reach 5. Then start a new breathing cycle from 1 to 5 (counting exhalations). Never work one cycle for more than five exhalations. It is advisable to do this for a total of 10 minutes.

11.5. Another very useful tool is relaxation techniques and they will be a great benefit for you.

Relaxation techniques for controlling anxiety and stress may be the best tool, so read this carefully. At the heart of any program to overcome anxiety, phobias or panic attacks is the ability to relax. Relaxing with TV, or a hot bath at the end of the day are examples of activities that can help us relax the mind. The type of relaxation required to reduce anxiety, is regular exercise that incorporates some form of deep relaxation. Deep relaxation refers to a specific physiological response that opposes your body's reaction to the stresses that you might experience in a panic attack or, a fight-or-flight scenario. This condition was first described by Herbert Benson in 1975 as a relaxing response.

11.6. What is a relaxing response?

It consists of a series of physiological changes, such as slowed breathing, lowered blood pressure, reduced muscle tension, slowed metabolic rate, reduced oxygen consumption, minimized analytical thinking, increased physiological resistance of the skin, and increased bio-electric alpha wave activity in the brain.

Practicing deep relaxation for 20 to 30 minutes a day can have positive effects over time. After a few weeks of daily deep relaxation, you will be more relaxed when engaged in other activities. Over the past 20 years, other beneficial effects of deep relaxation have been documented, such as relief from generalized anxiety. Many people have found that performing this exercise regularly reduces both the frequency and intensity of panic attacks.

11.7. Prevention of stress accumulation

Stress builds up over time. Getting daily physiological rest provides your body the opportunity to recover from the effects of stress. Even sleeping does not halt stress buildup unless you have allowed yourself to relax deeply when you are awake.

- Increased energy and productivity. (When stressed, you can work against yourself and become less effective.)
- Improved concentration and memory. Regularly engaging in deep relaxation exercises can increase your ability to concentrate and calm your mind.
- Reduced bouts of insomnia and fatigue. Learning to relax leads to deeper dream sleep.
- Prevents and/or reduces incidences of psychosomatic disorders such as high blood pressure, migraine, headache, asthma, ulcers, etc.
- Strengthens confidence and self-esteem. For many people, stress and self-criticism go hand-in-hand. When relaxed, you will feel better and function more efficiently.
- Increased ability to emote. Muscle tension is one of the principal factors that stop you from relating to your emotions.

11.8. How can you achieve a state of deep relaxation?

Some common methods are:

1. Abdominal breathing
2. Progressive muscle relaxation
3. Visualizing a calming scene
4. Meditation
5. Guided imagination
6. Autogenic training
7. Biological feedback from the body
8. Deprivation of the senses
9. Yoga
10. Calming music

So each time you experience symptoms, choose something from this list that best suits your needs. The point is that you sufficiently relax to overcome that river of emotions. Breathing exercises and relaxation techniques will help you to overcome your symptoms and better control your urges and emotions.

CHAPTER FOUR

SPECIFIC THERAPY SKILLS FOR TYPE CODEPENDENCY

First of all, codependent therapy must be very specific, because this condition is very specific. You are a unique individual whose condition requires significant attention, primarily from your loved ones.

Regardless of codependency type, what matters most is that you accept yourself. This is the most important step for you, as you move to improve your perception of life and the world around you. Going forward, you will see yourself as a completely different person. Your life will not be the one you know before, but that is essential for your recovery.

In every known type of codependency, the core cause and general symptoms are the same. Consequently, therapy will be mainly focused on developing your self-confidence and eliminating feelings of guilt.

Only when you have succeeded in boosting your self-confidence and erasing feelings of guilt, can you be certain that your therapy has been fruitful. Yes, I know how you feel about yourself. I have already explained to you what the biggest problem with your condition is.

Your therapist will help you to understand the problem and understand the essence of the codependency. You have become your worst enemy. You have disregarded your life for the sake of others' lives, managing to lose yourself in the process. Look, this isn't me being judgmental—this is me telling you the truth. Only the truth can spare you from this condition.

You must be completely honest with your therapist. You must tell him everything that you've been through. Only in this way, can he develop the best treatment for you. Believe in yourself and just be honest. Only the truth can bring you to full recovery.

We already covered this, but I feel the need that you need to hear it again. You were always there to help others, and you put your life on hold for their sake. I understand that your intentions were good, and that you believed you were doing your best for yourself and for others. But unfortunately, this resulted in unfortunate consequences. People did not react to your good intentions with open arms, you were shocked that they resented you. I understand that you feel this way. However, you need to understand that you challenged *their* integrity, and devalued *their* self-worth. Because of that, they turned their backs on you.

12.1. What is integrity?

Integrity may be the most valuable thing that a person has. Integrity is the boundary that separates independent people from the rest. People do all that they can to protect themselves and their integrity. You, on the other hand, don't have this crucial quality. You need to learn how to protect your integrity and you need integrity to make your life better and create a new you.

12.2. What you need to know

With integrity, self-confidence will improve drastically. So there are things to which you must say *no* . Forget about other people's needs, and recognize that they may exploit your willingness to make compromises. Remember that every time you make a compromise, that you don't really want to make, a small piece of your personality will vanish.

Always remember that you are a good person and will always be a good person. That doesn't mean that you have to be everyone's savior. The world is not your problem. Rather than trying to care for the world and everyone in it, you must realize that you can't save everyone. Instead of trying to care for everyone, start to think about yourself, your life, and your personal needs. It is not in our power to change the world. That is macro-level and unattainable. So, focus your actions on the micro-level.

12.3. *The micro-level*

I will define micro-level as a universe of one—you. Your life and your environment. You must begin to focus on yourself. Each day, ask yourself this question, "What can I do today to make my life better?"

12.4. Learn how to be happy

You always feel that senseless guilt for everything you do. Is that correct? Can you recall the last time you had a good time and didn't feel guilty about it?

You can't, because you are overwhelmed with guilt. Feelings of guilt are your worst enemy. Ask yourself, why? Why are you guilty? If you analyze it carefully you can arrive at only one logical conclusion. There is no reason for that feeling. That feeling was caused by a traumatic event, and it denies your happiness.

12.5. *The message*

In addition to your therapy, you must understand everything that I written here. No, you are not guilty of anything, and no, you are not a superhero—so, stop with the obsessive need to control. You will never win a single battle as long as you continue to compensate for helping others. For once, focus on yourself and on your life.

CHAPTER FIVE

HELPFUL STRATEGIES WHEN A LOVED ONE HAS CODEPENDENCY



This chapter is not intended for persons suffering from this condition. This chapter is for those of you who are living with a person that suffers from this condition and who you want to help. You love this person or you wouldn't read this book. By now, you've had the opportunity to become familiar with all aspects of the codependency condition.

What is important now, is to help your loved one. Let's be clear from the start. I understand that living with a person who suffers from this condition is not easy, but you read this book because you want to help them. So, here are some useful strategies to help your loved one.

13.1. What is essential?

When a person manifests one of the psychic symptoms, the initial reaction of their loved ones is denial. Denial is an unhelpful escape from a painful reality. First reactions also depend on cultural norms and prevailing attitudes within the family. In some families, mental health care is an integral part of caring for oneself and loved ones, while in others the topic is not discussed, because mental health problems are equated with weakness. Families who normalize the existence of mental health problems will be quicker to accept the existence of the problem and seek professional help. In other families, the period between acknowledging the problem and seeking professional help is usually longer. The person who has the problem copes as best they can, and fears that they will be labeled as weak, and inadequate. Support, understanding, caring, and love provides hope that recovery is possible. In the absence of the above, recovery is significantly impeded.

13.2. What are the steps in supporting a loved one?

Sometimes a codependent person will share the story of the difficulties they are experiencing. Although this can make dealing with the situation easier, frequently, family members respond by denying the severity of the problem. Unlike the aforementioned denials, denying the severity of the symptoms, sends the message, "You can do this, it is not so terrible, you have succeeded so much, look how it has worked...." Frankly, such conversations are not helpful, making the codependent feel less competent, and the problem confronting them less solvable. The truth is, no one, not even a professional, can feel what the person with anxiety, depression, obsessive thoughts, anorexia, and especially codependency, feels. They can still help, though. Not only because of the knowledge they have, but also by listening carefully to what the person is saying about the problem. So, if one is exposed to a problem, the first step is to hear it, hear it in the full scope of its intensity. It would more appropriate to say, "I don't understand, because I've never felt something like that, but it seems like a very difficult experience for you."

Sometimes the responsibility of recognizing the symptoms falls on loved ones. The situation is a little more complex then, but they must always try to understand that the codependent may be ashamed, and afraid to share what is bothering them. Many mental illnesses alter the sufferer's perception of reality and prevent them from recognizing that they are in trouble. A timely response can significantly shorten the course of recovery. Loved ones have a moral responsibility to seek professional help for the codependent, despite their resistance and denial. Approaching the codependent by expressing feelings of concern regarding perceived symptoms or behaviors, offering hope that recovery is possible, giving clear information that the person is not alone, that they are loved and accepted is encouraged. Tolerating certain behaviors, such as drinking, gambling, eating disorders, matters of personal hygiene, and failing to participate in daily activities must not be ignored. That would be tantamount to fostering disease. Family members must understand that making good decisions are crucial in reversing the development of the disease.

13.3. The second step is to seek professional help

Loved ones can provide support by encouraging the codependent to schedule a medical examination or talk to a psychotherapist. If professional assistance is in progress, further assistance, such as scheduling medications, keeping appointments, arranging follow-ups, and so forth, are very helpful.

13.4. The third step is to provide ongoing support

Most loved ones want to provide support but don't know how. Seeking answers from both the expert and the codependent gives you the clearest guidance. There is no need for anyone to be alone and in the darkness. There is always a path. Being a good listener and asking questions regarding the codependent's thoughts and feelings, combined with an open acknowledgement of the codependent's significant role they play in everyone's life, and that codependency is the problem, not the codependent. They are still a good person, with many positive qualities and unrealized potential. Even when the codependent offers no resistance to professional help, the loyalty and support of loved ones plays an irreplaceable and invaluable role. Codependent should recognize that not only they but also their loved ones, are going through difficult times. The experience of speaking with an expert, in the presence of the codependent, can make things easier for everyone. For the codependent, support means having someone who understands what is being discussed, and what is happening to them. And, knowing that an expert is providing loved ones with neutral information that dispels misconceptions and prejudices. Those with anxiety or depressive disorders, regardless of the support they receive (joint visits with physicians/ psychotherapists), are occasionally misunderstood, labeled as cowards, lazy, and irresponsible. As noted above, each of these messages is a stumbling block to recovery.

13.5. Control

The fourth step, which occurs after becoming acquainted with the problem in detail, is the control of relapse (recurrence of symptoms). Loved ones, already familiar with the problem and the symptoms, will recognize them if they reappear. Although relapse is discouraging, it is important not to give up, and seek professional help as soon as possible. Taking that first step towards treatment is always difficult, be it parents or children, husband or wife, or friend. We must understand that psychological difficulties are not a measure of a person's strengths or weaknesses. The person is still the same person, except now, they have a problem. The codependent will soon come to stabilization and/or recovery, with love, support, care, and the freedom to communicate their problems.

So the basic message is simple. Be as supportive as possible, and learn to cope with this condition. Take no actions that may activate the triggers you've read about here, and convince your loved one to begin therapy. Do these things, and have unlimited patience with your loved one.

Remember that your loved one is a victim. and it is your loved one that suffers the most. Now, I know that you might not believe that, but unfortunately, that is the truth. The codependent person is difficult for you in many respects, but you still love that person. The codependent is dealing with enormous levels of guilt, shame, and depression. The effect of a traumatic experience looms large inside that person. You can salvage your loved one only if you are willing to overcome your own ego and dismiss the past. Be supportive, and be compassionate. Do not be judgmental, because that will only backfire. If you can't accept your loved one and forgive their transgressions, you will lose that person forever. Don't make that mistake. Suppress any anger and resentment you may feel, and do the right thing. If you can do that, the person you love will heal, and both of you will have a whole new life.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT PEOPLE AROUND YOU NEED TO KNOW IN ORDER TO HELP YOU?



What your family needs to know to help you

We'll talk about *you* again. This is also very important. Until now, you didn't know why your watch wasn't ticking. Now you know a great deal. Before reading this book, all you knew, was that something wasn't right.

Now you know what it is. It's time to be brave. Time to realize that even though you are alone in this fight, you are not without the support of others. When I told you this was your fight I meant you were the one who has to stake the initiative and demonstrate the will to overcome this condition. It means that, in a manner of speaking, you must defeat yourself—do you understand?

As for the people around you, it's best to be open and honest, about your problem. Just as you have to be honest with yourself, so you have to be honest with others. We've already said that running away from reality is a dead end. It's the same with running away from the truth. Honesty is the best medicine. There is a saying that, "the worst truth is always better than the most beautiful lie". It's time to explain your condition to your family. They, just like you, live in the dark when it comes to your behavior. They tried to understand you but couldn't. Now it's time to explain to them what is going on, so that your family can finally know what is important regarding your condition.

14.1. Why family is the only important social network

The famous meme that all happy families look like each other has already been written by one of the greatest writers, but a hundred years later, it remains the absolute truth.

They say that everything comes from family. Family can be your greatest strength, as well as your greatest weakness. Certainly, there are times when our loved ones drive us crazy, but when times are tough, you always come home.

Many families have been together for decades. What makes a family the happiest is the absence of conflict, closeness, mutual understanding, respect, shared activities, and the support of loved ones. When a family has all of that, then difficulties become nothing more than small bumps in the road.

Most modern families have a strong social network, which includes immediate and extended family members as well as friends. Most believe that they can rely on this social network when they need support. This is consistent with large international studies, which indicate that families in transitional societies are vital, and that the family network provides emotional, social and economic assistance to its members. Strangely, in developed Scandinavian countries with high levels of wealth, material goods and social support from the state, there has been a decline in close family relationships. Research indicates that strong social networks which are closely related to close relationships and emotional exchange, are stronger in transitional societies.

Psychological research into happiness has shown that there are three different types of happiness, 1) happiness in a *Hollywood sense* that involves relaxation, smiling and satisfying desires, 2) happiness related to engaging in activities that have a deeper meaning for the person, and 3) happiness originating from the feeling that our life has a purpose and that we are connected to something bigger than ourselves.

So, it is the family that understands you best. The support you need for your recovery will be found in your family, but only if you are honest with yourself and with your family. If they choose not to support you, so be it. That will only make you stronger and you will manage to overcome your condition regardless.

What your partner needs to know to help you

Your partner, your soul mate, needs to know everything there is to know. You must be completely honest with your loved one and you must tell them everything there is to know.

I want to be very clear about this. If you love someone and you learn something that you didn't know before—you must tell your partner everything. You need to be responsible and completely honest. You must bare yourself to the bone.

While positive vibes and wide smiles create the need to be a part of your loved one's life and share all the joy with them, your problems, negative thoughts and failures can cause you to close the door to your loved one. Fighting to communicate with someone who seeks isolation is difficult, but love is the weapon that can help you tear down those walls. There are several ways to initiate a conversation. Love and tenderness can motivate you to open up to your partner, and begin a discussion regarding your problems and insecurities. This makes it easier for your partner to understand what you did and why you did it. The same applies to you. If you want support you have to be honest.

The moment we first face the problem, we need some space to isolate ourselves, think about everything, and work out how to solve the problem. In such moments that the partner needs to be given some time to process everything.

When we are in emotional distress, we may not be aware of our inaccessibility, so try to let them know that there is no need for walls. You are in this together.

14.2. Give them understanding

Even if they push you away in difficult times, remember, he wasn't aware of your problem. Give them the understanding and support they need, they can help you to overcome the crisis and accept your issues. When you feel their support and understanding, you will begin open up to them.

In addition to love and trust, communication is one of the most important factors for a successful and healthy relationship. If there isn't good communication between the partners, there can be trust issues, stress, misunderstandings, and unnecessary quarrels. For all that, be honest. This is the only way for your partner to understand you and for you to overcome this problem together.

-What your friend needs to know to help you

Your friend can be a very important person regarding your condition. If you have someone in your life, whom you've known for a very long time, and you are extremely close, they may be able to help you the most. The same openness and honesty applies to such a friend.

14.3. Why is friendship important

It's hard to imagine a life without friends; they are an integral part of our lives. They make us happy, and they cheer us up when we are down. It is extremely difficult to find a true friend, and when one has one or two friends in their life, it can be said that this person is truly blessed. It's clear why friendship is important. A true friend is hard to find.

Fake friendships are an everyday occurrence. We have countless people that come in and out of our lives, but only the right ones survive. Once you have experienced disappointment, it can be difficult to take another gamble on friendship, especially when it comes to trust, honesty, and closeness. But sometimes friendship is the most beautiful and deepest of all relationships. Friendship is not easy, it requires a mutual give and take.

It is not enough that others are with you. You must also be with them. That means being there for the good times and the bad times. In today's world, this is true wealth, and a true friend has immeasurable value. True friendship means a great deal of responsibility. You must be responsible and acknowledge your obligation to your friends. Friendship is, by no means, a matter of self-interest. If you hang out with someone for the benefits, then it is not a true friendship.

True friendship means mutual respect. Respect is important in every relationship, and where there is no respect, there is no relationship. Love your friend in spite of their faults and accept them for who they are. Trusting someone is rare these days, and when you gain that trust, you gain a fortune. True friends are always there for you, and would not betray you under any circumstances. Open up to your friend, trust him, and tell him your problems. An open heart and trust contribute to understanding. For a true friend, you open your heart, and give them a special place in it, and they, in turn, will give you their love.

Friendship means forgiveness, and asking for forgiveness. Be big enough to ask for forgiveness when you are wrong. A true friend will forgive you, but do not show them disrespect by repeating the same mistakes. Life is not easy, it brings both good and bad, ups and downs, but when you have the support of a true friend, you will push through. The hand of friendship is the most wonderful thing a person can achieve in life. True friendships are rare. So, if you are fortunate to have one, cherish it.

A good friend is worth a thousand acquaintances. If you have a good friend tell him everything and know he will be with you. Openness means a lot.

14.4. Why are good friends so important?

Many studies have looked at the benefits of friendship, and have confirmed what you have already assumed. The better the friendships you have, the happier you are. Therefore, it is good for your happiness to be someone's best friend, and have a group of good friends who support you. Sometimes it's hard to determine what makes a good friend.

14.5. Good friend signs

Friends will come in and out of your life, but more important than how long a friendship lasts, is that your friend loves you for who you are. You can recognize a good friend by his deeds, large and small, which show you that they care.

A good friend is:

- Someone who will support you, no matter what
- Someone you can trust and who doesn't condemn you
- Someone who will not let you down or intentionally hurt you
- Someone kind and respectful to you
- Someone who loves you because they have made that choice, not because they need it
- Someone you enjoy being with
- Someone who shows loyalty
- Someone trustworthy and who tells the truth, even when it is difficult
- Someone who laughs with you
- Someone who is with you when you have a problem
- Someone who makes you laugh
- Someone who listens to you
- Someone who will cry with you too.

14.6. Friendship and why them

The importance of friendship is best understood if you concentrate for a moment and try to think of at least one person who has never had a friend, and probably never will. Try it. It's not possible, is it? Even humanity's biggest monsters have friends. So the phenomenon of friendship is a universal and therefore, deserves special attention.

14.7. Friendship and some psychological interpretations

Friendly relationships, even deep ones, can develop as early as childhood. As an individual's personality develops, these relationships gain new qualities. People set new tasks both to themselves and to others. Peers, and especially close friends, have a great influence on the individual, especially during adolescence. During this period, when young people struggle for psychological independence from their parents, friends exert a substantial influence in forming one's self-image, attitudes, aspirations. Friends can motivate an individual to adopt different behaviors, and friends have an active role in the development of one's identity.

In psychology, one aspect of self-image is called the social self. It encompasses perceptions of interpersonal relationships, their moral attitudes, and vocational/educational goals. If these social relationships in a person's life are disturbed, they have a very negative effect on the self-image, not the mental health in general, but the young person's stability.

Friends play a big role during the period in which the young person defies the authority of their parents, and begin to choose goals for themselves. For a young person, having a mature and stable friend means having direction. The kind of direction needed to find yourself in the newly discovered world of social relationships outside the family. The influence of peers and friends is third in order (after family and teacher) in the process of professional orientation and choice of future occupation. In the mature period, the situation is a little different.

Abraham Maslow, one of the representatives of the humanistic direction in psychology, says everyone strives toward his ultimate goal, which is self-actualization. In simple words, the self-actualized personality is the one who has realized the maximum of all their real potentials, achieved the highest they could, and they are finally satisfied. This motive is at the top of the scale of human motives. One of the characteristics of a self-actualized personality is that they establish a small number of deep relationships with people, and they have the occasional need for solitude. As adults we have a built-in social relations system that seeks to maintain our satisfaction.

In daily life, the mature personality increasingly relies on himself and his personal experience, welcoming friends and taking time for them in times of crisis or periods of joy. As we age, one develops more realistic expectations and more mature approaches to connecting with people. That's how it should be. Jung also spoke about friendship, saying, "If you're lonely, it's because you chose it".

So don't reject a friend, and don't "keep him in the dark" about you and your condition. A good friend is a treasure. You will find many shells, but if you are very lucky, you will find a pearl or two. So, you need to open yourself to your friend and apologize for everything that your condition may have caused between two of you, and then you will have the support you need.

-What your children need to know to help you

If you have children the best thing you can do for them is just to hug them and say to them "I love you, everything will be better from now on".

If your children are small, you can't explain to them that you have a condition, and that because of your condition you behaved badly. They are small, and just starting to learn about the world around them. You don't need to burden them with the story of your condition. They probably won't understand it. There's a good chance that many adults won't understand, let alone children.

Regarding your children, you must be able to suppress everything that you carry inside. You need to open your heart and... just love them. Love them beyond any measure and spend as much of your time as can with them. Don't refuse them anything. If you are not on the best of terms, do everything in your power to restore the relationship with your children. Remember, this is a new you, a responsible you, and your children deserve a good childhood.

Your condition is curable, and one day soon, you will be much better, both for yourself and for your children. I will tell you a story. I knew a man who suffered from schizophrenia. When doctors told him that he was suffering from this horrible mental illness, he told me, but he never allowed his children know about his illness. He managed to fight his mental illness (with severe medication) successfully for three years, and he gave his children three more years of pure happiness. When he felt that he could no longer suppress his illness, he voluntarily entered a mental institution for fear that he might hurt them. That

was a truly brave man. I told you this story because I wanted you to understand what parental sacrifice means. Remember to put your children in first place, always and forever. You will eventually get better, and when they are old enough, you will tell them about your condition and how you fought it and beat it.

CHAPTER SEVEN

START YOUR HEALING PROCESS AND LEARN HOW TO LOVE AGAIN



Everything you have learned so far is essential for you to start your healing process and to learn how to love again. It is not easy to accept yourself and all your mistakes. However, if you succeed in doing this, you will remove your concerns from your life, and at the same time, you will no longer be devastated should someone criticize you.

The easier it is to accept yourself, the easier it is to accept others. Treat yourself the way you want others to treat you, rely on yourself in the same way you want to rely on your partner. When you succeed in this, you will have something to give to others.

It seems to me that basic wisdom says, if you do not love yourself, you cannot love others. When you do not love yourself, you cannot understand yourself, and become prone to self-criticism. Self-criticizing for fearing loneliness, entering relationships for the wrong reasons, or being mired in in the wrong relationship.

When you do not love yourself, you view the love relationship as the beginning and the end of everything, especially your happiness, and even life itself. So, you are prepared to sacrifice yourself and your needs for others. When you lose a loved one, especially if you feel rejected, you lose yourself too, unless you love yourself.

15.1. Does every criticism and remark touch your heart?

If this is happening, then you are not very happy with yourself. Change some habits and change the way you think.

15.2. Tips for making it easier for you to accept yourself

Remember one or two minor mistakes you know you've made. Tell yourself that in ten years they will be gone, so, it doesn't matter if they exist now. You may not yet understand why you have made certain mistakes, but over time, you will understand.

At least once per day, remember that all people have good and bad characteristics. Be patient with yourself. You haven't stopped learning—we learn throughout our lives. If you believe in a higher power, then convince yourself that the higher power loves you as you are. Your parents love you in the same way. Learn to pamper yourself without spending a lot, and show yourself that you love yourself. Think of the characteristics that you do not like and cannot change. Is there something in these characteristics that you could love? Think of someone you love. Do you love him despite his flaws?

15.3. Practice Receiving Love

If you want to truly love, you must receive love and be aware that you deserve it. Accept the love given by your loved ones, their good deeds, kind words, compliments, and gifts. Practice saying "I love you" to yourself, love yourself unconditionally and such love will fill your heart.

15.4. Practice saying "no"

Don't feel guilty about rejecting someone or not being in the mood to do something that others are asking you to do. Do only what your heart desires, and do nothing to please others.

15.5. Do what you love

If you can find something you love to do and begin spending time doing it, you will find love, joy, and happiness in your heart.

15.6. Treat yourself as your best friend

Leave the past behind and be present for every new day. Forgive yourself for all your mistakes, regrets, and omissions. It's time to move forward.

15.7. Nurture yourself

Find time for yourself. Nurture yourself physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually. Do that which gives you a sense of peace, joy, and love. Take a walk, play sports, exercise, dance, eat healthy and sleep.

15.8. Feel good with yourself

Look in the mirror, smile and say to yourself "I love myself, I'm worthy of love". Listen to your favorite music, read books, play with pets, be proud of your accomplishments, write a diary of your life dreams and goals.

15.9. Don't compare yourself with others

Every human being is unique, and everyone has a different talent. Comparing yourself with others evokes negative emotions, such as impaired self-esteem, depression, envy, and jealousy. Focus on your inner strength, get to know yourself, and discover the gifts you have.

15.10. You don't have to be perfect

Stop criticizing yourself for not being perfect. Strive to give your best, and if you do not achieve perfection, accept that it does not mean defeat.

15.11. And something else

When you reach that point when you can say that you accept yourself, many things will change. Your world view will change, you will become more tolerant of others, and it will be easier to accept criticism on your account. Remarks will not affect you, because deep down you know you love yourself.

15.12. Now is the time

It's time to believe in yourself again. It's time to move on with your life. It is time to surrender to your past self. It's time to believe in good. It's time to leave behind all the painful memories. It's time to focus on what matters most—your happiness.

Now begins a new chapter for you. The story has not yet ended. It is time to embrace all that has happened, to learn the lessons, and to continue your journey. It is time to free your heart from all the pain you feel and learn to love yourself and your life again.

Happiness is not only external but also internal—and this internal happiness is special, because it is purer and more honest than any other kind of happiness. And you can only achieve it when you learn to appreciate yourself for who you are. When you choose not to be so rude to yourself, and when you realize that you are wrong, and still take a step forward because you do not want to be caught in the grip of the past. It is time for you to continue on your path.

15.13. Always remember to love yourself

After all, loving yourself is the most important thing you can do in this life. Through life, you experience many things. Beautiful moments and moments that are less than beautiful. You will know not only the good, but also the evil, not only happiness, but also sadness. So I will ask you to be gentle with yourself, be patient...because what you have inside you is a relationship that will last forever. Understand that you have no control over anything that happens in your life. Not over feelings, and not over people.

15.14. At the end

Happiness is not the absence of problems, but the ability to face them. Just imagine what wonderful things your mind could achieve if it weren't so focused on dealing with problems. Always look at what you have, instead of what you have lost. It doesn't matter what life has taken from you, but what you will do with what you have left.

15.15. Here are some reminders to help you get motivated when you need it.

1. Pain is part of the growth process

Sometimes life closes the door because we need to move forward. And that is a good thing, because we often do not want to make a move until circumstances force us. When times are tough, remember that no pain comes without purpose. Step away from what hurts, but never forget what it taught you. Just because you lost some fights does not mean you are unsuccessful. Every great success requires some kind of good fight to get there. Good things take time. Be patient and positive. Everything will work out, if not immediately, then when the time comes.

There are two types of pain—one that hurts you, and one that changes you. Don't resist them because they both teach you how to grow.

1. Everything in life is transient

Every time it rains, it stops. Every time you are hurt, you heal. After darkness comes the light. Each morning reminds us, but we often forget and believe that the night will last forever. It won't. Nothing in this world lasts forever. So if all is well now, enjoy it. It won't last forever. If things go downhill, don't worry because that won't last forever either. Just because life isn't easy right now doesn't mean you can't laugh. Just because something is bothering you doesn't mean you can't smile. Each moment offers you a new beginning and a new end. Every second, you get a second chance. You just have to accept things and do the best you can.

1. Concerns and lamentations change nothing

Those who mourn the most achieve the least. It is always better to try to do something big and fail, than to not try at all. All is not finished if you have lost, it is finished when you do nothing. If you believe in something, keep trying. Don't let the shadows of the past darken the passage to your future. If we mourn today because of yesterday, it will not make tomorrow better. Instead, do something. Make what you have learned enhance your life. Make a change and look no further. And no matter what happens, in the long run, that true happiness only begins when you stop complaining about your problems, and learn to be grateful for any problems you do not have.

1. Your scars are symbols of your strength

Don't be ashamed of the scars life has left upon you. The scar means that the pain has stopped and the wound is healed. Scarring means you overcame the pain, learned the lesson, got stronger, and moved on. A scar is a triumphant tattoo—be proud of it. Don't let scars hold you hostage. Don't let them make you live your life in fear. You can't make them go away, but you can change the way you look at them. Start seeing the scars as signs of your strength, it doesn't hurt anymore.

1. Every fight is a step forward

In life, patience is not a matter of waiting; it is the ability to maintain a good attitude while we work hard on our dreams, knowing that the work is worth it. So, if you decide to give it a try, invest the time, and go all the way. Otherwise, it doesn't even make sense to start. This may mean that you will lose stability and comfort for a time, and occasionally your mind. This may mean that you will not eat anything, and sleep where you can, for a while. It can mean that you stretch your comfort zone so much that you feel a constant tingling. This can mean sacrificing relationships, and everything you've come to know. This may mean that someone will make fun of you, or that you will be lonely for a while. Loneliness can be a gift that makes things possible. It gives you the space you need. Everything is a test of your determination.

And if you want something, you will what is necessary, regardless of failures, rejections, and expectations. At every turn, you will feel better than you can imagine. You will understand that combat is not the way to go, it is the way itself. And it pays off. Therefore, if you are going to try, go all the way. There is no better feeling in the world... there is no better feeling than knowing what it means to be alive.

1. Other people's negativity is not your problem

Be positive when negativity surrounds you. Smile when others want to put you down. It's an easy way to keep your enthusiasm and focus in check. When people treat you poorly, continue to be who you are. Don't let resentment change you. Don't take things personally, even when they seem be personal. People rarely do things for you. They do it for themselves. Above all else, never change yourself to impress someone who says you are not good enough. Change because it makes you a better person, and because it leads you to a better future. People will gossip no matter what you do, and how well you do it. So take care of yourself, no regard to what others think. If you believe in something, don't be afraid to fight for it. Great power comes from overcoming that which others believe is impossible to overcome. You only live this life once. Use it wisely. Do what makes you happy, makes you a better person and brings a smile to your face.

1. Ultimately, it will be as it should be

Real power comes when you have so many reasons to cry, but instead, choose to smile. There is some blessing in every struggle we face, but to see it, it is necessary to have an open heart and mind. You can't force things to happen. You can just go crazy trying. At some point, all you have to do is let what happens, happen. Loving your life means trusting your intuition, taking risks, losing and finding happiness, cherishing memories and learning from experiences. It is a long-distance journey. Stop worrying and doubting yourself every step of the way. Live consciously, in the moment, and enjoy what life brings you. You may not end up where you planned to go, but you will end up where you need to be.

1. The best you can do is move on

Do not be afraid to stand on your own two feet again. Don't be afraid to love again. Don't let the cracks in your heart turn into scars. Find the courage to be different, but still beautiful. Find in your heart the desire to make others laugh. Remember that you don't need a lot of people in your life, just a few wonderful ones. Be strong when things go downhill. Remember that the universe always does what is right. Recognize when you are wrong, and learn from it. Always look back and see how you've grown, and be proud of yourself for that. Don't change for the sake of others.

What more can I say to you? It's time to put everything that has happened behind you. End that chapter of your life with a calm soul and a broad smile. Remember to accept the next chapter. Get on with your life.

PART 3

CHAPTER ONE

LIVING WITH A CODEPENDENT PERSON



This chapter is for all of you who are living the life of a codependent person. If you've reading this far, you know the truth, both about the codependent person and about yourself. I believe that deep down, you already know how to live with a codependent person, and how you view that connection now. Having read this book thus far, you could only conclude, that you are a victim as much as your codependent partner is a victim and you understand that it is not their fault that things went bad. It's up to you to decide how to move forward. You can support a codependent person, which is certainly important, but maybe this kind of relationship has become too much for you.

My recommendation for you is, that knowing the truth, you will be supportive to your codependent partner. Remember, behind all your disagreements, is the person suffering from this condition.

For some, love relationships and partnerships are a source of energy for coping with life's challenges, while for others, it is an energy field that sucks the life from you causes many problems.

One of the most common problems in such relationships is the dependence. Some emerging clients recognize that they are addicted, and want to overcome this challenge, but there are large numbers of people who are not aware of their addiction, but only recognize the many symptoms that have arisen from it.

16.1. Five basic signs of addiction

1. Although your mind tells you that the relationship is hurting you, and that you cannot expect any improvement, you take no concrete steps to end it.
2. You give yourself irrational reasons for maintaining the connection that are an insufficient counter to the negative aspects of the relationship.
3. When you think about breaking up, you feel fear, even horror, so hold on to it even more.
4. When you take steps to break up, you suffer from acute symptoms of separation anxiety, which includes physical and emotional pain, only alleviated by reestablishing the relationship.
5. When the relationship is ended (or so you think), you feel lost, lonely, and empty...an abandoned person, but simultaneously, you feel a sense of liberation.

If most of these signs are present, you can be reasonably sure that you are in a relationship in which the elements of addiction have taken control of your ability to manage your life. The first step in resolving this addiction is to acknowledge that it exists, after which you need to learn how it works. The next steps are focused on empowering you as an individual, leading you to a degree of freedom, and then you can decide whether the relationship should be improved, accepted or ended.

And lastly, the message I always emphasize that goes beyond being dependent on a partner. Let your relationship with a codependent person be a choice, not a commitment.

I have an opinion that I feel the need to share with you.

You have to look at all of this through the lens of pure logic. If you have lived with a codependent person all this time, and you were unaware of this condition, why would you leave the relationship now that you know the truth? That just isn't logical to me. You have a unique opportunity now. You can help a codependent person now. You have all the necessary tools to help that person in this book. My advice to you is simple—don't give up.

16.2. How to Save a Relationship before you break up

- Don't give up on love

If you are not happy about the relationship, and you are facing problems, do not give up and end a relationship that used to be great. Keep in mind that many couples are in crisis, but that doesn't mean you have to break up.

Here are some things you can try to help save the bond that is about to break.

- Communicate as a team

One of the worst things to do is to break up without discussing it openly. Remember that. "You don't want to permanently hurt someone's feelings, and at the same time, you have to talk openly and honestly about why the relationship doesn't work," says relationship expert Rory Sasun. Be kind, and talk sensitively, so that the partner responds in kind, and feels safe to speak honestly and openly.

- Say yes

If things don't work out or you get into a routine, try putting some excitement into the mix. "It may seem counterproductive for you to say yes, when your relationship is on the verge of breaking up. The idea is to give yourself a whole lot of room to save the relationship," says relationship expert Marla Martenson. Try to rediscover the excitement and adventure of the relationship, be ready to help, and try to smooth things out where they don't work.

- Get rid of bad memories

Make a pact to start over, and to explore opportunities for a happy future. "One of my favorite techniques is to practice deliberately forgetting all the bad shared memories a couple has, and only remembering good things," says Martenson.

Usually, when the relationship is on the verge of breaking up, there is a lot of resentment and negative thoughts among the partners. By practicing this, so-called selective amnesia, you can get rid of the ugly past and enjoy the present.

- Be patient after a big conversation

If you had the big conversation where you talked about your feelings, don't expect things to change overnight. Be patient, and if things don't improve, then think again about your relationship. After talking to your partner about what's not working and why you're not happy, you should be patient and give your partner a chance to make some changes.

- Set specific goals

Communication is important, but it will be more effective if you set specific goals and an action plan. Instead of talking and then moving on, set goals for your relationship. This may include weekly meetings to converse, network, go out together. Treat each other as you did at the beginning of a relationship

- Try to treat your partner as if the relationship was just starting.

That means making your partner the priority, thinking about them constantly, and thinking of ways to make them happy.

- Do something different and spontaneous

Do you remember the 2:00 AM walks and late night talks in the early phase of your relationship? A time when it seemed that nothing else in the world mattered? Try to recreate those things that made you so happy in the beginning. Change your routine! Do something new with your partner, whether it's running or playing tennis.

- Make your partner happy

How does a partner express their love and affection— sweet words, gifts, time together, physical touch? Think about it, and do just that, to revive your love and save your relationship.

- Focus on your partner's positive traits

Are you constantly telling your partner how they should change? Do you focus on traits that annoy you? Stop it! Try to remember everything positive about your partner. List the reasons you love them and focus that! Even when they do

something that annoys you, counter it by remembering something about them that you love.

- Work on yourself too

Sometimes your personality is the cause for stagnation and negativity in the relationship. When we become the best version of ourselves, then we create the best possible relationship. When I see people stuck in unhealthy relationships, it's often because they don't stop to look at how they can improve themselves. Work on yourself, then!

- Spend some time separately

Take a short break, and find some alone time. That will provide you time to think things through, and who knows, maybe that space that you give yourself will reawaken the love and desire you experienced in the early days of the relationship.

- Make small gestures that show you care

Simply put a smile on your partner's face. Love is a word. You have to understand that actions speak louder than words. Make it your daily habit to do one thing that makes your partner happy. See how that changes how you feel about your partner, and how they feel about you.

Connections can be difficult, but with a little effort, they can succeed. Healthy relationships take time, and breaking up is not always the answer. Make sure you keep your relationship, and simultaneously help the person you love. It's always easier to turn your back and run, but you know the truth now. You must make the effort to help your codependent partner.

CHAPTER TWO

WHY DID THEY CHOOSE YOU?



With regard to this specific question, the psychiatric community hasn't provided definitive and concrete answers. When it comes to love and codependency there are only speculations. Why and how a codependent personality chooses their partner is largely unknown. Scholars have provided some theories, but provable reasons are unclear. So, if you think that there is something specific in your personality that attracted a codependent person to you, you need to stop doing that. The only answer given, that we only partially accept, is that codependent persons are attracted to strong personality types. Even that has not been proven.

The question is a relative one, but when it comes to love, it is not a question for the brain but for the heart. All that researchers can tell us, is that codependent people seem to exhibit a pattern in choosing their partners.

17.1. The choice is never random

The question should be; why don't codependents choose partners with whom they can form harmonious love relationships? Instead, codependents choose to enter into unstable and unsatisfactory love relationships. The reason for this is that codependent persons are usually inconsistent people. They are a jumble of different personality traits. Because of this, they function in conflicting ways. While on one level they make choices based upon reason, on another level, they make choices based upon chemistry, that is, based upon subconscious processes. These subconscious processes, which often come from the adult's *inner child*, create strong emotions that often overcome the rational method.

Either way, the choice of a partner never random, there is always a method. When the methodology is revealed, we learn that it speaks more about the person who chooses than about the person who is selected.

A codependent that consistently chooses a partner who is cold, emotionally distant, and unavailable, makes that choice because their *inner child* needs a challenge. The codependent is driven by the subconscious logic that suggests that by attracting this type of person, they will affirm their worth.

If their previously unreachable and cold partner, becomes warm, accepting, and loving, their subconscious motivation is affirmed. However, having met the challenge, the codependent loses interest, and ends the relationship, moving on to the next challenge.

On other hand, if they continue to represent a challenge, the relationship continues as the codependent continues their struggle to obtain warm, accepting, and loving behavior from their partner. At a deeper level, we often find that a person who struggled to receive love and attention in childhood, continues the struggle in his adult life.

17.2. The pursuit of ideal love

The subconscious motives of the *inner child* vary. Codependent individuals choose someone problematic who demands that they constantly help them to solve their problems. Their *inner child* believes that only when it is beneficial to someone else, do they deserve to think they are worthy to be loved. This *inner child* does not know the difference between partner love and parental love. For this reason, they have subconscious expectations of their partner, either to adore them in the way their parents did, or to provide them the parental love they did not receive in childhood.

What is the solution for those who move from one unsatisfactory relationship to another, or for those who persist in an unsatisfactory relationship? Step one—stop waiting for the ideal partner who will bring them true love, because change does not come from the outside. Step two—understand your logic in choosing your partner, and from where does it come. Step three—come to an agreement with yourself, that is to say, resolve the conflict between your rational self and the unreasonable *inner child*. It is crucial that you learn that you deserve to love and be loved.

The heart wants what the heart wants. Your personality is not your only characteristic, is it the only reason the codependent chose you. Keep this in mind—no one knows who you are until you show them, right? So, at some point, you allowed a codependent person to get to know you better. But as I said, regarding love, there is so much more than personality. Your charisma, your beauty...you must keep in mind that codependent person is not a monster. That person is like everyone else, so when it comes to love and relationships, you must be aware that all relationships are a two-way street. You also choose that person, right?

CHAPTER THREE

HOW TO SPEAK TO A CODEPENDENCY



18.1. Breaking the stereotypes

Let's begin with one stereotype. After years of studying codependency, widespread opinion persists that codependent people are on the margins of our society. However, as far back as the fifties, most codependent persons were found to have family, to be employed, and to have friends. Many could be found in the upper classes and professional fields.

A significant number of mentally ill patients have a family member that suffers from a similar condition. Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists believe that codependency's most devastating consequences are felt by their family. Therefore, we need to be aware that codependency is not only an issue for the codependent, but these issues extend to their family, and shapes relationships among its members. Therefore, it must be treated within the family.

18.2. Why is codependency a family problem?

To make this clear, we will start from the beginning—from the very sign of problems in the codependent's family. The first casualty of codependence is communication between spouses. Namely, when one partner notices their spouse acting strangely, particularly by making accusations designed to control the partner. Due to constant criticism, the codependent avoids conversations, lies, and channel the conversation to other topics, pretending not to understand what is being asked, or quickly ending the conversation. This affects the emotional and sexual aspects of the relationship, which then becomes unstable, resulting in a complete break in sexual relations and/or marital fidelity, giving rise to jealousy.

Further, this may lead to substitutions in family roles. For example, if the father is codependent, the oldest male child may take on his role, assisting his mother with shopping, bringing his younger siblings to and from school, or attend a parent meeting because dad is at work. Codependency also leads to financial problems, because there may be drug or alcohol addiction problems. This may require the older child to get a job to help financially support the family.

18.3. Why should all family members participate in the treatment of codependency?

From the foregoing, we can see, then, that codependency changes relationships among all family members, and, over time, leads to new patterns of behavior and roles, which further exacerbates family issues. Accordingly, when a codependent has completed treatment and returns to this altered family environment, the family must once more adapt to new conditions. To illustrate the challenges the codependent and their family continues to face, post treatment, I offer this example. Imagine the codependent husband returning from a day's work, tired and annoyed. He finds his wife napping in the armchair, surrounded by a room full of clutter. He begins yelling at her, accusing her of being lazy, although she isn't. She apologizes and explains that she was tired, and therefore, didn't clean the house. However, he doesn't trust her explanation and angrily leaves the house. As a result of this unpleasant event, the ex-codependent risks a return to showing aggression, a trigger that must be avoided. In short, a family in which relationships remain broken, can only survive with mutual respect and understanding. This is the reason it is important to support and treat a family member who is suffering or recovering from the codependent condition. First of all, family must trust them, and demonstrate that they are still needed in the family. Otherwise, they may not feel that their efforts to cure themselves have been fruitful, and they may fear that their loved ones will continue to blame and dismiss them.

18.4. How can a family be cured?

It is extremely difficult to persuade the codependent's family members that the codependent can be cured. After years of trying, asking, broken promises and intermittent recoveries, it is understandable that the family will ask, is healing at all possible? The answer is, yes, of course.

Healing is possible with tremendous effort, patience and dedication. When a codependent enters therapy, other family members must also be involved in the healing process, to provide support to the codependent, to show them that they are important, but also to learn more about their problem and how to deal with it.

It is necessary, from the beginning, to adapt to the new situation that results after their cure. Learn new behaviors and taking on new family roles is part of the process. The codependent needs encouragement in facing their past, accepting reality, and starting their new life. Families also a need to learn how to respond appropriately if signs of the condition re-surface in the codependent. The appropriate response, would be to ensure that they receive regular check-ups with their therapist. Most importantly, don't give up! If a problem arises, the former codependent must receive help to overcome the crisis, without being accused and vilified. Everyone in the family must work to change themselves because the family is a team, and each team member has a role to play.

CHAPTER FOUR

CODEPENDENT RELATIONSHIPS - BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WITH CODEPENDENCY



People have relationship crises because their expectations for a relationship are generally unrealistic. As we've said before, connections made between the partners are almost always made at the sub-conscious level. Such a crisis is defined as a brief psychic disturbance that, from time to time, occurs in people struggling with life problems that exceed their capacity to cope. The crisis appears as a function disorder in the cognitive, emotional and behavioral plane. On the cognitive plane, it manifests through ego dysfunction, intellectual inefficiency, disrupted concentration, and reasoning, while on the emotional plane there is fear of abandonment, sleep disorders, altered sex drives, and eating disorders.

There are often problems in the relationship that partners can resolve without the help of an expert, but there are also problems that require the help of the expert or psychotherapist. Even couples that have successfully overcome serious problems, may encounter problems such as codependency, when they begin to critically examine their choice of a partner in their relationship. In assessing one's emotional life, a person will compare previous expectations with what is happening in the present, and if expectations are not met, there is a problem with the relationship.

19.1. How to solve a relationship crisis caused by codependency?

Daily communication between partners plays a very important role in the partnership. It is essential for the couple that both parties be able to speak and express emotions. All couples should make an effort to understand and respect one another, and to nurture common values. It is necessary to develop empathy, respect, and tolerance. Partners need to define the problems in the relationship and offer solutions. Placing the blame on one another is a significant problem in a relationship, and leads to additional conflict. Avoiding problems, and postponing communications, also deepens the conflict. So, one should talk about the problem, not run away from it. The cornerstone of a quality partnership is the belief that their partner is worthy of respect and appreciation.

19.2. Does affective attachment style affect the quality of the partnership?

Philosophers, psychologists, and writers have all tried their hand at addressing the question of what people want in a partnership. Nietzsche claimed that a man wants two things—danger and play. Freud concluded that women do not know what they want, but these explanations do not answer the question. There should be moments in each person's life to contemplate what they want in a partner, and what level of emotional connection is the ideal. The qualities of a partnership depend on many factors, such as intimate interactions, loyalty, communication, relationship satisfaction, sexual satisfaction, support, etc. An emotional partner is concurrently the primary provider and recipient of emotional support, a sexual partner, and an affective figure, meaning that depending on the affective pattern formed, the partners will exhibit a degree of care and sexuality.

Affective attachment is manifested differently in codependent people, so in a partner relationship, there are individual differences that are determined by the pattern of affective attachment. Kim Bartolomeu talked about four styles of attachment, 1) safe, 2) preoccupied, 3) timid, and 4) dismissive. *Safe* individuals build open and authentic partnerships, have high self-confidence, easily achieve intimacy in relationships, and constructively resolve conflicts. For people with this pattern of affective attachment, emotional intercourse with others is very important, and in the partnership, they are securely attached because, in addition to feeling self-worth, they enjoy the closeness and intimacy.

On the other hand, codependent persons are dependent on partners, invest too much in a partnership, and have the belief that they *must* be loved. These persons are territorial in representing their love and idealizing their partner. Afflicted persons have a conflict of motives, seek affirmation of their personal values from their partners, and they are passive and dependent. Chaos is the major feature of their relationships. They avoid bonding with people that are compulsively self-reliant, superior, and have an increased need for autonomy. They build short-term and superficial connections. Lack of closeness, intimacy, and expression of emotions are their characteristics. They have the conviction that the relationship suffocates, but the root of the fear is rejection.

Various world-wide studies show that securely bonded couples work better together, are more satisfied in the relationship, and constructively resolve conflicts. According to behavioral theory, compatible partner behaviors lead to higher quality partnerships.

19.3. Same or different styles of attachment

Research shows that dyads, in which both members have a secure attachment style, are of better quality. The same behavioral system and emotional response, the experience of acceptance, support, availability, and sensitivity of the partners lead to these couples having a good relationship. Couples in which the dyad members are differently related, are likely to rate their relationship as lower quality, due to differences in the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional systems. One member who suffers from codependency may have a high level of anxiety accompanied by fear of abandonment, while the other may have a low level of anxiety accompanied by an experience of self-worth. The same rule applies to the avoidance domain. One partner may express and accept trust, and closeness, the other may be distrustful and disinterested in expressing closeness. These differences lead to frequent marital conflicts, dissatisfaction, misunderstandings, and inconsistencies, which have detrimental effects on the quality of marriage. Married couples who share the same levels of anxiety and avoidance, will have a higher quality relationship than couples having disparate levels of anxiety and avoidance.

19.4. Relationship with a codependent person

You have been in an emotional relationship for a long time and everything seems to be fine. Your partner is fully committed, and you feel loved. However, that doesn't make you happy. You have the feeling that you have lost yourself. You cannot distinguish your wants, from your partner's needs. You are chronically dissatisfied, even depressed. You feel like you are in a cage, and as though you are no longer you. These signals can indicate that you are in a symbiotic emotional relationship.

19.5. What is a symbiotic emotional relationship?

The term symbiotic relationship is commonly used to describe the type of relationship that occurs in an animal species. It is a relationship in which two individuals interact with each other for their common benefit. These individuals are functionally and physically connected, and operate as one organism. In humans, the symbiotic relationship is the fusion of two people into one, meaning they cannot function effectively without each other. Practically speaking, *you and me* become *we*, a new plane of existence in which both persons lose their individuality. This kind of relationship is not exclusive to partners in a relationship or marriage, it may also be present in relationships with friends, or parent-child relationships.

19.6. What kinds of persons are inclined to build symbiotic relationships?

Although relationships between partners imply equality, it is possible for one person to be drawn into a symbiotic relationship by the other. Usually, this happens under the guise of *true love*, that is to say, one of the partners involved is very happy, because they have received unconditional love and commitment from the other partner. It is important to understand that a symbiotic relationship is completely normal in the early stage of a relationship and can last for several months. The partners are in a state of falling in love, so, they feel like one being. They are oblivious to those around them. Still, this is just a phase, and should by no means persist long-term.

People who build purely symbiotic emotional relationships have a fear of being left behind/rejected. Usually, such persons have had very painful experiences in their lives. Experiences in primary family relationships or previous partnerships (because of the condition they suffer) that they want to avoid repeating at all costs. To ensure that such experiences are not repeated, they fully commit to their partner and demand that they do so in return. Also, the person tries to compensate for emotional losses that occurred in previous relationships by intensifying the current one, which results in a hunger for constant attention and closeness. These are generally addictive personality types that cannot function on their own, and seek a strong, supportive figure in another person. These kinds of people have the philosophy that, "If I'm not with someone I'm not worthy", "I need another person to feel complete", "Life without the love and attention of another person is not a life" and so on.

19.7. What are the signs that you are in a symbiotic emotional relationship?

As I've outlined above, a person who is involved in a symbiotic relationship may feel loved and special, at first, and then a covert depression occurs, although, outwardly, everything is okay. Yet the person is unhappy, lost, feeling that they are losing themselves. Moreover, all social aspects of life are neglected—contact with friends is lost. In a healthy relationship, it is normal that you will share the bulk of your time with your partner, and that you will rarely see your friends. This is a matter of gradually eliminating old friendships, while, at the same time, forming new friendships that include your partner. However, in symbiotic relationships, you don't make new friendships, especially not with the opposite sex (e.g. colleague/colleague at work) as these will be misinterpreted. As a result, your social circle shrinks and you are "doomed" to contact with only one person. Personal interests, desires and goals are reduced or extinguished. In spending more time with your partner, you will neglect your hobbies, interests, activities, and professional development. Even though you realize that something is wrong, you still feel guilty because if they could give up their interests, hobbies, professional challenges, and social circle, how can you not do the same.

Convinced that you have found your *true love* you make the decision to devote yourself completely to one person, because they alone deserve it. A symbiotic relationship is *not* a healthy relationship between two people. When you assess that you are not progressing with your partner on a personal plane, when you realize that your social life is completely shut down, when you feel unhappy, and depressed, consider whether it is time to change things in your relationship, set boundaries, and fight for your individuality.

CHAPTER FIVE

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS/ BOUNDARIES



All of us want to have happiness in love. Many of us think that we need to be born under a lucky star to have a healthy emotional connection. That's just not true.

Healthy emotional relationships can be learned, just like everything else in life. Some of us have had the benefit of positive role models in as we were growing up, and we passively and effortlessly adopted healthy behaviors. Others, who had no such opportunity, nonetheless possess all the potential and all the qualities necessary to create a healthy and fulfilling relationship.

20.1. *Immature love*

Immature love follows the principle, "I love because I am loved." In contrast, mature love follows the principle, "I am loved because I love." Immature love says, "I love you because you need me," and mature love allows for independence and free expression of ideas and feelings. It discusses values and encourages expression.

Elements of addiction also exist in most mature relationships. We can recognize and accept them, unravel the myths that support them, do what we can to change them, and thus achieve the healthy aspects of the relationship. How do we know that our love is an addiction?

20.2. Characteristics of addictive love

People in addictive relationships have the following characteristics:

1. They routinely feel exhausted
2. They cannot define ego boundaries
3. They exhibit sadomasochism
4. They are afraid to let things run their course
5. They are afraid of risk, change, and the unknown
6. Have a small shift in personal growth
7. They have no experience of true closeness
8. They play psychological games
9. They want to mold their partner
 10. They need their partner to feel complete
 11. They seek and demand unconditional love
 12. They relive old, negative feelings

20.3. Characteristics of healthy love

People in a healthy relationship have the following characteristics:

1. They allow self-sufficiency
2. They share the same experience—that they are one with their partner, and they are each for themselves
3. They encourage the best in their partner
4. They accept endings
5. They are opened to change and exploration
6. They encourage personal growth in their partner
7. They experience true closeness
8. They feel free to seek what they need
9. They feel that giving and receiving are equally important
 10. They have no intention of diminishing or controlling another
 11. They encourage self-sufficiency in their partner
 12. They accept their partner's boundaries
 13. They do not seek unconditional love
 14. They are self-confident

Of course, everyone wants their relationship to be normal and perfect, but most don't really know what that looks like. Here are some guidelines on how healthy relationships should look.

20.4. You have realistic expectations from love

I hope that you are aware that perfection does not exist, and that your partner cannot be perfect. Perfection exists in those small imperfections that make the connection beautiful and sweet. It is very important in to accept not only your flaws, but also your partner's flaws and turn them into something bearable and even sweet. When you love someone, those things that would usually annoy you become sweet and cute.

20.5. Do not take everything personally

Instead of blaming your partner for everything they do wrong, you should discuss them, until these things are resolved to the mutual satisfaction of both partners. Don't take everything personally. People are constantly being wronged. Your partner did not intentionally do something wrong, things happen.

20.6. You are a team

Together, you can accomplish whatever you want. Remember that you should not compete, but revel in each other's victories. Relationships are not a competitive sport, so, accept that you share the same goals and work together to resolve your problems.

20.7. Trust and compromise

It is very important that in each relationship, the partners can find mutual pursuits that both parties will enjoy. There is no need for quarrels because you are one soul and two bodies, that's something to remember when there are quarrels between you. Also very important, is the confidence you build in one another. A relationship becomes stronger and more stable when you can trust the person you are in a relationship with. This must be established between you.

20.8. Discussion

It is important to have honest conversations between partners in a relationship or marriage. Each problem can be solved with the strength of two people who can honestly express their opinions. You need to express your likes and dislikes. Many people want to live according to spiritual ideals, such as helping others, kindness, generosity, sharing, etc. In many books, you will read about the ideal behavior that we should strive for. These are learned patterns that were implanted in our childhood. Rarely does a family fail to teach their child that they should share with others, be good, and be obedient. This implicitly indicates to the child that everything will be okay if they put others before themselves. Obedience has always been valued above individuality.

20.9. The main problem

The problem arises because we forget that most people are still at a rather low level of emotional maturity and awareness regarding relationships. Many people are clueless on how to respect the personal boundaries of others. Others will consciously take advantage of a perceived weakness in another person. As you can see, a person who tries to be kind and helpful to others can quickly find themselves in situations that are exhausting, because people constantly take advantage of them. There is no joy in such relationships. Yet kind and helpful people do all they can meet these expectations at the expense of their own feelings, which leads to frustration and anger. Not only is frustration and anger considered socially undesirable, but a person who satisfies others at their own expense, often feel tremendous discomfort with the anger and frustration that they have, so, they suppress it.

20.10. Spending yourself out of decency

If you find yourself in this situation, you must know that you owe no one your time, love, or friendship. These are abstract categories for which we rarely consider how to set boundaries, that is, what we want and what we don't want. In this area, we may feel guiltier than in other areas, such as the amount of money we spend. Our parents probably didn't give out a lot of money, but many children watched their parents spend time and energy on people they didn't want to be with, so as not to not offend them. In this way, indirectly, and sometimes directly, we learned to act the same.

Sometimes the best way to help someone is to turn them away, to not allow them to *hang* on us, and consume our time and energy. In this way, we actually help the person learn to cope, by handling their own needs, relying on their own strengths and develop independence. Intervention would only increase their dependence. We are not usually aware of these dynamics, and we fail to realize that our outreach may do more harm than good. We've all heard the old saying, the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Even if you do not find anything negative in the other person, they may they may not be attractive to you as a potential friend. There is nothing wrong with that, and there is no reason to feel guilty for rejecting the friendship offered. Not all people are made to be a part of our lives, and that's fine.

20.11. The feelings of others

Mature, quality communication does not always have to be an effort designed to make your partner feel good or to avoid hurting their feelings. This, of course, does not mean that we should hurt others recklessly on the pretext of doing so for their own good. We must have boundaries in everything, and that's exactly what I'm writing about here. Often, when we avoid telling someone directly what we think, we are just avoiding the problem. The other person will remain unaware of the problem and continue to cross our boundary. Eventually the situation devolves into open conflict or avoidance, both of which leave a bitter taste.

The basic rule is that you are responsible for your behavior, but not for the other person's feelings. So, if you have done your best to communicate, shown them respect, and maintained your integrity, there is no reason to feel guilty, even if the other person feels hurt.

20.12. Establishing boundaries

If one partner denies the other partner's desire or request, or sets boundaries that are not suitable for the other partner, the other partner may consider modifying their requirements in order to maintain the relationship, or perhaps change the form or intensity of the relationship, and seek what they want in another relationship. All this can be done without harm and blame, as a natural process, if we perceive each other as equals with equal needs. What is essential is that we communicate it. But if the other partner does not see you for who you are, and instead projects upon you their expectations of a parent, partner or child, they will feel hurt, disappointed, and make their happiness and feelings dependent on your behavior, which is a recipe for suffering.

In any communication with someone more important than a casual acquaintance, it is good to clarify what each of the parties wants and whether that is acceptable to the other, especially if we see that the expectations are different. We cannot expect the other person to be automatically obliged to consent to something because we want it, or want the same form of relationship. We are all personalities unto ourselves and we are all different, no matter how similar we may be. This is what makes us human and this is what gives us the potential for happiness. How many unhappy people would there be in the world, if we all wanted the same things?

20.13. *Boundaries in partnerships*

Setting boundaries is just as important in a partnership as in any other relationship. In this area, partners also, have exaggerated expectations and needs from their partner. I could repeat everything I've written earlier on the subject, but just know that it applies equally to partnerships

20.14. Responses to border violations

How do we recognize what our borders are and when they are not respected? This is where the usual advice should be repeated. Observe the subtle emotions and try to translate them into words as best you can. If your emotions do not alert you strongly enough, eventually your physical body may start alerting you.

If we notice that one is encroaching our boundaries, it is not a reason to place ourselves in an offensive or defensive stance, or to demonstrate righteous anger. Anger and blame are just signs of our repressed fear and unresolved guilt. Of course that needs to be acknowledged and explored. It is necessary to learn the difference between determination and defense, as well as the difference between yielding and compassion. This may be difficult at first, because we have all learned, to suppress our needs and alter our boundaries. That is why we usually react with guilt, fear, and anger when we are forced to set or reset them, which usually occurs only following a period of ingestion, indulgence, and accumulated feelings of discomfort.

Some people defend their borders very firmly, and very aggressively, blaming others for small things. They also essentially respond out of fear and guilt, but these feelings are much less accessible to the conscious mind. Such individuals were likely to have been injured in childhood, so they learned to fight for themselves. The problem starts with their, "I'll hurt you before you hurt me" attitude. That attitude essentially reflects their fear, and their insecurity. Such a person does not understand that they can protect themselves and take care of themselves without directly attacking and belittling others. It is not a display of self-esteem, but rather just another iteration of the same problem.

Assuming, with the exception of direct aggression or manipulation, that people do not act with a conscious intention to hurt or exploit us, but simply out of an underdeveloped awareness of other people's values and feelings, there is no reason to react with anger. If we react with anger, we may sabotage a relationship that has the potential to be of good quality.

It is crucial to recognize, define and explain our boundaries, needs, and desires at the earliest possible stage of any relationship we have with other persons. We must do this before dissatisfaction builds. The problem, is that we have not learned to pay attention to the messages of our emotions and our bodies, and react to those messages quickly. This frequently results in an emotional, sometimes physical crisis, which result from our failure to react.

Be aware of these message, and then calmly, without fear, guilt, or anger, explain to the other person what you want or what you disagree with. To the extent that you are unable to, you will feel uncomfortable and anxious in contact with that person, which is why we usually attribute the blame to them and not to ourselves. We must understand that just as we do not respect ourselves and our needs, we frequently do not respect them and their needs, even if it is only in our minds.

It is important to understand that if you feel uncomfortable in your interactions with a person, it is likely that one of you has been unable to set boundaries that the other will be able to respect. Certainly, some people simply dislike us, and cannot be friends with us for some objective or subjective reason. However, if this is not the case, then it is likely that there is a problem in establishing boundaries. For example, the person may be taking more than they are giving. That's why it's important to set boundaries. It will benefit you and, most importantly, others interacting with you.

CHAPTER SIX

WHAT TO DO WHEN YOUR LOVE HAS CODEPENDENCY

It's not easy to watch a loved one struggle with codependency, and in most cases, people don't know how to put themselves in that situation. Here are some tips to teach you how to help your partner with their codependent condition. Although sadness is an integral part of life, if you notice that your partner is going through a period of intense feelings of sadness that last for more than a few days, these may be the first signs of the codependent condition. There are several things you can do to help yourself and your partner more easily push through that challenging period for both of you.

21.1. How to identify symptoms of codependency in your partner

Do not take these symptoms as a rule, as symptoms of codependency can vary from person to person. The most common symptoms include feelings of sadness that lasts at least two weeks, loss of interest in hobbies, friends, sex, eating disorders, sleeping disorders, nervousness, hopelessness, helplessness, feelings of worthlessness, sudden outbursts of anger, constant expressions of criticism, and/or suicidal thoughts.

21.2. Encourage your partner to seek help

Codependency can be so debilitating that the individual becomes incapable of seeking help, and many of those who are codependent are ashamed of their condition. If you suspect that your loved one is suffering from this condition, I suggest that you consult an expert. Schedule an appointment with a psychiatrist who will make the right assessment and be sure to ask your partner if they want you to go for moral support. If your partner refuses to see a doctor, consult a specialist about the following steps.

21.3. Educate yourself

The more you learn about codependency, its symptoms, its impact, and how it is treated, the easier it will be to understand what your partner is going through, and the easier it will be to help them make important decisions about their treatment. Ask questions, read books, and consult an expert. Talk to your partner's doctor about anything you need to learn about.

21.4. *Talk*

Encourage your partner to open up to tell you all the most hidden thoughts that pop into their head. Having a serious and honest conversation about their feelings will make it known that you care, that you take them seriously, and that you will, in some way, bring them relief. Avoid complicated topics, stick to simple words, and do not condemn. Listen—listen carefully to everything your partner has to say, be careful not to interrupt them and never finish their sentences.

21.5. Participate in the repair

Although you may not understand the reasons for your partner's condition, you must support them during the recovery process. Make sure they take their medication regularly, accompany them to their psychiatrist's sessions, but only if they want you to. Try to prevent situations that could cause them anxiety, fear, or stress. This means that you may be compelled to take on some of the obligations that your partner had been responsible for, such as paying bills, and arguing with neighbors.

21.6. Give your partner hope

Hope comes in many different forms, some find it through faith, others through their children. Discover your partner's greatest hope and remind them of that hope when they think everything is lost. Make sure you are there for them all the time.

21.7. Identify warning signs

Codependent people often have suicidal tendencies when they can no longer cope with feelings of hopelessness and helplessness. If your partner starts mentioning suicide, take it seriously and don't assume they won't put their thoughts into action.

21.8. Take care of yourself

At times, when we care for a loved one, it can be very easy for us to neglect ourselves and our needs, but you must keep in mind that if you are unable to function normally, you will not be able to help your partner. Feelings of depression can easily pass on to you as well. Make sure you eat well, sleep well, exercise, and keep in touch with family and friends who can support you if needed. Take time for yourself and look at the situation from a distance. Consider joining psychotherapy yourself or joining forums to connect with people who are going through the same thing.

CHAPTER SEVEN

BREAKING UP WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS CODEPENDENCY - WHEN IS THE TIME TO END IT?



If you are questioning whether to leave, or give your relationship another chance, perhaps this will help you decide. There are ups and downs in every relationship, but the way we overcome bad times says a lot about whether or not that love has a future. If the person suffering from this condition does not want to be treated, or does not acknowledge the problem, then it is time to end the relationship. If you don't do this, you will waste your life in vain—remember that. You cannot expect someone to be there for you if you are not prepared to do the same for them.

If you are questioning whether to leave or give your relationship another chance, perhaps this will inform your decision.

22.1. Some obvious signs that your relationship is not going to be saved

- You know deep inside that you are not happy

If you feel that way, you are wasting your time. The question of whether you are happy or not is not subject to compromise.

- You are no longer close to your partner

If you've moved on, and if you feel that it's irreversible, you're probably right. There's no point in continuing to suffer. End the relationship.

- You don't see a common future

If you can't imagine yourself together in the future. If all your plans and dreams are yours, and yours alone, why would you stay in that relationship?

- You feel like you're pretending all the time

It is as if your true nature is *on hold*, because you can no longer express it in this relationship.

- You would do anything rather than spend time with your partner

If you stay longer at work than you need to, if you make up a thousand reasons to stay in the city, just because you don't want to go home, then...go. It is not fair neither to you nor to your partner, to remain in the relationship.

- You no longer choose your words

If you find yourself increasingly uncomfortable with their comments, if you are being unkind, if you don't have the patience to say something nice, why would you continue a toxic relationship?

- It everything your partner does or says gets on your nerves

When the most banal of conversations sets your hair afire, when you can't stand the way she sits on the bed before she goes to sleep, when you get angry if she leaves her sneakers where she always leaves them, when you suddenly notice that she washes the dishes slowly, and you realize that this is not the person you fell in love with. You have changed, your love is gone, and it is much better for you to leave, rather than spend your life being angry and anxious.

- You are aware that the only reason you are still together is your fear of being alone

That's so pathetic—if there is no love, go. Don't ruin the life of someone you once loved because of your fears.

- You can no longer talk without arguing

Not even agreeing on what to have dinner, or where to go for the weekend turns into a fight. Communication is one of the most important things in a relationship. But if only contempt remains, instead of love, then why frown? And more importantly, why blame the person you used to love. Go!

- When you need solace, you do not seek it from your partner

In a loving relationship your partner is a safe harbor. If you don't have that any longer, just go.

- You have nothing in common anymore

Have you moved so far that you can no longer watch TV together, because you are interested in completely different topics? It is time to let go.

The bottom line and the simple message is this: If you have tried everything and found no solution—end the relationship. You have only one life, and no one, that you do not love, is worthy to take your life.

CHAPTER EIGHT

HOW TO FIX BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS



I honestly believe that any relationship that is broken due to this condition can be repaired. This condition is to blame for all the bad things that have happened in all of their relationships. The person who suffers from this condition is always understood to be the culprit. Now, with new knowledge, relationships can be easily repaired if there is mutual understanding and appreciation.

Here, everyone must know that compromise is important. Everyone has to understand the other side.

Understanding is the key. If there is an understanding, the relationship will be repaired and if there isn't an understanding, it cannot be repaired. Forgiveness and understanding are the keys to repairing all relationships.

23.1. Forgiveness

First of all, everyone is hurt as a consequence of this condition. So, the most important thing, is to learn how to forgive.

This condition is very specific and very serious. It can cause a great deal of damage to a relationship. There is no more to say when it comes to this.

23.2. How to forgive

Everyone involved in this vicious circle has suffered greatly, and that is a fact. However, if you read carefully you have learned that the codependent person is also a victim of this condition. So you must understand that everything that has transpired is a consequence of this condition. So open your heart, and look deep into yourself. Is there an element of intent that caused all of this? There is no element of intent. The person who hurt you couldn't comprehend doing that to you. The condition is the cause of your disagreements. The codependent is not the guilty party in this. You must have this in mind when you are deciding if will you forgive that person. Forgiveness is our nature, so, try to put yourself in the position of this person. How would you feel about forgiving then? You must be objective, and I believe that everyone deserves a second chance. That is still the same person you once loved. Give it a try, that person deserves that much.

23.3. Try to understand the problem

Nowadays, everyone is very busy, and not many people will make the time to deal with others. Everyone is living in the fast lane. But, stop and think about what you are doing. Try to understand that there will be a time, later in your life, when you will need someone to pick you up. Every one of us has that moment in their life when they need someone. Now, you can make a good decision, and you can choose to understand the importance of helping, and letting the past go.

23.4. Think about tomorrow

Many people are stuck in the past and they are unable to let go of all that has happened. Try to focus on tomorrow. Before you cross off someone from your life, think twice about it. There is a good chance that you will lose much more than you will gain.

CHAPTER NINE

HOW TO HELP SOMEONE CODEPENDENT?

This will be a very short chapter because the message in this is simple. You have everything you need in previous chapters, and all that you need to help someone who has a codependency condition, is your personal will.

Your will is essential.

We have all done something that we know is not good for us. Do we have a weak will?

Although the will is based on desire, it is important to distinguish it from desire. Desire is one of many emotions. To feel desire is to be motivated to the actions that lead to its realization. This kind of motivation lasts as long as the person feels their desire. The problem with emotions in general, and even with desires, is that they are transient. One can feel desire for days or weeks and then, in a moment it's gone. Then we lose our motivation as well. This is a pattern of behavior is typical of unsuccessful people, they get excited about something, are inspired by it for a time, lose their motivation for a moment, and give up the whole thing entirely, or postpone it to some future time.

It is not good when a person is motivated only by feelings or the principle of seeking the pleasant, and avoiding the unpleasant. Personality is a complex system, all parts of which should govern behavior. The ability of a person move toward their desired goals is called **will** . It is a higher form of motivation, important for the achievement of goals that are not at your fingertips, but which must be pursued vigorously over time.

So, your **will** and your desire are crucial, and in addition to your **will** and your desire, this book has taught you everything you need to know in order to help someone who is suffering from the codependent condition.

CONCLUSION

Dear readers, I believe that we managed to achieve our task in this book. We went very deep to reveal this condition for everyone interested in knowing it better. I believe that we managed to send a message. We talked about this condition, we defined codependent disorder, we explained what a codependent person is, we point out specific therapies and symptoms of the condition, and we went through the main reasons for this condition thoroughly. My goal was to show the readers the seriousness of this condition and to provide them with concrete evidence that this condition is one that can be cured. I believe that I have completed my task. My message for codependents is unchanged: Yes, you can be better, yes you can "repair your watch", yes you can have a better life and a better future by letting go of the past. You will find yourself again and you will love yourself again. Why am I saying that? Because I know that in every one of us there is a fighter—a warrior. This is your battle, and it is also your life. Don't waste your life and the lives of your loved ones. You have only one life; make the most of that life.

Don't be your enemy, be your best friend—believe in yourself. Use your time wisely, read this book and you will have a good and normal life, the life you've been seeking since you were born.

You are a watchmaker, learn how to find the missing part of your watch...

Please tell me what you think of the information you've read. Leave a review. I hope this has been helpful.

BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

*The hidden faces of BPD that you need to spot.
How to manage out of control emotions before they destroy your relationship.*

INTRODUCTION

As with many other mental illnesses, there is plenty of stigma attached to borderline personality disorder, or BPD. Thanks to stereotypical portrayals of mental illnesses in film and television, many people view those suffering from disorders like BPD as being wild, uncontrollable and weak.

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with BPD, it can present a number of challenges. Thanks to these damaging stigmas, people suffering from mental illness often have to contend not only with their disorder, but with the stereotypes and discriminations of others. Common preconceptions surrounding BPD include the belief that sufferers are always overly dramatic, manipulative and attention-seeking.

While these traits can appear in sufferers of BPD, the truth is far more complex. In this book, we will take a look at the realities of borderline personality disorder, analyzing exactly what the illness is and the types of behaviors it can lead to. In part one, we will look closely at both the overt and more subtle symptoms associated with BPD, to assist you in determining whether you or a loved one may be afflicted. We will also examine the underlying causes of the disorder, and the different forms of BPD can take. Methods of diagnosis will also be discussed.

So what if you have been diagnosed with BPD? Does this mean you no longer have the potential to live a normal and fulfilling life? Does it mean you have to conform to the stereotypes of being unstable, angry and helpless? Of course not. With the right tools and treatment, BPD can be managed effectively, allowing you to have a rewarding career, close friendships and meaningful relationships.

In part two, we will look at the many tools you can employ to keep the disorder under control. We'll take a look at effective methods for handling unpredictable emotions, along with specific therapies often used in managing the disorder.

Of course, relating to your loved ones can be a huge challenge when faced with BPD. Thanks to the violent mood swings and unpredictable behavior associated with BPD, it is likely you will fear unintentionally hurting those you care about. In order to manage this, we will take a look at the things it's important for your loved ones to know in order to help you cope with BPD. Our guide will help you explain your illness to your family, friends and partner, helping them to understand and empathize with what you are experiencing. Following these guidelines will assist you in creating a secure and loving support network, making the disorder more manageable.

As we have touched on, borderline personality disorder can be just as difficult for loved ones as it can be the sufferer themselves. Perhaps your family member, child, parent or partner has been diagnosed with BPD and you're struggling to know how to react. Perhaps that's why you picked up this book. In part three, we will take a close look at how to cope when those close to you are suffering from this disorder. We will examine how to speak to those with BPD in order to avoid conflict, and ways to manage being a relationship with a BPD sufferer.

As people with BPD can often be manipulative, or emotionally aggressive, it can be just as important to take care of yourself in such situations. We will look closely at ways to disarm those who are attempting to manipulate you, in order to facilitate a harmonious relationship for both parties. And if you decide that, for whatever reason, the relationship has no future, we will address ways of breaking up with a BPD sufferer in order to produce the minimum amount of conflict and distress.

Living with BPD does not have to be a life sentence. Following the advice provided will help both BPD sufferers and their loved ones have a happy and fulfilling life.

PART ONE

Understanding Borderline Personality Disorder?

CHAPTER ONE

WHAT IS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER?

Borderline personality disorder, or BPD, is a pattern of mental behavior that causes sufferers to have difficulty controlling their emotions and impulses. Thanks to their often aggressive and unpredictable behavior, with BPD will often experience many unstable relationships in all aspects of their lives. BPD causes sufferers to feel uncomfortable in themselves and exhibit strong emotional reactions to seemingly routine events and circumstances. They live through a pattern of extreme emotional highs and lows.

Borderline personality is so-named as people suffering from the disorder were originally believed to be on the borderline between psychosis (difficulties determining what is real) and neurosis (a mild mental illness largely characterized by depression, anxiety).

People with BPD often experience high levels of anger and distress and take offence easily. Sufferers struggle with a low sense of self-esteem, having regular painful thoughts about themselves and others. Unsurprisingly, this often leads to ongoing problems in their family and social life. This low sense of self-worth and regular stream of negative thoughts can lead to self-harming and, in severe cases, suicide.

Many people with BPD live their lives with an ongoing pattern of unstable social relationships. They are prone to developing intense, almost obsessive attachments to others, which can change almost without warning to feelings of intense anger and dislike for the same person. This fluctuation from extreme to another is highly indicative of borderline personality disorder.

BPD appears in approximately 2% of the general population, with women three times more likely to suffer from the disorder than men. BPD usually appears during the teen years, with symptoms gradually improving as sufferers go through life.

The causes of BPD are unclear, but can be traced to environmental, social, neurological and genetic factors. BPD can also be sparked by difficult life events such as childhood trauma. Many experts believe the illness is brought about by a combination of factors, such as genetic and environmental.

Drug and alcohol abuse, depression and eating disorders are all commonly associated with borderline personality disorder. Sufferers of BPD often experience other mental illnesses in conjunction with the disorder, such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, or bipolar disorder. Thanks to the plethora of other illnesses that can co-exist alongside borderline personality disorder, BPD can often be difficult to identify and diagnose.

While borderline personality disorder has immense destructive power for both sufferers and their loved ones, the good news is, it is treatable. In part two of this book, we will address numerous ways BPD can be treated and managed, allowing sufferers and their loved ones to live their lives to the fullest, with minimal degrees of stress and conflict.

CHAPTER TWO

THE TRAITS OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

As mentioned in the previous chapter, people with borderline personality disorder often also suffer from other mental illnesses, including issues with anxiety, eating disorders and substance addiction. BPD has many symptoms in common with illnesses such as bipolar disorder, often making it difficult to distinguish and diagnose.

Let's take a look at some of the most common symptoms and traits associated with BPD:

- ***Difficulty Regulating Emotions:*** Perhaps the most recognizable trait of borderline personality disorder is the sufferers inability to regulate and control their emotions. People with BPD will often “act out” in ways that may seem out of proportion to the situation, or seemingly unprovoked.
- ***Intense Emotions:*** People with BPD will often react to a situation or event in a way that seems disproportionate to what is happening. They are prone to rapid and violent mood swings and can fluctuate between states of intense happiness to crushing depression in very short spaces of time. Sufferers of BPD describe the disorder as an “emotional roller coaster.”
- ***Heightened Sensitivity to Criticism:*** People suffering from borderline personality disorder are prone to taking criticism very badly, often taking offense and acting out in response to even the smallest piece of disapproval.
- ***Identity Disturbance and Distorted sense of Self-image:*** People who suffer from BPD often have trouble making sense of their own identity. They often find it difficult to pinpoint their likes and dislikes, passions, beliefs and values. They are often unsure about their long term goals, particularly with regards to employment or relationships. As a result, people with BPD often feel lost or empty, with little sense of direction. BPD can also cause one's self-image to rapidly fluctuate between healthy and unhealthy.
- ***Manic efforts to avoid abandonment :*** Perhaps the thing that BPD sufferers fear the most is abandonment. This is often due to the trauma they experienced as a child, which led to the condition. (More on this in Chapter Five.) People with BPD want and need human connection, but they fear their friends and loved ones will leave them the minute they get angry or frustrated. In an attempt to avoid abandonment, BPD sufferers will often go to extremes to avoid being abandoned, such as ending a relationship or friendship at the first sign of trouble. In this way, they avoid abandonment by being the ones to end the relationship.
- ***Black and white thinking:*** Also known as “splitting” or “all-or-nothing thinking,” black and white thinking refers to an inability to reconcile oneself with the both the positive and negative aspects of a situation or person. People who

think in such a way will generally see a situation as either all good, or all bad, with no middle ground. In BPD, sufferers have a tendency to focus on the negative side of events; their bad representation dominating the good representation. For example, a person suffering from BPD may see love and sexuality as lude and perverse, rather than acknowledging the tender qualities of such relationships. In the same way that a person with a black and white thinking may see another person or situation as all good or all bad, they will do the same for themselves, seeing themselves as either flawless, or inherently bad. While most people have the ability to acknowledge that two contradictory states can exist at once – i.e. no one is either “all good” or “all bad,” people with BPD are unable to accept the ambivalence of this. Instead, they shift rapidly from one extreme to the other, in order to accommodate their fluctuating emotions. If they are in a “bad” state and focusing on a person’s negative qualities, they have no awareness of the same person’s positive traits.

- **Reckless and impulsive behavior:** Sufferers of BPD are likely to engage in damaging behaviors such as impulse buying, binge eating, unsafe sex, drug and alcohol abuse and reckless driving. While impulsive behavior is not in of itself necessarily a symptom of BPD, it is the difficulties BPD sufferers face in controlling their impulses that lead to impulsive and reckless behavior. Often, sufferers of BPD engage in reckless behavior in an attempt to either calm the emotional storm inside them, or to “wake” them from a sense of emptiness and detachment. But this impulsive behavior may not always take the form of something that appears to be damaging. The impulsiveness of borderline personality disorder can also lead sufferers to engage in behaviors such as:

- oversharing emotions
- quitting their job unexpectedly
- joining and then quitting different groups or hobbies
- clearing out all their belongings in an attempt to “start again.”
- Abruptly cancelling or changing plans

- **Unstable Personal Relationships:** Thanks to both their difficulties controlling their emotions and their deep-seated fear of abandonment, BPD sufferers will often find themselves in a string of damaging and chaotic personal relationships. We will explore relationships and borderline personality disorder in details in Parts Two and Three.

- **Self-Damaging Behavior:** Often used as a coping mechanism against overwhelm, BPD sufferers are prone to self-harming, both physically and emotionally. Examples of this may be sabotaging their own work at school or in employment, rather than facing the stress associated with meeting deadlines, or engaging in alienating behavior in order to drive others away. Often, sufferers of BPD will engage in these types of behaviors in order to gain a little relief from their emotional pain. Of course, this relief is almost always short-lasting and can result in guilt and shame. This leads to a cycle, in which the sufferer then turns to destructive behavior in an attempt to relieve the guilt. As time progresses, self-damaging behavior can become an instinctive and unconscious response to emotional pain. More obvious forms of self-destructive behavior such as eating disorders, substance abuse, self-injury and sex addiction are also associated with BPD. It is estimated that at least 10% of BPD sufferers will attempt suicide throughout their lives.

- **Disassociation:** Zoning out or feeling as though they are not in the “real world” is a common trait for people suffering from BPD. Disassociation refers to a disconnect between a person’s thoughts, emotions, behaviors, memories and identity. Disassociation is a common coping mechanism for people with BPD, along with a number of other mental health disorders such as PTSD and acute stress disorder (both of which can co-exist alongside BPD). Disassociation can be broken down into several facets:

- **Depersonalization:** A person experiencing disassociation often feels a sense of disconnect between themselves and their body. It is akin to watching yourself within a dream, or from outside your body.

- **Derealization:** A similar experience to depersonalization, derealization is a sense of being separate from the world

around you; including other people and the objects around you. If you are experience derealization, the world around you can feel unfamiliar and strange.

□ *Amnesia*: Disassociation can lead to short periods of amnesia or “lost time,” in which the sufferer cannot remember what they were doing at a particular time in the day.

□ *Identity Confusion*: The feeling of being detached from yourself and the world can lead sufferers of disassociation to question who they are.

□ *Identity Alteration*: Identity alteration is the act of behaving differently as brought about by your circumstances, for example, not recognizing the world around you due to disassociation. While all of us experience identity alternation from time to time (behaving differently in unusual circumstances), it is a common trait of suffers of BPD. Some BPD sufferers have reported struggling so much with their identity and knowing who they are they have changed their name multiple times by deed poll.

Knowing these common symptoms can help you if you believe you or a loved one may be experiencing borderline personality disorder. However, there are a number of hidden signs of BPD that are not so overt. In the following chapter we will take a look at some of the more subtle symptoms of borderline personality, and how to spot them.

CHAPTER THREE

THE HIDDEN SIGNS OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

While many of the symptoms of borderline personality disorder are difficult to miss, there are also traits of the illness that are much more subtle. A person exhibiting these more subtle signs is said to be experiencing “quiet” borderline personality disorder.

Whereas people with BPD often experience violent mood swings which are easy to recognise, those with quiet BPD are more likely to internalize their feelings. While they still experience the same fluctuation of emotions, the disorder can be much more difficult to spot.

To recognize “quiet” BPD in either yourself or a loved one, look out for the following traits and symptoms:

- ***Struggling to maintain relationships:*** People with quiet BPD may speak about how they find it hard to keep relationships, whether romantic or otherwise. These relationships will often have been ended by the other person, unable to cope with the BPD sufferer’s wild mood swings and aggression. However, as mentioned in Chapter One, it is also common for people with BPD to preemptively end a relationship they feel is struggling as they so often fear being abandoned.
- ***Low self-esteem:*** While quiet sufferers of BPD may be less prone to self-damaging behavior such as reckless driving or violence, they are still likely to suffer from a severely diminished sense of self-worth. Often, this will only be noticeable to others by paying attention to the way they speak about themselves. They may say things like “I can’t do anything right,” or “Why would you want to spend time with me?”
- ***Self-harming tendencies and talk of suicide:*** As with the above example, to recognize these traits in quiet sufferers of BPD, it is important to pay attention to the way they speak. Their comments relating to self-harm or suicide might seem on the surface to be flippant, throw-away lines such as “It makes me want to bash my head against a brick wall,” or but this seemingly innocuous comments can be a mask for much deeper issues.
- ***Having Unhealthy Boundaries:*** In the same way that BPD sufferers are prone to black and white thinking, people with quiet BPD will often obsess about a person, seeming to care greatly what this person thinks of them. On the flip side, they may also have times of needing to completely detach from others, pulling away to the point of isolating themselves in order to create what they perceive as a safe space between them and the world.
- ***Heightened Emotions:*** People suffering from BPD generally experience emotions much more easily and deeply than the general population. This can have both negative and positive effects. People with BPD often exhibit great levels

of excitement, enthusiasm, joy and love but, conversely, can often feel overwhelmed by negative emotions such as anxiety, depression, guilt, anger. Everyday emotions are often heightened, with sadness being transmuted to grief, for example, mild embarrassment being replaced by intense humiliation and panic taking the place of nervousness.

- **Lack of concentration:** Another more subtle trait of BPD is the inability to concentrate. This is often due to the intense emotions building up inside one's head, leaving them with little room to think about anything else. Inability to concentrate is a form of disassociation and can appear as though a person is simply zoning out. A BPD sufferer who has zoned out can be identified by an expressionless face and/or flat vocal delivery. They may also appear distracted.

Familiarizing yourself with these more subtle symptoms of borderline personality disorder can help you identify whether you or a loved one may be suffering from the illness. If you suspect yourself or someone you love is experience borderline personality disorder, it is important to seek professional help. We will be looking at how to get help more closely in Chapter Nine. Parts Two and Three will also offer tools and tips for managing borderline personality disorder, both for sufferers and their families and friends.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE DIFFERENT FACES OF BORDERLINE

PERSONALITY DISORDER - TYPES OF BPD

Just as no two people are the same, so too are no two experiences of borderline personality disorder the same. As we have already seen in Chapters One and Two, there can be a great difference in the behaviors of people suffering from “quiet” borderline personality disorder and more outward manifestations of the illness.

Borderline personality disorder can also be broken down into four different types, as proposed by American psychologist Theodore Million, in his 1995 book *Disorders of Personality DSM-IV and Beyond*.

Million's four categories of BPD are as follows:

- **Discouraged Borderline:** People suffering from discouraged borderline personalities often exhibit avoidant, depressive, dependent tendencies. People with this form of BPD are often submissive and humble, and prone to pliant behavior. They often feel hopeless, powerless and vulnerable. Someone with a discouraged borderline personality can be clingy and tends to go along with the crowd for fear of upsetting the people around them. They can behave in a somber and dejected manner. Below the surface, however, is an anger waiting to erupt. When it does so, it can lead sufferers to self-injury and even suicide.
- **Petulant Borderline:** A petulant borderline personality is characterized by a heightened sense of negativity. Sufferers of this form of BPD are often highly impatient, stubborn and resentful. They are sullen and defiant and feel easily slighted. They are easily disillusioned and disappointed in life. People with a petulant borderline personality disorder fluctuate between desperately relying on people and keeping their distance out of fear of being disappointed or let down. Their emotions are prone to swing between feelings of unworthiness and rage.
- **Impulsive borderline:** Sufferers of impulsive borderline personalities are prone to histrionic or antisocial behavior. This form of BPD is characterized by frenetic, flighty behavior. They can often be flirty and charismatic, able to draw people to them. They are highly energetic and are constantly seeking the next thrill. However, when things do not go their way, sufferers are quick to become agitated, gloomy and irritable. They fear any form of loss, leading them to frequent suicidal tendencies.
- **Self-destructive borderline:** Self-destructive borderline personalities are often highly depressive and masochistic. They carry around a constant sense of bitterness, which they regularly turn inwards. People with this form of BPD are often prone to self-harming and self-punishing. They are often angry, highly strung and moody and are prone to

suicidal thoughts and behaviors. Their self-hatred is prone to reach extreme levels, leading them to many types of destructive behavior, ranging from reckless driving, to poor healthcare, to performing derogatory sexual acts.

In addition to these four borderline types proposed by Millon, psychologist Dr. Christine Lawson also identified four types of borderline personalities in her book *Understanding the Borderline Mother*.

- **Borderline Queen:** Someone with a borderline queen personality is prone to perfectionism. They are prone to take mild criticism very personally and will become aggressive and indignant if anyone suggests they have made a mistake. Thanks to their perfectionism, borderline queens often disassociate from their own negative traits and emotions, believing them a flaw, so is often unable to accept his or her own mistakes. People with this borderline personality regularly feel the need to one-up people around them, particularly their therapists and loved ones.
- **Borderline Waif:** Unlike many other borderline types, the borderline waif does not exhibit a great deal of aggression or outward hostility. Instead, they appear to be fragile and victimized by all life has thrown at them. Waifs are generally depressed and discontented and worry easily. Borderline waifs believe themselves to be helpless victims and often refuse to accept help in order to keep their 'victim' mentality alive.
- **Borderline Witch:** Someone exhibiting a borderline witch personality can be extremely aggressive and controlling. They seek to punish people for the smallest of indiscretions and are prone to "borderline rage" – the destruction of objects that are of value to those they believe have wronged them. Borderline witches are adept at black and white thinking, particularly when it comes to their loved ones. Parents with this personality will often idealize one of their children over the rest or seek to play one family member off against another. (More on this in Chapter Seventeen.) People with a borderline witch personality can be extremely domineering and intrusive, often violating the boundaries of those around them. They are prone to using the thoughts and feelings of those around them a weapon, leading their loved ones to become withdrawn and restrained in their presence. Borderline witches can be extremely paranoid and suspicious, with their hostile behavior masking their own fear of loss of control.
- **Borderline Hermit:** People with a borderline hermit personality view the world as an inherently dangerous place. They have large amounts of paranoia and suspicion and have trouble trusting those around them. Thanks to their belief that everyone is out to get them, borderline hermits will withdraw from the world and isolate themselves. For many sufferers of a borderline hermit personality, the disorder stems from sexual abuse or other equally damaging childhood trauma.

CHAPTER FIVE

WHAT ARE THE CAUSES OF BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER?

As mentioned in chapter one, the causes of BPD, like many other mental disorders remain unclear. Experts believe BPD is unlikely to be caused by any single factor, but rather a combination of contributing elements.

Some of the factors that are believed to contribute to this disorder include:

- **Genetics:** Having a parent with borderline personality disorder may make you more susceptible to the illness. Studies have shown that, in the case of identical twins, when one twin has the disorder, the other has a 2 in 3 chance of developing it as well. At present, however, there is no definitive proof that a gene exists for BPD, meaning genetics' effect on borderline personality disorder is still under question.
- **Issues with Chemicals in the Brain:** Experts believe many people who suffer from BPD have problems with the neurotransmitters in their brain. Neurotransmitters are chemicals that act as "messengers," transmitting signals between the brain cells. In particular, altered levels of the neurotransmitter serotonin are thought to play a part in the onset of BPD, as serotonin levels have been linked to depression, aggression and destructive urges.
- **Issues with Brain Development:** Thanks to MRI scans conducted on sufferers of BPD, researchers have identified that the condition may be associated with issues in three specific parts of the brain. In many people with BPD these parts of the brain were either undeveloped or showed unusual activity. These parts are:
 - *The orbitofrontal cortex* , responsible for decision-making and planning
 - *The hippocampus* , which is responsible for regulating behavior and exhibiting self-control
 - *The amygdala* , which plays a substantial role in the control of negative emotions such as aggression, anxiety and fear.
- **Environmental Factors:** Genetic and biological factors such as brain make-up are far from the only elements believed to play a part in the onset of BPD. A number of environmental factors are also common among sufferers of borderline personality disorder. Many of these stem from our experiences as children, as our childhood plays such an enormous part in the shaping of our adult lives. Some of the issues experienced by BPD sufferers include:
 - Parental neglect as a child
 - Being a victim of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, particularly as a child
 - Being exposed to long-term fear or stress, particularly as a child

□ Growing up with a family member who suffered from a serious mental condition, or who had problems with drug and alcohol abuse

Issues of neglect or abuse in childhood can manifest themselves in a number of different ways in our adult life. Childhood trauma can cause us to bury our true feelings and present a “false self” to the world, can drive intense feelings of lack of self-worth and cause a range of attachment issues that present themselves in all kinds of relationships. For sufferers of BPD, the effects of childhood trauma can be seen in traits such as expecting others to be a parent to you, idealizing others, or expecting others to bully you.

CHAPTER SIX

DIAGNOSING BORDERLINE

PERSONALITY DISORDER

As discussed in Chapter Two, if you believe yourself or a loved one is suffering from borderline personality disorder, it is crucial to get professional help as soon as possible. BPD can lead to violence, damaged relationships, any number of dangerous behaviors, and even suicide. It is not something that you should attempt to handle without the help of a trained psychologist, or other mental health professional.

Self Diagnoses:

While you have likely identified several of the traits mentioned in Chapters One and Two, the following questions can help you determine whether you might be affected by BPD:

- Do your emotions change very quickly?
- Do you often experience extreme anger, sadness or distress?
- Do you often feel empty or unfulfilled?
- Are you constantly afraid the people I care about will leave me?
- Are most of your romantic relationships intense and unstable?
- Does the way you feel about the people in your life tend to fluctuate from one extreme to the other?
- Are you ever tempted to engage in self-injury or attempt suicide?
- When you feel insecure in a relationship, do you ever lash out or behave impulsively in a desperate attempt to keep your lover close?
- Do you ever engage in dangerous behavior such as binge drinking, drug use, unsafe sex or reckless driving?

If you or your loved one answered yes to several or all of these statements, it may indicate borderline personality disorder.

Professional Diagnoses:

BPD will be officially diagnosed following a clinical assessment by a mental health professional. The generally accepted method of diagnosis involves presenting the patient with a list of characteristics and asking them whether they feel such characteristics accurately represents them. By actively involving patients in their own diagnosis this way, sufferers are likely to come to terms with the disorder more quickly.

Mental health experts have produced a list of nine symptoms associated with borderline personality disorder. For a person to be diagnosed with BPD, they must exhibit at least five of the following traits:

- Fear of abandonment

- Unclear or changing self-image
- Unstable relationships
- Impulsive and/or self-destructive behaviors
- Tendency towards self-harm or suicide attempts
- Extreme mood swings
- Difficulty controlling rage
- Paranoia or suspicion of others' motives.
- Persistent feelings of emptiness

Such an evaluation will also discuss the severity of these symptoms and when they began, along with determining when they may have begun. Of particular relevance are any suicidal thoughts a patient may have experienced, along with thoughts of self-harm, or doing harm to others.

An assessment may also include physical tests to rule out other triggers of these symptoms, such as thyroid conditions or drug and alcohol abuse.

As previously mentioned, BPD can sometimes be misdiagnosed, thanks to its similarities to other mental health disorders such as depression, bipolar disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder. As a result, mental health professionals might experiment with a range of treatments and therapies in order to identify the most suitable path towards recovery.

So what if you or a loved one has been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder? What does this mean for your relationships, and your life in general? There is no doubt that BPD presents an enormous array of challenges to both the sufferer and those around them. But all is not lost. In the following sections, we will take a look at how to cope if borderline personality disorder has become a part of your life.

PART TWO

How To Cope If You Suffer From Bpd

CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT TO EXPECT IF YOU HAVE BEEN DIAGNOSED WITH BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

So you have been diagnosed with borderline personality disorder. Perhaps this has come as a cruel shock. Or perhaps you may even welcome the diagnosis as an explanation to your previously unexplainable emotional outbursts and mood swings. It feels like a relief to know that this behavior is the cause of an illness, rather than another part of yourself.

Regardless of how you feel about your diagnosis, there is no doubt that living with borderline personality disorder can be a hellish experience, both for you and your loved ones. BPD can affect every part of your life, from your relationship to yourself and others, to your education, career and recreational life. Your tendencies to act out and behave in violent and aggressive mean that both you and your loved ones are prone to being hurt, both physically and mentally.

Learning to manage the disorder begins with understanding. By knowing exactly what to expect, you can prepare and develop coping skills to help you weather the emotional storm. Having a deep understanding of your illness and its traits will also help you communicate better with your loved ones about BPD, making it easier for them to assist you with the struggles you will face. We will address this more in Chapter Twelve, but for now, let's take a look at exactly what you can expect if you have been diagnosed with BPD:

How You May Feel Towards Yourself

If you have been diagnosed with BPD, you can expect to feel the following ways about yourself:

- Overwhelmed by the intensity of your feelings and rapid mood swings
- Lonely
- As though you are inherently flawed
- As though you are to blame for everything bad that happens to you
- As though you have a hard time deciding what you want in life, or even what you like or dislike.
- As though you are a bad person
- As though you are not a "real" person
- As though you are a child forced to live in an adult's world
- As though you don't know who you really are
- As though something you are unable to identify is missing from inside you

These negative feelings towards yourself can cause you to act out in the following ways:

- Keeping very busy so you are never alone with your thoughts
- Regularly changing plans, hobbies or even jobs as you struggle to identify who you really are.
- Overspending and/or binge eating
- Using recreational drugs and/or smoking
- Excessive use of alcohol to help dampen your emotions.
- Avoiding seeing things through
- Refusing to attempt activities you think you might fail or might otherwise cause you to feel disappointed.

How You May Feel Towards Others

Of course, borderline personality disorder also plays a huge role in the way you relate to the people around you. BPD can cause you to act with aggression and hostility towards those you love, causing them both physical and emotional pain. But again, understanding exactly how BPD can make you act and think can help you manage these outbursts and limit the damage to those you care about. Here are some of the ways BPD can cause you to think or behave around others:

- You may feel as though no one understands you and what you are going through
- You may inherently feel different from everyone around you
- You may believe that the world is a dangerous place that you want only to run away from
- You may believe that people are either completely perfect, or completely bad and hurtful, with no middle ground.
(This is known as “black and white thinking.”)
- You may fear your friends and loved ones will leave you forever if they get upset or angry with you.

These feelings can cause you to act in the following ways around other people:

- Getting extremely frustrated and angry with those around you
- Having difficulty trusting people, even those you love
- Wanting – and needing – to be close to people, but fearing they will leave you, so avoiding them.
- Having unrealistic expectations of your friends and loved ones
- Ending relationships with partners and friends if you think they might leave you
- Constantly looking for signs within your relationships that signal someone is going to leave you.

As you no doubt already know, borderline personality disorder can be exhausting. The constant swings from exhilarating highs to crushing lows can make it feel as though you are trapped on an endless emotional rollercoaster.

But the good news is, with treatment, most sufferers of BPD experience a complete or partial improvement of their symptoms. Many people find their symptoms improve markedly within a few years of their diagnosis. In addition, if someone experiences a complete remission of their symptoms, there is a good chance the symptoms will not return in the future. In the following chapters we will begin to look at the many tools and techniques available for managing borderline personality. While the road ahead is guaranteed not to be an easy one, there is hope. With patience and perseverance, you too can be one of the many people with BPD who go on to live productive and successful lives.

CHAPTER EIGHT

LEARNING TO CONTROL THE EMOTIONAL STORM

It is the “emotional storm” that most pointedly characterizes borderline personality disorder; that wild fluctuation of emotions you feel as though you have no control over. This emotional storm can leave you feeling utterly helpless, frustrated and/or detached from your body. When in the grip of the emotional storm, it can feel as though there is no way out, but the reality is there are many techniques you can implement to help you through the situation.

By studying the following techniques at a time when you are feeling calm and centered, you will be much more prepared and able to manage the emotional storm when it hits. Developing a “plan of attack” to deal with such a situation can help you feel more in control the next time your emotions threaten to overwhelm you.

Let’s take a look at a few of the techniques that can be implemented when it comes to managing the emotional storm:
Identify Your Emotions

The first step in managing your emotions, it is developing the skills to recognize exactly what it is you are feeling. When you are in the midst of the emotional storm wrought by BPD, it can be difficult to discern just what is going on. You are literally in a state of chaos, and you may be experiencing a number of conflicting emotions at any one time.

If you are feeling emotionally overwhelmed and unable to pinpoint exactly what it is you are feeling, it can help to work through the situation a moment at a time. Focus on getting through one minute, then the next, then the next. Breaking the situation down into smaller, more manageable tasks can help it feel more manageable. Focusing on identifying a single emotion within the storm can also help to manage the overwhelm. Give a name to exactly what it is you are feeling. Is it anger, or frustration? Exhilaration? Grief? Try and identify the emotion without trying to find the reason for its appearance or bring it to a halt.

Here are some of the physical symptoms you will experience with a number of emotions which may help you identify exactly what it is you are feeling:

- Anger
- Quickened heart rate
- Quickened breathing
- Tense muscles
- Tapping your feet
- Clenching your fists or your jaw
- Sadness and depression
- Physical ache in your chest

- Decreased appetite
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Anxiety and panic
- Sweating palms
- Dilated pupils
- Body aches
- Body temperature changes
- Chest pain
- Chills
- Choking sensation
- Dry Mouth
- Increased heart rate
- Nausea
- Shortness of breath
- Tingling sensations

Once you have identified exactly what it is you are feeling, you can begin to implement techniques for calming these emotions. See Chapter Ten for more details on calming specific emotions.

Accept Your Emotions

Now you have identified the emotions you are feeling, the next step is to accept them. This is a crucial step when it comes to calming the storm of emotions raging inside your head. This can be an extremely difficult thing to do, particularly if you have been suffering from the effects of BPD for a number of years. You will now have a great deal of resentment for the disorder, along with the emotions it causes you to feel. Accepting them may seem like an impossible task.

But it is important to understand that accepting your emotions is not the same things as approving of them or accepting that there is no chance of change. It just means that you keep yourself from trying to push away and suppress these feelings or deny what it is happening. By allowing yourself to feel the true intensity of your feelings, rather than battling to keep them away, you actually take away a great deal of their power.

Endeavor to just let your feelings “be”, without engaging in self-criticism or judgement. See if you can focus on the present moment, without giving rise to thoughts of the past or future.

Try some of the following techniques:

- Imagine you are observing your emotions from the outside. After all, you are not defined by your emotions. You are not your anger, or your grief or your frustration, or anxiety. Attempt to view your emotions as what they truly are – something separate from yourself.
- Observe the ways your emotions come and go. It can be helpful to think of them as “waves”- imagine them ebbing and flowing, increasing and decreasing in intensity. This also strengthens your ability to see your emotions as something separate from yourself.
- Pay attention to your physical body. How do these emotions manifest inside you? Do they cause you to feel tension or pain? Where? Does this pain or discomfort move as the feelings increase and increase? Try and pinpoint exactly where you can feel the manifestation of the emotion. And what does it feel like? Is a dull ache? A sharp pain? A burning? A tingling?
- Tell yourself it’s okay to be feeling these emotions. Accept them for what they are. Remember, accepting them does not mean you approve of them. And it does not mean you are giving them permission to be here forever.
- Tell yourself that just because you are experiencing these emotions right now, it does not mean they are reality. Your emotions are a result of your thoughts. And all thoughts can be changed.

Engage in Mindfulness Practices

Engaging in mindfulness practices can also be a great help in learning to manage the chaos of the emotional storm. Mindfulness is a form of meditation and that helps people manage their thoughts and feelings. It is used increasingly in the treatment of mental health disorders and is recommended by NICE (The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) in the treatment of depression, among other illnesses. Thanks to the way it helps practitioners manage and become aware of their emotional states, mindfulness can also be extremely beneficial when it comes to treating borderline personality disorder.

The mindfulness state can be reached through a number of methods. Here are a few mindfulness techniques to try if you are new to the practice:

- **Standard mindfulness meditation:** Focus on your breathing. Feel the breath move in and out of your body and become aware of its rhythm. If you become aware of thoughts arising, simply notice them, then let them go by imagining them drifting away down an imaginary river. You can achieve the same result by focusing on a mantra (a repeated phrase), in place of the breath.
- **Sensory mindfulness meditation:** Pay attention to each of your senses. Identify five things you can see, five things you can hear, smell, touch and even taste. Challenge yourself to describe these sensory experiences in great detail. For example, rather than simply saying “I see a butterfly,” describe to yourself exactly what it is you are seeing: “I see a butterfly with dark yellow wings and small semi-circular black spots. Its legs are moving slowly in a back and forth action.” Apply the same level of detail to the descriptions of things you hear, smell, feel and taste. This is an excellent way to ensure you are engaged in the present moment, and not focusing on the past or future.
- **Bodily sensation mindfulness:** Close your eyes and become aware of the subtle sensations within your body. Do you feel an itch? A gentle ache? A tingling? Do not try to fight these feelings, simply become aware of them and allow them to pass. Work your way from the top of your head to the tips of your toes, mentally scanning every inch of the body. Paying close attention to what you notice, proving the same depth of description you would in a sensory meditation.
- **Emotional mindfulness:** Arguably the most beneficial type of mindfulness when it comes to managing BPD, this calls on you to allow and accept arising emotions without passing judgment. Rather than fighting your emotions, simply try to name them. Exactly what is it you are feeling? Anger? Jealousy? Frustration? Joy? Whatever it is you are feeling, accept it and then let it go. Imagine your emotion floating away down the river in the same way you would discard an errant thought during a standard mindfulness meditation.

Learning to Control Your Impulses

As any sufferer of borderline personality disorder knows, BPD is a constant struggle of battling your impulses. The sudden mood swings can drive you to impulsive, reckless, self-damaging behaviors ranging from self-harming to dangerous driving, to unsafe sex. You likely know these things are no good for you, but it can feel like the only way of easing the chaos inside your head. It can often feel as though you have no choice but to engage in these behaviors.

Though it may not seem like it in the heat of the moment, these impulses can be managed. Begin by acknowledging that these reckless, impulsive behaviors have a purpose. They are coping mechanisms that help you deal with distress, and should be seen as such, rather than a cause for punishing yourself. But as you no doubt are aware, these reckless behaviors can put both you and those around you in danger. It is important to find healthier and less damaging ways of coping with the distress BPD can cause.

In order to do this successfully, you must learn to tolerate this distress, rather than immediately seeking to relieve it. But building your tolerance, you will be able to step back and give yourself a moment to think when you feel the need to act recklessly, as BPD can so often drive you to do. By becoming able to tolerate distress, you will be able to “ride out” the experience, without resorting to damaging behaviors.

No doubt this sounds much easier said than done. So let’s take a look at a few of the techniques you can implement to begin to build your tolerance to distress:

Lower Your Body Temperature: When we get angry and frustrated, our body temperatures often rise. Lowering your body temperature can help calm the anger within. Do this by splashing cold water on your face, standing in front of a fan or air conditioner, or stepping outside if you are in a warm building. The change in temperature will have the effect of cooling you down both emotionally and physically.

Engage in High Intensity Exercise: Vigorous exercise is a great way to ease many intense emotions. The next time you feel overwhelmed and about to act out, turn to exercise instead. Sprint around the block or swim a few laps. It can even be

something as simple as doing a few jumping jacks or running on the spot for a few minutes. The increase in oxygen flow will greatly aid in managing your distress. Being physically exhausted also makes you far less likely to engage in dangerous and reckless behavior.

Focuses Breathing: Paying attention to your breath, much the same way as you would do in meditation, can be a useful technique in managing distress. Force yourself to breathe in a rhythm, giving yourself five counts in, hold for two counts, then release. Repeat as many times as you need to.

Tense and Relax Your Muscles: When we are tense or stressed, our muscles can involuntarily become tense. But deliberately tensing your muscles and then consciously releasing it, you will be able to enter a deeper state of relaxation. Try tensing your fists as hard as you can and holding it for a count of ten. Keep squeezing harder and harder. On the count of ten, release your fists. You will feel your muscles become far more relaxed than they had initially been. If you are feeling distressed, try this technique in as many places around your body as you can. Tense each muscle and then feel them relax more deeply as you release the hold.

Find an Activity That Calms You: The next time you feel distressed and ready to act out, force yourself to engage in a different activity. This can be any activity you choose, as long as it is a healthy one that will not put yourself or others in danger. This helps by taking your mind off the negative emotion and forcing you to concentrate on the task at hand. It can be helpful to put together a list of activities you enjoy doing – they could be something as simple as taking a walk or reading a book, through to playing a musical instrument, doing a sport or baking a cake. The next time you feel distressed, you will have this list to turn to.

Do Something Kind: Though being kind and generous may be the last thing you feel like doing while you are lost in your own problems, engaging in an act of service is a great way to help yourself through your distress without resorting to reckless behavior. Bake cookies for someone, wash a neighbor's windows, or help out with tasks around the house. Not only will this distract you from your stress, it will have the added benefit of making you feel good about yourself, helping with your sense of self-worth. As with the above suggestion, when you are feeling good, it can be helpful to make a list of helpful tasks you can engage in that you can refer to the next time stress takes hold.

Keep Your Mind Busy: If you need a quick distraction from the chaos of thoughts inside your head, engage in an activity that forces you to keep your mind busy. Try saying the alphabet backwards or recite your times tables.

Utilize Positive Imagery: Imagine the way you would like to respond the next time you feel like acting recklessly. How would you ideally like to manage the distress? Imagine what this would look like. Allow yourself to really feel the way this would feel. This exercise can be done both when you are feeling good and when the distress begins to take hold. By imagining the ideal outcome, you may be able to change the way you behave in reality.

Give Meaning to the Situation: We have already discussed the way reckless behavior has a purpose, in that it acts as a mechanism in times of distress. But what other meaning can you give to the way you are feeling? Perhaps your battle with your distress has given you the strength to face it again next time it arrives. Maybe it has taught you how you *don't* wish to behave. Maybe you received help from someone unexpected and the situation allowed you to create a new relationship.

Make a Pros and Cons List: If you are battling with yourself about whether to engage in reckless behavior, such as going on a massive shopping spree or sleeping with someone you know you shouldn't, take a few moments to write down a list of the pros and cons. What will the benefits be to engaging in this behavior? And what are the likely consequences? The act of doing this will hopefully not only allow you to see the repercussions of your reckless actions but may also provide you with that moment of thought you need to remove yourself from the intensity of the situation.

CHAPTER NINE

WHO CAN HELP YOU?

If you are suffering from borderline personality disorder, it is important to know that you are not alone. In Part Three, we will be looking more closely at how your loved ones can help you manage the illness, but it is important to acknowledge the vast array of healthcare professionals who are trained to help sufferers of borderline personality disorder.

While psychiatrists and psychologists are often the first people we turn to in the treatment of BPD, the condition can also be treated by GPs and nurses, along with occupational therapists and social workers who have undergone special training. Some major cities worldwide also have specialized mental health services dedicated to patients suffering from BPD.

Finding the right health-care professional

Finding the right therapist to work with can be a challenge. With so many options out there, even knowing where to begin can be a challenge. While your GP will often be able to assist you in finding a therapist well-versed in dealing with borderline personality disorder, it is important that you play an active part in finding a person you feel comfortable working with. After all, for therapy to be successful, you will need to open up to your therapist and feel safe doing so.

So how do you begin the daunting task of finding the right therapist for you?

Begin by narrowing down your options. You already know you want a therapist with experience treating BPD, of course, but think about what else you require. For example, how far are you willing to travel to get to your appointments? What is your budget? Do you have a preference for a male or female therapist? Apply these filters to your list of therapists to create a shortlist of potential candidates.

Next, take your time to read through the profiles of the therapists on your shortlist. Take note of not only what they offer professionally, but any information they might provide about their personal lives. It's good to use your instinct here – who do you get a good feeling from? Is there anyone who makes you feel uncomfortable?

Understand the different approaches each therapist takes when it comes to managing BPD. Is there a specific type of therapy you have been recommended by your GP, or one you feel would be most beneficial for you? Carefully examine the courses of treatment each therapist offers and learn as much as you can about each method of treatment.

Once you have found the therapist you feel may be right for you, take up their offer of a free consultation before committing to anything more long-term. It is important that you feel a connection to your therapist and that you feel they understand you. At the initial consultation, be sure to ask questions, in order to come away with all the information you need to make a decision. Here are few things you might consider asking:

- Are you experienced and comfortable in treating people with borderline personality disorder?
- Do you have any special training when it comes to the treatment of BPD? If so, what? How do you approach treatment?
- Are you comfortable with me expressing my emotions during our sessions? Do you feel comfortable with me raising sensitive issues in my life?
- How will you determine if your treatment is working?
- What will your next step be if the treatment is not successful?

- How often will we have sessions? How long will each session last?
- Does your treatment involve my partner and family? If so, how?
- Am I able to call you if I am experiencing a crisis? If not, can you provide details of someone I can call?
- What are your fees? Will they be covered by my health insurance?

As BPD often exists in conjunction with other mental health issues such as eating disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, bipolar disorder and depression, it is important to keep your therapist updated on any new issues or changes in your behavior that may present themselves. In this way, you can both keep on top of any alterations in your condition and treatment can be adjusted accordingly.

As an adult, you should expect your healthcare provider to give you all the information and assistance you need to deal with your illness. You should be given the choice to make your own decisions when it comes to your treatment. Often your healthcare provider will involve your partner or family in this discussion. Be sure to ask questions about anything you do not understand.

Things You Can Do to Increase the Likelihood of Success

To give yourself the best chance of defeating the BPD, you must take an active role in your treatment. Just relying on your psychologist, or other healthcare provider will not be enough to manage the emotional chaos that arises with the disorder. By taking the following steps, you will be greatly increasing the chance of successful treatment:

- Work with your psychologist or other healthcare provider, along with your partner and/or family, to make a plan for the management of your BPD
- Be sure to attend all your appointments
- Be honest and open with your psychologist. Tell them about anything that is worrying you.
- Be open to change with regards to your daily life. Allow your psychologist to offer suggestions, and do not disregard them without due consideration, even if they may seem uncomfortable at first.
- Be sure to do any “homework” set for you by your psychologist.
- Be honest when it comes to the way BPD affects you. Analyze your illness and understand the way it makes you act.
- Learn how to manage your impulses and emotions, and develop ways of coping, without resorting to self-harming or destructive behavior. (See Chapter Eight for further information.)
- Be patient and persistent. Keep trying different treatment options until you find one that works for you.
- Get as much reliable information about the disorder as you can. The more you know and understand about BPD, the easier it will be to manage.
- Design and implement a plan to get you through crises. Having a plan in place will help you think more clearly in times of distress. The plan should highlight things you can do to get through the crisis, along with things that should be avoided. (See Chapter Eight for further information.) Include things your loved ones can do for you, along with people you can contact in times of crisis.

What to expect with regards to recovery

If you are suffering from a physical illness, recovery is often a black and white thing. You are sick, and then you are healed. But, as you likely know, recovery is completely different in cases of mental illness. Very rarely does recovery mean a complete elimination of symptoms. It is unlikely – though not impossible – that you will ever be able to completely dispense with the need for therapy, medication or other treatments.

Nonetheless, many people suffering from BPD have seen marked improvements in their conditions through a variety of treatments. When dealing with borderline personality disorder, recovery can be measured in a number of ways.

When you are in recovery you will experience less frequent emotional outbursts, and these outbursts will decrease in intensity. You will have less incidences of self-harming and other impulsive, reckless behaviour. While it is of course possible that there will be relapses, you will be able to resolve these crises much more quickly than you did in the past. As your symptoms improve, you will likely feel more and more confident taking steps towards living a full and successful life.

CHAPTER TEN

USEFUL TOOLS

Learn How to Change Your Brain

As crazy as it sounds, learning how to alter the function of your brain is a key way of managing borderline personality disorder. As discussed in part one, BPD is often linked to neurological abnormalities. So what are you to do if your brain does not function in the same way as others'? Surely that is just something you have to live with, right?

Not necessarily.

Each time you engage in a healthy coping response, such as those outlined in Chapter Eight, you are developing new neural pathways. Skills and treatments such as meditation and mindfulness have also been proven to grow and strengthen brain matter. The more you practice, the stronger these pathways will become. Before you know it, the learned behavior will become automatic. With time and patience you have the ability to change the way you feel, behave and think.

Stimulate Your Senses

Engaging one or more of your senses can be a good way to manage the emotional challenges of BPD. As each person is different, it is a good idea to experiment with stimulating different senses to find out what works best for you. You may also find that what works for you changes depending on just what it is you are feeling. Something that is effective for you when you are feeling numb or empty may not work to calm anger or frustration. There are of course an endless array of ways to stimulate your senses, but here are a few techniques to begin with. Start here and then experiment to find out just what works for you:

- **Sight:** Seek out an image that captures your attention. This may be something in your immediate environment such as a view, a piece of art, or an inanimate object such as a book or table. Or it could be an image you see in your imagination. Allow yourself to appreciate the colors and textures you see. Bright colors will have the effect of stimulating you if you feel empty or numb, while cooler colors can have a calming influence on anger or frustration.
- **Taste:** Stimulating your taste buds can help when you are feeling numb and empty. Try eating foods with intense flavors such as lemons, chilis, or strong-flavored mints. Alternatively, if you are seeking to calm your anger or agitation, warming foods such as tea and soup can help.
- **Touch:** If you are feeling numb, try holding a piece of ice, or running chilled or warm water over your hands. Gripping tightly to an inanimate object can also be helpful. If you need to calm yourself, a hot shower, warm bed or cuddles with a pet can be beneficial.
- **Smell:** If you are familiar with aromatherapy, you will know the immense power of scents. You will find essential oils available to manage any emotions. For example, scents such as lavender, ylang or chamomile can calm you, orange and sandalwood can have a stimulating effect, while rose, frankincense and basil can help alleviate anxiety. Also take the time to identify scents around your home that calm or stimulate you. For example, does the smell of clean laundry have a calming effect? How does the scent of freshly cut grass make you feel? What about the scents that

come out of your kitchen? Pay attention to the way you feel when you smell different foods cooking.

- **Sound:** If you are struggling with emptiness or numbness, loud music, whistles or buzzers can help jolt you back to reality. To calm your emotions, try soothing music or natural sounds such as bird song, rainfall or ocean waves. If you don't have access to the real thing, there are many recordings available on places like iTunes or YouTube.

Activities to Soothe Your Emotions

While we have already touched on the role of activities when it comes to focusing your attention, specific activities can have the effect of soothing our emotions. Just like the sensory stimulation, different things will work for different people, so it is important to experiment and find what works for you. Here are few places to begin.

If you are feeling anxious, tense or panicked, try:

- Taking ten deep breaths, counting them out aloud
- Taking a warm bath or shower
- Engaging in mindfulness by making yourself a hot drink and drinking it slowly, paying attention to the smell, the taste and the feel of the mug in your hands
- Write down every detail you can about where you are in this moment. Include details about the room, the weather, the time, date etc.
- Go for a walk.
- If you are feeling angry, restless or frustrated, try:
 - Hitting a pillow
 - Throwing ice cubes into the sink make them smash
 - Tearing up a newspaper
 - Doing some vigorous exercise such as boxing
 - Doing a practical activity such as gardening or handiwork
 - Listening to some loud music
 - Focusing on your breathing. This will force you to focus on something other than your anger.
 - Counting to ten before you react. This buys you a little time to think.
 - Taking yourself out of the area. Take a short walk around the block, or even just remove yourself to a different from the person or situation that is causing you anger.
- If you are feeling depressed, lonely or sad, try:
 - Writing all your negative emotions on a piece of paper and tearing it up or burning it
 - Listening to a piece of music or song you find uplifting
 - Writing a loving letter to the part of you that is experiencing the sadness or loneliness
 - Wrapping yourself up in a blanket and watching your favourite movie
 - Cuddling a pet or soft toy
 - Doing some exercise
 - When you are not feeling sad or depressed, make a list of things you enjoy doing, such as playing a musical instrument, walking in nature, or watching your favourite TV show. The next time you are struggling, refer to this list and do one of the activities.
- If you feel detached, disassociated or lost in your own world, try:
 - Clapping your hands together hard and paying attention to the way it feels
 - Chewing a chili or piece of ginger
 - Splashing your face with cold water
 - Walking barefoot and paying attention to the feel of the ground beneath your feet
 - When you are not experience an episode of disassociation, write notes to yourself in places you will see them. The

next time you feel detached, use these notes to anchor you in the world outside your head.

- If you feel as though you want to self harm, try:
- Rubbing an ice cube over the place you want to hurt yourself
- Stick tape over your arm and pull it off
- Take a cold bath

Reduce Your Vulnerability

Give yourself the best chance of fighting negative emotions by taking care of your physical and mental well-being. Be sure to do the following:

- Do plenty of exercise
- Get a good night's sleep
- Eat a balanced diet
- Avoid excessive use of drugs and alcohol
- Practice relaxation techniques such as meditation

Psychoeducation

Psychoeducation is a useful tool that can be of great value to sufferers of borderline personality, along with their loved ones. It helps people with BPD and those around them understand the disorder at a deeper level. Psychoeducation programs cover symptoms of the disease, along with treatment options, recovery methods and available help.

Psychoeducation can take place either individually or in groups. It may comprise of written information-person meetings, websites, videos or discussion groups. Speak to your healthcare provider if you are interested in pursuing psychoeducation for you and your family.

Medication

Using medication in the treatment of borderline personality disorder has its roots in the 1980s. Since then, there has been a marked increase in the success of psychotherapy in managing the disorder. Thanks to this, many healthcare professionals believe medication, in conjunction with psychotherapy, is an effective way of managing the illness.

As BPD is believed to be caused, at least in part, by biological disturbances, such as chemical imbalances in the brain, many of the symptoms caused by these imbalances can be addressed through medication. Medication has proven to be effective in the rapid stabilization of emotional outbursts and aggression BPD sufferers can direct at both themselves and others. There has not been any form of psychotherapy to date that provides the same immediate response. In addition, medication has been proven to improve elements of BPD that are usually unresponsive to psychotherapy, such as paranoia, black and white thinking, high levels of suspiciousness and disassociation.

In some cases, the medication has such a profound effect on altering these biological processes that, in conjunction with psychotherapy, they decrease to the point of medication no longer being required.

There are four classes of medications usually used in the treatment of BPD:

- Antipsychotic agents

These have been proven to assist with mood regulation and decrease the incidences of self-injury paranoia, hostility, black and white thinking and depression.

Because of their ability to counter a wide range of symptoms, antipsychotic agents are considered one of the most useful classes of medications in the treatment of BPD. They are commonly used to treat other mental illnesses including schizophrenia and bipolar disorder, however, when prescribed at a lower dosage, they can also be extremely beneficial for sufferers of BPD.

- Mood stabilizers

This class of medication is known to improve unstable moods, anxiety, irritability and problems relating to others. They do not however reduce black and white thinking, paranoia or disassociation; all common symptoms of borderline personality disorder. Because of this, many psychotherapists will prescribe both a mood stabilizer and antipsychotic agent.

- Antianxiety agents

These have been proven to reduce anxiety, irritability, depression and agitation. They can also be beneficial for sufferers of BPD who have difficulty sleeping. However, thanks to their highly addictive nature, they are used with caution in the

treatment of BPD. There have been several cases in which the use of antianxiety agents have been reported to increase impulsive behavior in BPD sufferers.

- Nutraceuticals

This class of medications has been proven to reduce anger, depression and aggression.

The effectiveness of these medications will depend on several factors, namely, the patient's specific symptoms, the medication selected, and the degree to which the sufferer's disorder is caused by a biological imbalance. Because of this, medication which works for one person may not work for another. It make take some trial and error to determine which medication is right for you.

However, it is important to note that, many psychotherapists, as well as medical advisory group NICE are against the use of medication in the treatment of BPD. Medication can lead to addiction and may not be effective when a patient's disorder is caused by environmental factors rather than biological. For the same reasons, many patients are also resistant to taking medication to aid their condition.

Despite these conflicting ideas, the majority of therapists and doctors agree that the best way of tackling BPD is through a combined approach of medication and non-medical treatments such as CBT. Medication alone is rarely a suitable treatment plan.

Speak to your GP, therapist or other healthcare professional to discuss whether medication is the right treatment approach for you.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

SPECIFIC THERAPY SKILLS FOR

MANAGING BPD

These days, there are two main methods of therapy used to treat BPD: cognitive behavioral therapy and dialectical behavior therapy. Let's take a look at these two methods in order to understand their roles in the treatment of borderline personality disorder.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Skills

Cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT aims to alter the way a person thinks and behaves. The effectiveness of this therapy relies heavily on a patient's connection and relationship with their therapist, along with their willingness to change. CBT is commonly used to treat a range of disorders including depression, anxiety, addictions and phobias.

CBT is generally a short-term treatment and, thanks to this, is often more affordable than other types of therapies. It usually focuses on helping clients deal with a very specific problem.

- How Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Works

CBT operates on the premise that our behavior is heavily influenced by our thoughts and feelings. For example, someone with low self-esteem may believe that when they are in public, people are constantly judging them. As a result, they shy away from social occasions and prefer to spend time alone. Cognitive behavioral therapy aims to teach patients that they cannot control every element in the world around them, they are responsible for the way they perceive these external events.

One of the main goals of CBT is the removal of a patient's automatic negative thoughts and the replacing of them with something more positive and productive. These automatic thoughts, such as "I'm not good enough" or "I will never succeed" often have their roots in early childhood and, as the name suggests, pop into a person's head without them having any control over it. Someone experiencing automatic negative thoughts will generally accept them as true, thus the thoughts will have a great effect on their mood and can contribute to depression, anxiety and other emotional difficulties.

The first step of CBT therapy is to identify the automatic negative beliefs a patient is experiencing. This process is done under close guidance of the therapist and is important for learning how negative thoughts and beliefs can play a part in a person's behavior. This can be a challenging process, especially for someone uncomfortable or unfamiliar with introspection.

The second part of CBT asks patients to challenge and examine these negative thoughts, seeking evidence from reality to either support or refute their beliefs. For example, perhaps the person suffering from low self-esteem had an experience in which they were out in public and saw someone of the opposite sex laughing, while facing in their direction. At the time, they automatically assumed this person was laughing *at* them. But CBT calls the patient to examine situations such as this. Perhaps the person was laughing at a friend who was standing behind them. Perhaps the friend told a joke or pulled a face. In likelihood, it had nothing to do with the patient at all.

Doing this allows patients to look more objectively at the thought patterns that are contributing to their mental state. Once the patient is aware of the negative beliefs that come into their heads on a regular basis, they are able to catch themselves thinking these things, thus replacing the negative thought with a more positive one. For example, "I'm not good enough" can

be replaced with “I am enough.”

Through CBT, patients will also develop new coping skills to help them manage challenging situations. For example, patients with phobias will undergo exposure therapy, drug addicts may rehearse ways to avoid social situations in which there may be drugs present, and sufferers of BPD may work on building skills to help them cope with emotional outbursts.

The next step in the process may be rehearsing conversations with friends or family, in which the patient can implement the new beliefs and thought patterns they have been developing. By breaking the process into smaller goals this way, it becomes much more manageable.

While the therapist takes a very active role in CBT, the patient must be willing to put in a great deal of work, both in the sessions and in their daily life. They will often be given homework tasks to complete between sessions. CBT is much more structured and goal-oriented than psychoanalytic types of therapy, which can be quite open-ended. It is well-suited for people who want a short-term treatment to their emotional distress, along with skills they can use to manage their behavior long into the future.

Dialectical Behavioral Therapy Skills

Dialectical behavioral therapy, or DBT is a type of cognitive behavioral therapy that has been modified to specifically treat borderline personality disorder. Developed by Dr. Martha Linehan at the University of Washington, DBT focuses on skills specifically associated with the disorder such as mindfulness, controlling emotions, handling distress and cultivating relationships with others.

Often referred to as “talk therapy,” DBT, like CBT, focuses on cognition – in particular, the way our thoughts and beliefs affect our actions.

DBT was the first type of psychotherapy proven to be successful in the treatment of borderline personality disorder. Thanks to its rapidly growing body of documented success, DBT is considered one of the best ways of treating borderline personality disorder.

DBT is based on the theory that the problem at the heart of borderline personality disorder is the inability to regulate emotions. DBT works on the premise that this inability comes about from a mix of biological and genetic factors and a traumatic childhood in which a child’s caregivers either punished and trivialized a child’s emotional needs or behaved erratically towards them. DBT aims to help patients build a skill set that will help them manage and regulate their emotions.

There are four main types of skills that a patient will develop while undergoing DBT. These are:

- **Mindfulness Skills** : This part of the process focuses on building meditative skills which allow the BPD sufferer to experience and acknowledge all the emotions and thoughts they are experiencing, without judgment. The patient is taught to simply witness and experience the emotions, giving a name to what they are feeling – “sadness” “frustration” “excitement” etc. – without labelling them as good or bad. These are considered the core skills a patient needs to succeed in managing their emotions.
- **Interpersonal Skills**: This part of the DBT process focuses on building skills needed to relate successfully with others. It teaches patients to communicate effectively and assert their needs and managing conflict within relationships.
- **Distress Tolerance Skills**: This section of the process trains patients to tolerate accept their distress, without resorting to reckless or self-damaging behavior.
- **Emotional Regulation Skills**: This focuses on increasing the patient’s ability to identify and manage their emotional reactions to situations that may arise.
- Structure

DBT is made up of specific elements that are introduced over the course of a year or longer.

These elements are:

- **Individual therapy sessions**: This uses CBT techniques such as cognitive restructuring and exposure therapy in order to change patients’ behavior and improve their quality of life.
- **Group therapy sessions** : These sessions provide skills training, teaching patients how to respond to challenging situations and problems faced in day to day life.
- **Phone calls** : These operate as “follow up” sessions in which the therapist checks in on the patient to discuss how successful they have been at applying the skills they have learned to life outside of therapy.

Thanks to the implementation of skills training in mindfulness, acceptance and tolerance of distress, DBT has been proven

to be more effective in treating sufferers of borderline personality disorder than standard CBT.

Speak to your doctor to help you find the right therapy method for you.

CHAPTER TWELVE

GETTING HELP FROM YOUR LOVED ONES

As any sufferer of borderline personality disorder will know, one of the biggest challenges of BPD is relating to other people. BPD can make you feel alone, attacked and unable to engage with those around you. You likely have a string of broken and damaged relationships behind you, and don't see any hope of improving the way you connect with others. Sometimes you may want nothing more than to hide away from the world and have everyone forget you exist.

But the reality is, the greater your support network, the more chance you have of defeating the disorder and going on to live a healthy and fulfilling life.

Understanding the illness and the way it can manifest is the key for both you and those around you. It can be incredibly distressing for your loved ones to watch you struggle with the effects of BPD. It can cause them to feel helpless and full of anxiety. Then, of course, there are the effects of your acting out; which naturally have the greatest impact of those you care about. Witnessing a manifestation of BPD, such as aggression, self-harm or even suicide attempts can be terrifying for those around you. As BPD can cause you to act aggressively and hostile towards those closest to you, the disorder can be frightening and frustrating for your loved ones when they are placed on the receiving end of your attacks. Assisting them in understanding what to expect from the disease, along with what they can do to help can go a long way to improving your relationship and ensuring you have the support you need.

What your family needs to know to help you with BPD

Your family will often feel angry and helpless at how you relate to them. When you strike out at them, they may feel emotionally – or even physically – wounded and will have to fight their own urges to retaliate.

But despite this, your family can be a great help and support when it comes to managing your BPD. After all, they love and are for you, and want the best for you. Speak to your healthcare provider about involving your family in your treatment and management plan. Ask your healthcare provider to give you written information about the disorder for you to show your family. The more they understand about what you are going through, the more support they will be able to offer.

When you begin treatment with a new psychologist or other healthcare professional, speak with your family members about which of them will be willing to be a part of your treatment. Ensure your psychologist is aware of which family members, or even close friends, they are able to speak with or contact with any concerns.

Family psychoeducation sessions can also go a long way towards building a deeper understanding and easing the distress that comes with seeing a loved one battle with BPD.

What your partner needs to know to help you with BPD

If you have been struggling with borderline personality for a number of years, you have likely seen the havoc it can wreak on romantic relationships. A BPD sufferer's intense fear of rejection, along with their inability to regulate their emotions can lead to one drama-filled relationship after another.

But BPD does not have to be a roadblock to having a successful relationship. There are many people with the disorder who

have stable, loving and supportive families. The key lies in helping your partner understand what to expect, and how your disorder may manifest itself.

As with any relationship challenges, managing conflict becomes easier when you try to see the issue from your partner's point of view. This is especially important if you are suffering from a mental health disorder such as BPD which can cause you to think in ways that your partner will not.

To help them understand what you are going through, here are a few things it can be helpful to remind your partner of:

- It is important that they understand the way BPD P sufferers are highly sensitive to rejection and abandonment, both real and perceived. Explain to them the way even mild separations such as vacations or sudden changes in plans can spark your negative emotions and distress and the way having an important person disappear from your life even for a short amount of time can make you feel abandoned, lost and worthless. Accept that these concepts, while they may make perfect sense to you, might be difficult for you partner to relate to. That's okay. The goal here is simply to help them to understand how these situations make *you* feel and react.
- As you know, the challenges of BPD mean you are easily drawn into arguments, conflict and dramas. Ensure your partner understands the way your anger can creep up on you unaware. Help them understand that your BPD can make you very sensitive to the way you are treated. As this is never more prominent than in an intimate relationship, ensure your partner understands that your heightened sensitivity and outbursts are caused by your disorder, not by something they may have done or not done.
- Explain to your partner the way BPD can heighten both positive and negative emotions. Tell them that even the smallest kind thing they do for you can cause you to react with intense joy and gratitude. But they must also be aware of the flip side of this; that even mild criticism a partner with BPD can result in intense anger and hurt.
- Help your partner understand your propensity towards black and white thinking. Explain to them the way it causes you to see things as either all good or all bad, and the way this can cause rapid fluctuations between love and admiration and intense dislike and disappointment.
- Explain to your partner the way BPD can cause you to misconstrue what others are saying to you. For this reason, it is important to make sure they know to communicate their meaning as effectively as possible. Explain to them the way you often have difficulty communicating through facial expressions alone.

The unpredictability of being a relationship with someone with BPD can cause your partner to have their own doubts about your relationship and their ability to handle it. Here are a few ways you and your partner can work together to make the management of BPD easier on both of you:

- **Hold discussions only when you are both calm.** As you are no doubt aware, when you are struggling with an episode of BPD is no time for rational discussion. But be aware that your BPD outbursts can also cause intense emotional reactions from your partner as they struggle to deal with you behavior. If you have something important to discuss, ensure you are both calm and control before you attempt to communicate.
- **Get information.** Help your partner find as much information as possible about what it is like to suffer from BPD. This will help increase empathy in the relationship, and help your partner understand the struggles you face on a daily basis. Help your loved one see that your challenging behavior is a facet of your illness, rather than a choice.
- **See a counsellor.** Seeking support from a mental health professional can be invaluable to both you and your partner. You may choose to attend therapy sessions alone or as a couple.
- **Work on your Communication.** Communication is vital in any relationship, but when a partner suffers from BPD, it becomes even more vital that both parties are able to communicate effectively. Ensure that all discussions you have come from a place of love and do your best to understand that what you may perceive as hurtful behavior is simply your partner trying to do the best they can for the both of you.
- **Tell Your partner to avoid blaming everything on your mental illness.** Help your partner understand that your illness does not define you. Make sure they understand that not every aspect of who you are can be put down to BPD. Help them understand that doing so can cause the disorder to become something of a put-down.

- **Ensure Your partner is practicing self-care.** Living with a partner with BPD can be an enormous challenge and it is important that you acknowledge the immense struggles your loved one is going through. Ensure you give them time to themselves, and that they have a network of friends they can rely on when things become overwhelming. As much as you might value your partner's support, accept that they need a life of their own. Allow them to prioritize time for friends and hobbies, both alone and with you.

What your children need to know to help you with BPD

Being a parent is challenging at the best of times, and it can be an immense struggle when you are battling BPD symptoms as well. While all interpersonal relationships are challenged by borderline personality disorder, the relationship between a parent with BPD and their child can be one of the most difficult to navigate successfully. BPD can make it hard to be steady for your children and it can feel near impossible to be a good parent.

The sad reality is that many children with parents who suffer from BPD go on to exhibit attachment issues and other problems in adulthood. For this reason, it is crucial that parents with borderline personality disorder seek as much help as possible when raising their children.

Parenting with BPD is something that should be managed in conjunction with your therapist and/or doctor. But here are a few ways you can make the challenge less insurmountable:

- Arrange a professional family support service to visit you and your child in your home.
- Attend individual therapy sessions to help you manage your feelings, especially those related to being a parent and your fears surrounding your children's upbringing.
- Attend group therapy with you and your child to help build your relationship. Parents with BPD can often be detached and distant, leading to attachment issues in their children. Therapy sessions can be crucial in countering this.
- Have someone else care for your child for a period of time. Either put your child in childcare or another family member, allowing you to have a much-needed break.
- Just like when dealing with adults, helping your children to understand what you are going through can be of huge benefit when it comes to strengthening your relationship. Explain to them about your illness and exactly what it is you are going through, using books and stories where necessary. Teach your children about not only your own illness, but about mental health and wellbeing. This will help them understand your own erratic behavior and will also allow them to be more open about their own feelings and challenges. Engaging the help of a child psychologist can also be invaluable.
- If you have a baby, they should stay with you if you need to be admitted to hospital.

The best thing you can do for your children is to work constantly on your treatment, doing your best to get well, along with shielding them as much as possible from the negative effects of BPD.

PART THREE

How To Cope When Your Loved One Has Borderline Personality Disorder

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

MANAGING A LOVED ONE WITH BPD

If you have a loved one who is suffering from borderline personality disorder, life can be full of aggression, fear, crises and conflict. You might feel as though you're being held hostage, with a barrage of demands made against you, terrified that your family member will injure or even kill themselves if you don't appease them. Perhaps they are acting violently or asking to borrow money or your car again. Maybe they are bombarding you with endless messages and voicemails. Dealing with BPD can be an ongoing and seemingly unrewarding challenge.

Successfully dealing with borderline personality disorder requires you to build skills to deescalating crises and building independence in your loved one. Although it can often seem impossible, with the right tools and strategies, it is possible to help your loved one on make their way towards recovery.

Understanding what your loved one is going through can help make BPD more manageable for both of you. When you appreciate just what it is your loved one is experience, it increases both empathy and your ability to foresee crises, allowing you to better manage them. So what is it like to have BPD?

Begin by accepting BPD for what it is; a severe limiting disability. As you are no doubt aware, it is a disability that can affects sufferers' quality of life on many levels, including their romantic relationships, friendships and career prospects. The reality is that most people with BPD are severely unhappy. Thanks to the combination of chemical imbalances in the brain, along with deep-seated childhood traumas, a life with BPD is often one filled with great challenges. Beyond the mental symptoms themselves, BPD can also lead to broken education and few career options, drug and alcohol abuse and loneliness. This is especially true for people on the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, as they usually have less access to treatment. Their hyper-sensitivity and tendency toward aggression can wreak havoc on every aspect of their lives. People with BPD are truly victims of their own illness.

Sufferers of BPD describe the disorder as akin to being on a roller coaster- both in terms of the dramatic emotional highs and lows, but also in their constantly wavering sense of who they are. BPD can cause a person to have violent fluctuations in their self-image, goals and aspirations, and even their likes and dislikes. It can be confusing, disorienting and frustrating. This feeling of being adrift can leave people with BPD frightened, in pain and defensive.

As you may already be aware, people with BPD can be extremely sensitive, with some people describing it as feeling like they are one giant exposed nerve. Seemingly small events of situations can trigger intense emotional reactions that are difficult to calm down. When in the midst of these intense emotions, BPD sufferers can find it hard to think straight. They may say hurtful things, or act in reckless or dangerous ways, leading them to feel guilty or ashamed once the violent emotions have passed. But these damaging behaviors are rarely done with the intent to harm. Rather they are done out of desperation.

People with BPD are at risk of creating havoc in their own lives and the lives of those around them. Thanks to tendencies to misinterpret situations, they are quick to anger and often strike out at those closest to them; namely, their family members, partners or children.

People with BPD, like any other illness, need to be treated with compassion and understanding. But it is also important to acknowledge that they need professional psychological help. Offer your loved one all the support and care you can, but do not try and manage on your own.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

HOW TO SPEAK TO SOMEONE WITH BPD

In general, people with BPD do not want special treatment. They just wished to be loved; an emotion which, thanks to traumatic upbringings, they may never have truly experienced. For BPDs simple things such as maintain friendships or cohabiting can be enormous challenges.

People with BPD exhibit heightened levels of sensitivity, meaning even the smallest criticism can cause great offense, leading them behave with aggression and hostility. In addition, they are prone to misconstruing things that are said to them and taking offense when none was intended.

These factors can make relating to someone with borderline personality disorder a complete minefield. While you want to treat your loved one the same way you would others, you must also be aware of the erratic behavior their disorder can cause.

Here are few ways to speak to and relate to a friend, partner or family member suffering from BPD:

What to Do:

- Ensure your meaning is as clear as possible. Do not rely on subtleties or facial expressions to get your meaning across.
- Offer ongoing and regular support. Listen to them, offer assistance and comfort when needed.
- Validate what they are going through. Acknowledge that, while you may not be able to relate to their experience, you understand it is very real to them.
- If you understand the way they are feeling, tell them. But if their feelings do not make sense to you, try to find out more. Ask questions. Let them know you really want to understand. Encourage them to tell you more about the things they are feeling and why.
- Give them hope by acknowledging that other sufferers of BPD have gone on to live long and happy lives.
- Acknowledge that the person is suffering and help them break their goals down into small, manageable steps.
- Have realistic expectations. The nature of BPD means setbacks are commonplace. Do your best to remain positive and encourage the person to do the same.
- If it is appropriate, ask them about their BPD management plan and find out what role you can play in implementing this.
- Communicate your boundaries clearly. Tell them what you are not prepared to accept, be it abusive language,

violence, threats etc.

- If they are agitated, do your best to respond in a calm manner. If you feel in danger, remove yourself from the situation and call for help.
- Listening and reflecting on what you have been told is perhaps the most effective way of communicating with someone with BPD. Even though you may disagree with every word that comes out of your loved one's mouth, acknowledge that listening is not the same as agreeing to someone. You are simply accepting the person's emotions and perspective.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourages your loved one to share pieces of their life, such as "Tell me what happened today to make you feel like this?" or "How is your week going?"
- Summarizing back what you have been told. This helps someone with BPD feel heard and valued. For example, if your partner shares that she thinks you don't love her as much as you used to, you could say, "All right, you feel that I don't love you as much as I used to ." Again, by doing this, you are not agreeing with the statement, you are simply acknowledging the emotions and perspective of the other person. Avoid the temptation to point out all the flaws in the argument remind yourself that the goal of this reflection is not necessarily to agree. It is not about proving who is right or wrong. It is about helping someone you love to feel valued and heard, and about deescalating conflict before it transmutes into a crisis.
- Focus on emotions, not words. BPD sufferers are prone to speaking in ways that may come across as hurtful or antagonistic, and it can be difficult not to focus on these words. But rather than pulling your loved one up on something they may have said, look beneath their words to the core emotion beneath. If you sense your loved one is struggling, ask questions such as: "It seems as though you are feeling hurt right now, is that right?" Asking questions such as these will validate your loved one and their feelings and help them feel as though they are being heard.

What Not to Do:

- Do not attempt to take control of the person's life. Allow them to make their own choices and simply offer your support. Do not let this become a source of conflict.
- Avoid being drawn into their conflicts with other people. As we will discuss further in Chapter Seventeen, people with BPD are skilled at manipulating those around them to engage in conflict with each other. Do not be drawn into their attempts to do so.
- Do not try and talk them out of their feelings. A BPD sufferer might come to you with a claim like "I am a terrible person." Flat out disagreeing with this with a comment like: "You're not a terrible person," has the effect of invalidating their thoughts and feelings. Instead, try to understand what it is that has made them feel this way. Ask questions and listen carefully. Find out if there was something specific they did to make them feel like a terrible person. From there, engage in practical problem solving – ask them what they can do to rectify the situation. Doing so gives the BPD sufferer a sense of being in control of their own lives and emotions.
- Do not attempt to be their therapist. Instead, assist your loved one in finding the right healthcare professional for them and offer your support throughout their treatment.
- Do not get defensive. While it can be challenging not to take accusations and criticisms personally, acknowledge that it is not about you. This is just a manifestation of the BPD. Remind yourself of this on a regular basis and do your best to see beyond the illness to the person you love beneath.

How to Communicate effectively during a crisis

When a loved one is in the midst of a BPD episode, they may become aggressive, insult you or hurl out unfair accusations. As human, our natural response is to become defensive and counter their arguments with hostility and aggression of our own. But when dealing with a BPD sufferer, acting such a way will only exacerbate the situation. It is important to remember that someone with BPD finds it difficult to see things from someone else's perspective. They have difficulty telling the

difference between a minor issue and a full blown catastrophe. When you behave defensively, they see this as a sign that they are not valued. This will lead them to believe that you do not want to be around them, triggering their deep-seated fear of abandonment. This then leads them to act recklessly or in a self-harming manner.

Instead, when your loved ones become reactive, take time to pay attention to what they are saying, without pointing out the holes in their argument. While it is easier said than done, do your best not to take their attack personally. After all, it is not about you. If your loved one makes a point about something you did wrong, or something you could improve on in the future, acknowledge and accept their point, make your apology, and attempt to discuss ways you can improve in the future. When someone with BPD feels as though they are being heard and taken seriously, the situation is less likely to get out of hand. If, however if the conflict increases to points of threats, aggression or a tantrum, it will be most beneficial to walk away and attempt the conversation again when they have calmed down.

How to Identify an Emergency

While disparaging self-talk is a common feature of borderline personality disorder, particular among those suffering from 'quiet' BPD, the sad reality is self-harming and suicide is all too common among people suffering from this disorder. When you are around a person with BPD, it is important to be vigilant and aware of any attempts at self-harming that may be taking place. When someone with BPD is reactive, it can easily escalate to the point where they will consider self-harming. It is important, however, not to plant the idea of self-injury or suicide in their head by outwardly asking them if they are considering it. Instead, provide a space where they can speak openly about what it is they are feeling or experiencing. This will then allow you to make a decision about whether to seek professional help on that occasion.

Be aware that there are several subtle signs that may indicate a person is considering suicide or engaging in self-harm. These include shaving off their hair, isolating themselves from others, excessive scratching or a reduced appetite. These less overt symptoms represent the BPD sufferer's inability to discuss their emotions outwardly. Being alert to these symptoms and seeking help accordingly can stop a crisis from escalating and requiring serious psychiatric or medical attention.

All suicide and self-harming attempts should be taken seriously. Even if they are done to seek attention, they are still indicative of deep emotional trauma. While it is important to get your loved one professional assistance in any situation involving self-harm and suicide, seek help immediately if any of the following occurs:

- The person has deliberately injured themselves.
- The person is expressing suicidal thoughts or talking about killing someone else
- The person is acting in an aggressive and abusive manner
- The person has become disoriented; i.e. they do not know who they are, where they are, or what day it is.
- The person has become delusional or is having hallucinations
- The person has become severely affected by drugs and/or alcohol and is acting in a reckless manner.

If you don't believe the situation has escalated to the point of being life threatening, however, refraining from calling the emergency services. Doing so every time your loved one speaks of hurting themselves will signal to them that they have a great amount of power over you and that by threatening to self-harm, they can effectively put an end to any conflict or argument. Instead, when your loved one speaks about self-harming, ask them what they would like to do about the situation. Suggest calling their therapist or an emergency hotline or going together to the emergency room. Doing this gives the BPD sufferer back an element of control, which can assist in calming their runaway emotions.

What to Do When You Feel Overwhelmed

There is no doubting that having a loved one with BPD is a struggle. There are bound to be times when you feel overwhelmed and unable to cope. This is exacerbated by the fact that the person you love with BPD will generally be unable to fulfill the supportive role of parent, friend or partner, that they otherwise would.

Because of this, it is crucial to have a strong network around you of people you can rely on in times of exhaustion, stress and overwhelm. Allow yourself plenty of time to engage in hobbies and relaxation activities with friends who you can be open with. Ensure too that you have people you can speak openly to about the experience of living with someone with borderline personality disorder. This may be a therapist or other health professional, a support group, GP or religious leader.

Involving other people in your support and care of the BPD sufferer can also be invaluable. Caring for someone with a mental illness should never fall to one person alone. Ensure there are a number of people around you who are well-versed in dealing with the individual with BPD and are able to act calmly and rationally in times of crisis. The more people around the BPD sufferer who know effective strategies for dealing with their reactivity, the less likely it is that a crisis will occur. Depending on the situation, your loved one's friends, siblings, parents, children or extended family members are all people who can be turned to for support.

Manage your expectations with regards to recovery

When dealing with a physical illness, recovery is often very black and white. But recovery is completely different when it

comes to mental illness. Very rarely does recovery see the complete elimination of symptoms and it is unlikely that someone suffering from a mental health disorder will ever be able to completely dispense with the need for therapy, medication or other treatments. When dealing with borderline personality disorder, recovery can be measured in a number of ways.

A sufferer in recovery will experience less frequent emotional outbursts, and these outbursts will decrease in intensity. There will be less incidences of self-harming and other impulsive, reckless behaviour. While it is of course possible that there will be relapses, such crises will likely be resolved much more quickly than in the past. As their symptoms improve, your loved one will likely feel more and more confident taking steps towards living a full and successful life. Offering your support at every step of the journey will go a long way towards assisting this recovery.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

BEING IN A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE WITH BPD

Often, people with BPD are very charismatic and energetic, so it is not difficult to be drawn to them. For this reason, many people find themselves in relationships with sufferers of borderline personality disorder. But the challenges of this illness mean a relationship with such a person is likely to be a cycle of perpetual arguments and dramas.

But while conducting a relationship with someone with BPD can be a challenge, if you have found a partner whom you love and care for, the relationship is likely worth pursuing. The key lies in knowing what to expect, and how your partner's disorder may manifest itself.

Understanding Your Partner

To really understand what is going on inside your partner's head, ensure you have read Part One of this book; a detailed overview of borderline personality disorder, its causes and the ways it can manifest. But here are a few of the traits of BPD that can be most prominent within a romantic relationship.

As people with BPD have such difficulty controlling their emotions, they often react with intense joy and gratitude if their partner does even the smallest kind thing for them. The flip side of this is that criticizing a partner with BPD can result in intense anger and hurt. As we have learned, people who suffer from BPD can be very sensitive to the way others treat them and even the smallest criticism can cause them immense amounts of hurt. Sufferers of BPD will experience often violent mood swings, which can be difficult to anticipate. Recognize that this is a symptom of the disorder, and likely not directly related to something you may or may not have done.

Sufferers of BPD fear abandonment and rejection, and this is never more heightened than in a romantic relationship. Experiencing even the smallest amount of conflict can lead your partner to believe that you are about to leave them. Sometimes, in order to avoid this rejection, they will pre-emptively end the relationship in order to be the one to do the "abandoning." Sufferers of BPD will have to work harder than normal to allow themselves to trust their partner and believe that they are not going to leave them.

You have probably noticed your partner tends to pick fights with you when things seem to be going well. People with BPD have often grown up surrounded by such trauma that peace and harmony in a relationship is completely foreign. In order to regain a sense of normalcy, they will seek to uproot this security through aggression, hostility and other damaging behavior. Peace and harmony can actually leave someone with BPD feeling empty and numb. In order to make themselves feel alive, they may attack you, or create conflict in another way. This helps them feel *something*, which, in their eyes, is better than feeling empty.

In addition, the BPD sufferer's propensity towards black and white thinking means they will often see you as either all good or all bad, often alternating rapidly between intense love and admiration to a crushing dislike and disappointment.

How to Cope

The unpredictability of being a relationship with someone with BPD can cause you to have doubts of your own. It may feel as though the more you love your partner, the less they seem to love you. All this conflict and confusion may have you

doubting whether you have the strength to maintain the relationship. These concerns can be heightened by the fact that you don't have your partner to rely on or confide in. This can leave you feeling lost and alone. Implementing the following solutions can make living with BPD much more manageable:

- **Get information.** Learn as much as you can about what it is like to suffer from BPD. This will help increase empathy in the relationship, and help you understand the struggles faced by your partner on a daily basis. By familiarizing yourself with the traits of the disorder, it should become clear to you that your partner's challenging behavior is the result of an illness, rather than a choice.
- **See a counsellor.** Seeking support from a mental health professional can be invaluable to both sufferers of BPD and their loved ones. You may choose to attend therapy sessions alone or as a couple.
- **Communicate.** Communication is vital in any relationship, but when a partner suffers from BPD, learning how to effectively communicate is of utmost importance. It is crucial however that you take care not to say anything that your partner may perceive as a slight, or may make them feel unloved, or as though the relationship is about to end. Ensure that all discussions you have come from a place of love, rather than attacking your partner or seeking to put them down.
- **Ensure your meaning is clear.** BPD can cause sufferers to misconstrue what others are saying to them. For this reason, it is important to make sure you communicate your meaning as effectively as possible. Do not assume your facial expression is enough to convey what you are thinking.
- **Hold discussions only when your partner is calm.** Avoid raising important issues with your partner when they are suffering from an episode of BPD, such as exhibiting mood swings. When faced with decision-making in such a state, a BPD sufferer is likely to act rashly, without thinking the issues through. They are also more likely to be defensive or aggressive and may turn to self-deprecating or self-harming behaviors in order to help them cope.
- **Offer support.** We all need support from our loved ones from time to time, and BPD sufferers are no different. Make sure your partner knows you are there for them, in good times and bad.
- **Foster a sense of independence in your partner.** As we know, BPD can lead a person to greatly fear rejection. Even the smallest of separations such as a vacation or work trip can be a source of immense stress. But these separations can be beneficial for fostering a sense of independence in your partner. Make sure you have parts of your lives that are independent from each other; your own hobbies and circles of friends. While of course it is wonderful to have a partner with whom you can share so much of your life, having separate interests is great for your partner's sense of independence. If you are apart for longer than a few hours, it can be helpful to check in on your partner, to ensure they understand that the separation is only temporary and that they are not being rejected.
- **Avoid blaming everything on their mental illness.** Remember that your partner's BPD does not define them. Avoid linking every part of their behavior to the BPD. After all, it is just one facet of who they are. Doing so can cause the disorder to become something of a put-down. See past the illness to your partner's personality and avoid labeling.
- **Take threats of self-harm seriously.** Threats of self-injury or suicide should always be taken seriously with a partner suffering from BPD. If your partner begins to exhibit signs of self-harming or suicidal behavior, call their therapist or your local suicide prevention helpline. See Chapter Fourteen for further information on how to act if your partner is exhibiting self-harming behavior.
- **Practice self-care.** Living with a partner with BPD can be an enormous challenge. It is important to allow yourself time to step back and relax. Ensure you have your own support network in place; people you can rely on if the stress becomes overwhelming. Prioritize time for friends and hobbies, both alone and with your partner.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PARENTING A CHILD WITH BPD

Raising children can be an enormous challenge at the best of times. Parenting a child with borderline personality disorder can seem like an insurmountable difficulty. While many of the techniques discussed in Chapter Thirteen, Fourteen and Seventeen will be of great value to parents of BPD sufferers, here are a few important points when raising a child with BPD:

Don't take it personally.

While the onset of BPD can be linked to childhood trauma, it is important to acknowledge that this is not always the case. While an examination of your parenting styles can be beneficially, refrain from placing the blame for your child's condition squarely on your own shoulders. Recognize that you did – and are doing – the best you could do in the situation. Children with heightened emotional sensitivity take a special kind of parenting and it can be an enormous challenge for parents to know how to respond effectively.

Practice emotional independence.

As a parent, it is easy to let your child's moods determine the way you yourself are feeling. Being emotionally codependent on your BPD child can lead to emotional burnout and distress. Foster your own emotional independence and work at growing your own tolerance to distress. You may find the self-soothing techniques described in Chapter Eight and Ten useful for not only your child, but for you as well. By building your own control over your emotions, you will be able to show love and support for your child, without letting your mood be influenced by his or her own.

Have your whole family learn skills for managing BPD.

The more people you and your child have around you that are able to successfully manage the symptoms of BPD, the smoother the management of the condition will be. Becoming well-versed in skills such as DBT can assist the whole family in providing as stable an upbringing as possible for your child.

See past the stigma.

While looking at your child's behavior through the label of BPD can help you understand their behavior, be aware that the disorder comes with a great deal of stigma attached. Look past the illness to your child's unique personality and acknowledge that the BPD is just a small facet of who they are. Separate their BPD symptoms from their personality traits and understand who they are beneath the illness.

Have the whole family agree on boundaries.

As we have discussed in Chapter Fourteen, setting boundaries with regards to acceptable and unacceptable behavior is crucial for the successful management of BPD. When the situation involves a child, involve the whole family, especially the BPD sufferer themselves, in setting boundaries. Be sure to discuss the values behind the boundaries – make sure everyone understands why certain limitations are in place. Agree on what the consequences will be if these boundaries are broken. It can help to even have a written contract which all parties sign. Doing this will help everybody feel more in control of the situation. Do, however, acknowledge that change can be difficult for everybody, particularly your BPD child. Do not attempt to implement all the boundaries at once, rather introduce them one at a time.

Do not make empty threats.

As parents, it can be easy to resort to empty threats such as “If you don’t eat your vegetables, there will be no dessert.” While these may have worked for young children, making such empty promises to older children and teenagers, especially those with BPD, are meaningless. Fully acknowledge the consequences discussed in your boundary-setting session and follow through with implementing them if the boundaries are crossed.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

DISARM THOSE WHO ARE MANIPULATING YOU

Reasoning with someone suffering from borderline personality disorder can be akin to reasoning with a child – impossible. It can be enormously frustrating and difficult not to get drawn into the provocations of your partner, friend or family member. But as you are no doubt aware, responding with hostility of your own is a surefire way to make the conflict escalate. In this chapter we will take a look at some of the techniques you can employ in order to disarm a BPD sufferer when they are acting with hostility towards you. These are crucial steps that can prevent your loved one’s aggression from turning into a full-blown crisis.

Firstly, acknowledge that, as someone in a relationship of any sort with a person with BPD, you are, by default, part of the problem. Regardless of how well you handle your loved one’s emotional outbursts, the very fact that you are there to respond and communicate with them means you are both a part of the issue, and also the solution. While you do not have the power to “fix” the individual with BPD, you can change your behavior towards them, in turn forcing them to change the way they behave towards you.

People with BPD will attack you in order to get one of three reactions from you: guilt, helplessness or hostility. As we have learned, people with BPD often grew up in a household full of conflict, so seek to recreate such an environment in order to feel a sense of normalcy. If a person with BPD succeeds at getting one of these three reactions from you, they will keep up the same behavior in order to get the same reaction again and again. Failing to get the desired behavior will usually see a BPD become more harmonious. However, if they have received the desired reaction from this particular person at least once in the past, they will continue trying for a long time before they change their behavior. For this reason, it is vital to do your best not to “reward” the bad behavior of a BPD by exhibiting the reaction they are seeking.

What not to do:

Of course it can be difficult to keep your cool and think clearly when faced with an emotional or physical attack from someone with BPD. The following steps can help you disarm your loved one before the conflict turns into a crisis.

- **Do not make undue sacrifices.** While you may well want to do everything in your power to help your loved one feel better, it is important not to do anything that is going to cause you to suffer in the long run. For example, do not stay up all night talking on the phone with them if you have work the next day. Do not lend them money you cannot afford, in the belief that they will have nowhere else to turn. Do not rearrange your entire schedule to fit in with their rapidly changing plans. Help your loved one by respecting your own needs.
- **Do your best not to get defensive.** While this is much easier said than done, avoid responding to their aggressive behavior with lines such as “I’m only trying to help, you know.”
- **Do your best not to act hostile.** While this again can seem like an impossible task, responding to BPD aggression with hostility of your own will only exacerbate the situation. If you feel your own rage beginning to surface, take a

few deep breaths to calm yourself, count to ten or remove yourself from the situation. Return to the conversation when you – and preferably also your loved one – are feeling calm.

Do not allow yourself to feel guilty. When your loved one is assaulting you with a barrage on insults, it can be difficult to ignore their hurtful words. Acknowledge this is simply a manifestation of an illness. Do not allow yourself to feel responsible or guilty for making them feel a particular way. You cannot be expected to “fix” it, or to solve the impossible, unsolvable dilemmas brought about by the disorder.

- **Do not lecture them.** Sure, we all know drugs are harmful or reckless driving can put the lives of many innocent people at risk. But arguing these points will have no effect on someone with BPD. Remember, reasoning with them can be like attempting to reason with a child. They will only respond in an argumentative way.
- **Do not act superior.** One of the major struggles for someone with BPD is that they are attempting to exist within a dysfunctional social network. While this is largely brought about by the disorder, of course, you yourself, along with everyone else in their sphere constitutes part of this network. While this is not a cause for guilt or laying blame at your own feet, it is a reminder not to act superior, or believe that you are any better than the person with BPD.
- **Do not censor issues.** If difficult issues such as suicide or violence arise, do not attempt to suppress them or change the subject. Instead, do your best to address them in a calm and rational way. Enlist the help of a therapist or counselor if you feel out of your depth.
- **Do not attempt to deal with suicide attempts on your own.** When someone with BPD is a part of your life, you must be prepared for incidents of self-harm or even attempted suicide. If such an incident arises, it is important to get the person to a psychologist or other health professional as soon as possible. Do not attempt to deal with suicidal situations alone. See Chapter Fourteen for further information on dealing with emergencies.

What to Do:

- **Understand and acknowledge their strengths.** Though it may seem otherwise, many people with borderline personality disorder have a high level of interpersonal skills. This is evidenced by their ability to manipulate others and bring about the very emotional responses they are seeking. When attempting to disarm a BPD, be sure to acknowledge this strength. Understand that their reactions have likely come about through a childhood of being invalidated by their family and so they carry the underlying belief that their job is to ensure everyone continues to undervalue them. Counter this by finding and acknowledging strengths in the person (such as their high level of inter-personal skills). Rather than looking at their behavior as a problem of someone with BPD, see that they are in fact very reasonable and expected responses for someone suffering from this disorder. Acknowledge that it is not a case of them being immature, or deliberately malicious.
- **Keep Calm.** If you do not agree with something a BPD is saying or doing, tell them so. But do it in a calm and restrained manner, even in the face of their hostility. Do so without arguing about who is right or wrong. If you feel as though something you have said is being misinterpreted (a common occurrence when communicating BPD sufferers), gently explain what you meant, without focusing on the fact that the person with BPD misunderstood or made a mistake.
- **Be Honest.** If you have done something wrong or made a mistake, be honest and admit it. However, do not under any circumstances admit to things you have not done, just to pacify someone with BPD. While this may calm the storm for a brief period, it has the potential to lead to bigger issues in the future.
- **Set Boundaries.** To handle the aggression and acting-out of someone with BPD, it is important to set firm boundaries, and stick to them. Be clear about what you will and will not tolerate, with regards to language, aggression and violence. If your loved one crosses a boundary, immediately remove yourself from the situation and refuse to engage with them any longer. Walking away when they engage in unacceptable behavior will make the connection in their brain that behaving in this manner will result in them being left alone. Because of the BPD

sufferer's intense fear of rejection, this action can have a great benefit when it comes to them learning what behavior is and isn't acceptable. Be sure your loved one understands both the boundaries you have set and the consequences of breaking them. Help them to appreciate that you walking away does not mean you don't love them, but rather that you will not tolerate emotional abuse. You can also let them know that if they ever feel emotionally threatened by you, they are welcome to do the same.

- **Pay Attention to Your Tone of Voice.** Regardless of what you are saying, if you are responding to a BPD sufferer with anxiety or nervousness in your voice, they will be aware of it. This will render anything you say to diffuse the situation ineffective. Practice speaking with a firm, matter-of-fact and forthright tone. This both naturally boosts your confidence and removes a level of emotion from the confrontation. We often sound very different in reality to the way we perceive ourselves, so practice by recording yourself on your phone and listening back so you can hear exactly how you sound.
- **Disagree, Rather Than Invalidate.** As mentioned above, people suffering from BPD are often unconsciously inviting those around them to invalidate them. They often do this through making outlandish or wildly exaggerated statements. While it can be tempting to invalidate this statement by flat-out denying it, it is important to acknowledge that, on almost every occasion, this statement contains at least a grain of truth. For example, someone with BPD might say to you "Life is terrible." While your instinct may be to reassure this person that things are not that bad, recognize that for someone suffering from BPD, things most certainly *can* be that bad. So rather than invalidating their statement, acknowledge the truth of what they are saying, without accepting the exaggeration. For example: "It does sound like you've been having a difficult time lately," validates the truth within the statement, while refusing to agree that life is *always* that bad.
- **Accept That There Are Times You Will Feel Helpless.** The person with BPD may continue to make demand after demand on you to help them feel better, when the both of you know there is nothing you can do to improve the situation. In these cases, the BPD sufferer's goal is actually to *make* you feel helpless – and then make you feel anxious about your helplessness. To counter this, acknowledge that you are, in fact, helpless, but allow yourself to accept and be okay with this.

For example, someone with BPD may come to you the night before an important exam and say "I haven't studied and I don't know any of the material. I am definitely going to fail."

In a situation like this, it is obvious that there is unlikely to be a positive outcome. You know that and so does the person with BPD. If you attempt to come up with a solution, the BPD sufferer will likely see it as rubbish, and it will come across as though you are treating them as a fool.

Instead, calmly respond along the lines of "I wish there was something I could do to help," acknowledging the problem but accepting you are unable to assist with a solution. Remember, honesty is crucial when dealing with someone with BPD

- **Respond Calmly to Illogical Statements.** There will be many occasions on which a BPD sufferer will make arguments that seem absurd or illogical. For example, they may say something along the lines of "I can't get by without cocaine."

While to you, this may seem like an untrue statement, resist the urge to argue your point outright. People with BPD are not stupid. They likely know just how damaging cocaine can be. However, there is likely more than a little truth to their claim that they cannot get by without it. Arguing flat out against these illogical statements does the job of invalidating the BPD sufferer, something we must seek to avoid. However, if you truly feel the need to discuss the matter with them, to do so by including a caveat such as "I know you know this already, but..." Also, keep your statements short and to-the-point. Going into long-winded discussions about why cocaine is bad, for example, only serves to make the BPD sufferers look unintelligent. If they refuse to drop the subject or continue to argue, respond calmly with something like "I disagree with you," or "I'm not going to insult your intelligence by arguing any more about this."

- **Find the true meaning beneath hostile comments.** People suffering from BPD can make comments which sound outward hostile or aggressive but are often ambiguous. For example, they may ask bitterly, “Why do you always act like my mother?” While this can come across as a hostile comment, they may actually be making a comment on your caring nature. You can respond by simply acknowledging what they say to be true, for example, “Yes, I care about you very much.”

While it is ingrained in us to notice body language and tone of voice, in such a situation, it is beneficial to do the exact opposite and pay attention purely to the words being spoken. This will help you see past the hostility to the true meaning beneath.

- **Be Conscious of Attempts at Creating Division.** There have been many occasions in which people hospitalized for BPD have caused staff on the ward to argue over the best way to treat them. This is a situation often unconsciously engineered by the BPD sufferer, though the technique of “mode flipping” (i.e., behaving in a pitiable, meek manner to one person and hostile and aggressive to another). This will undoubtedly lead to disagreements in the best way to handle such an individual. Sufferers of BPD are also prone to engineering such situations among family and friendship groups. The best way to counter such a technique is to be aware of it. If you find yourself arguing with a family member about your loved one with BPD, acknowledge that the situation may have been set up by the BPD sufferer themselves. Ask the family member with whom you are arguing what they are basing their opinion on. Calmly present your own arguments, and then “compare notes.” Can you see any disparities or attempts by the BPD sufferer to create division? From here, you can agree on the best way forward, now you have all the information.

In such a situation however, it is important not to invalidate the BPD sufferer. For example, if they are trying to play you off against another family member, they may also make disparaging remarks about that person to you. If you stand up for this person and argue against what the BPD sufferer is saying, you are automatically invalidating them. If this situation arises, do your best not to respond emotionally and present any disagreements in a calm and respectful manner.

- **Own Up to Your Mistakes.** Being around someone with BPD is an ongoing challenge, and there are bound to be times in which you behave in ways you did not intend to. You may find yourself acting aggressively or saying things you did not mean. If this happens, own up to your mistake. Wait until you are both calm and apologize for your behavior. But be sure to apologize only for the damaging thing you did or said, *not* for the negative emotions that led to it. For example: “I’m sorry I criticized you, but I felt as though were automatically dismissing everything I said to you without taking it into consideration.” While apologizing can be difficult, exhibit a strong sense of integrity and responsibility. Be someone your loved one can look up to and admire.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BREAKING UP WITH SOMEONE WHO HAS BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER

As we have learned, people with BPD have a heightened sensitivity to rejection, whether real or imagined. And for this reason, breaking up with someone with BPD can be immensely difficult. When faced with abandonment, BPD sufferers can resort to impulsive, damaging behavior, self-injury and even suicide. Because of this, there are many people who never leave their unhappy relationships with borderline partners, condemning both themselves and their partner to a life of unhappiness and conflict.

Leaving someone with borderline personality disorder takes a lot of courage, but if you are unhappy in the relationship and you feel it has no future, it must be done. You cannot spend your life in an unhappy relationship and nor can you expect your partner to do the same.

Here are some important things to take into consideration when ending a relationship with someone with BPD:

Give yourself permission to end the relationship.

For many people, this can be the biggest challenge. They do not want to be seen as someone who would deliberately hurt another, especially someone who faces so many other challenges in their day-to-day life. Breaking up with a BPD sufferer can lead their partners to have intense feelings of guilt. There have been numerous cases in which people in relationships with BPD sufferers have seemingly willed themselves into illness, and eventually, death, in order to “leave” the relationship.

But it is important to remember that this is *your* life. If you are anxious and unhappy in the relationship more than you are enjoying it, that is a sure sign that you need to get out. Give yourself permission to put yourself first.

Be kind and succinct.

When it comes to ending the relationship, endeavor to do so in a kind manner. Tell your partner calmly and clearly that you have appreciated your time together, but that it has now come to an end. Avoid going into detailed reasons about why the relationship is ending. There is no need to lay blame or point out all the reasons you are leaving. While doing so may ease your own guilt a little, it will likely exacerbate your partner’s sense of loss and harm their fragile sense of self-worth.

Allow Yourself to Mourn the Loss

When leaving any relationship, no matter how damaging, it is normal to feel a sense of loss and emptiness. Acknowledge that this is okay and give yourself permission to feel these emotions. Allow yourself to cry, to feel grief, to miss your partner. These are all normal experiences when a relationship is ending.

You may have been led to believe that making the right decision results only in “good” feelings, therefore, these negative emotions signal you have made the wrong choice. This, coupled with any guilt that may be arising, has the potential to have you questioning your decision. Remind yourself that you have made the decision that’s best for yourself – and stick to it!

Set Boundaries – and Stick to Them

Once you have ended the relationship, it is in the BPD sufferer’s nature to continue to call, text or attempt to visit you for

months, or even years. This is due to their inability to accept rejection and their deep-seated fear of being alone. While this can be an immensely challenging period for you, the best thing you can do is not engage in any of their attempts at communication. Doing so will only prolong the pain of the situation for both of you.

In an attempt to get your attention, your ex-partner may fluctuate between accusations and hurtful comments, and heartfelt expressions of love. Remember, for many people with BPD, there is no middle ground – only black and white. And they will do whatever they can to try and regain control and win you back.

Naturally, refusing to respond to a BPD's attempts at communication can leave you guilt-ridden and fearful. You may worry your ex-partner will resort to self-harming or even attempt suicide. But accept that you cannot be held responsible for their behavior forever. You must begin to put yourself first. If you become fearful that your ex-partner may engage in behavior that is damaging to themselves or others, speak to their family members and/or therapist, then remove yourself from the situation as soon as possible.

Reclaim Your Belongings

The end of a relationship is something someone with BPD has a difficult time accepting. Because of this, they may seek to hang on to your belongings after the breakup, in an attempt to keep hold of a piece of "you." This is their way of not accepting that the relationship is truly over and of "keeping the door open" for far longer than you may wish.

If you are considering leaving a relationship, it is a good idea to remove any stuff you have from your partner's home beforehand. This will remove the potential for any bitter conflicts that can arise when you try and reclaim your belongings, along with the chance of anything being destroyed in your partner's rage.

Take Care of Yourself

Being in – and ending – a relationship with a BPD can have an immense effect on your own health and wellbeing. Living through months, or years, or emotional torment and manipulation can wear down your self-esteem, often leading you to believe the accusations flung at you by your ex-partner in the heat of the moment to be the truth.

This constant emotional stress can have a very damaging effect on not only the psyche, but the physical body as well. Stress has been linked to countless illnesses, ranging from heart conditions to migraines to cancer.

Allow yourself space and time to engage in self-care. Undertake relaxing activities such as yoga or meditation and make time for your friends, interests and hobbies. If you are struggling to get past your sense of guilt or loss once the relationship has ended, seeking the help of a therapist or counselor can have an enormous benefit.

Examine Your Own Attachment Issues

Now you have managed to step away from a damaging relationship with BPD, it may be a good time to examine your own issues regarding attachment and why you love the people you do.

As we know, people with BPD need conflict in their relationship to create a sense of normalcy and stave off feelings of emptiness. But it is also worth asking yourself what drew you to your BPD partner in the first place? Was it their charisma and energy? Or are you yourself carrying attachment issues that led you to seek out a potentially damaging relationship?

As people with BPD generally have a strong desire for both physical and emotional intimacy, they often tend towards insecure attachment styles, that can lead to damaging relationships. When they find themselves in romantic relationships, sufferers of BPD often experience chronic stress, abuse at the hands of their partners and unwanted pregnancies. Ask yourself whether your relationship with a BPD sufferer was a damaging one for both of you. If so, what role did you play?

We learn who to love and how to love from our parents and upbringing. If you grew up with parents who were absent or abusive in any way, these issues may have manifested themselves as an insecure attachment style, leading you to seek out relationships with people who will have a negative effect on you. In all likelihood, both you and your ex-partner have suffered trauma in your childhood, leading you both to form your relationship.

Perhaps as a child you were neglected by your parents, leading you to become a people pleaser. You may have learned that the only way to gain attention and praise was to behave in a perfect manner and suppress any negative emotions as doing so may have antagonized emotionally or physically abusive parents. People pleasers are often drawn to BPDs because they represent your *shadow side* – that part of your being that you suppress and prevent from seeing the light of day; namely your negative emotions such as anger, fear and jealousy. A person with BPD has no difficulty expressing these emotions, and by pairing yourself with them, you are allowing yourself to become "whole."

Or perhaps, like your partner, you grew up in a household of chaos and conflict and by seeking out a relationship with a BPD sufferer, you are simply recreating the tumultuous environment which feels most natural to you.

Working with a counselor or therapist can help you identify and remove your own attachment issues. By recognizing exactly what drew you towards your ex-partner in the first place, you can address these issues and save yourself the pain of

repeating the pattern in future relationships.

CONCLUSION

While borderline personality disorder has the potential to wreak havoc on both sufferers and their loved ones, it is important to acknowledge that there is hope. Hopefully this book has shown you that, just as there are many different degrees of BPD, there are also many ways of tackling the disorder.

By working on their own emotional management techniques, and in conjunction with their therapists and loved ones, BPD sufferers have the potential to greatly improve their symptoms and go on to live their lives to the fullest.

While the road to recovery is bound to be a challenging one, vast improvement is possible.

There are many people with BPD who go on to live long, productive and happy lives, holding down steady jobs, meaningful relationships and loving families. There is no reason you or loved one cannot do the same.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

Break the intrusive thoughts that sabotage
you. Basic and advanced CBT techniques
to manage anxiety, depression and
panic attacks

DAVID LAWSON PHD

INTRODUCTION

- What is Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

We have to face quite a few specific kinds of problems and events in life. Any of those might be nice, others might not be so fun. But how we live life and whether we love it or loathe it is a feature of the kind of outlook we have as well as the emotional strength we can muster up. Some individuals are always optimistic and positive, giving them the power and equanimity to deal with all circumstances. There are others on the other end of the scale that are very timid and also negatively predisposed, making them quite scared, and also quite intimidated by each and every thing.

Other people are cynical by nature, people also go through traumatic experiences that change their lives forever. For example, children who experience a murder or terrorist attack could become mentally marred for life and suffer panic and anxiety attacks to the point that they are perennially miserable. These are all examples of behaviorally dysfunctional actions and lifestyles that need to be treated through Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, also known as CBT.

CBT is a therapy through which professional clinicians and psychologists work alongside people to try to help them find the reason they are behaving in a particular way. Thoughts provide a ride to emotions, rendering it essential to properly analyze them so that the root cause of the problem can be identified and resolved. The fundamental strategy is to substitute depressive feelings with constructive and optimistic ones. Only in this way can one once again become healthy and happy.

CBT is not always a straightforward technique. It needs a lot of meticulous and long-drawn psychoanalysis methods as well as psychiatric therapy so that old memories and deteriorating or wounded emotions will be allowed to disappear into the past. This will help bring happiness to the forefront and help a person make rational and healthy choices.

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and the Power of Thought

Evidence on the usefulness of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) in the management of multiple mental health conditions, including fear, depression, and addiction is comprehensive. CBT emphasizes the power of thinking and believing. CBT includes several structures which are necessary to understand. I'll focus on three basic ones: core beliefs, underlying assumptions, and automatic thinking.

What is the primary conviction? It's how we come to look at ourselves and our potential. It is our unique lens, through which we see the world. Such convictions are responsible for inducing unconscious reasoning. Unconscious thinking is a feeling that automatically occurs. It is our internal experiences which some circumstances cause. Maintaining control of unconscious thinking is a smart thing. It allows us to limit the derogatory self-talk we do every day. Journaling may be useful to slow, analyze, and evaluate what's going in our heads. Questions to ask yourself while journaling: "Which emotion has been experienced? Which thought pattern has caused this negative emotion? What occurred during that period?"

Identifying these unconscious thought patterns and then looking further will reveal the ideas and fundamental values behind them. Automatic thoughts are the first few layers to elaborate on this metaphor, underlying assumptions form the middle layers and ultimately core beliefs are the core of the onion. In Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, the uncovering of core beliefs is

called the "downward arrow technique." Through this process, I find my clients gain a great deal of self-awareness.

"I'm not good enough or I'm not lovable," could be a core belief. So how does an individual come to believe this? The underlying assumption determines the conviction or "schema." Usually, an underlying assumption is in the context of a sentence "if ... then." Usually, the individual does not question them, and they are taken as facts rather than as subjective opinions.

A distressed person will ignore or dismiss the good factors or events of their life, and focus on only the troubling "data" that reinforces the central conviction (i.e. "being inadequate"). And it can take many positive thoughts or affirmations to debunk a deeply rooted negative belief repeated daily.

As you might think, dealing with these pessimistic core beliefs, or schemas (such as "I'm not lovable"), is complicated. Some turn from this negative state of mind to drugs from time to time, for a brief escape. And for some, this ill-adapted method of coping will transform into a full-blown addiction. Core values can affect day-to-day activities and essential life decisions. I believe a vital aspect of the recovery process is learning to identify negative core beliefs and then challenging the assumptions that hold them.

- Why Cognitive Behavioral Therapy?

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is based on the idea that human beings are somewhat irrational and make many illogical mistakes whenever they assess the risks and benefits of their thoughts and actions. It can relate to feelings that are out of balance, such as rage and depression. But CBT is also used to address many other nuanced problems, including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), OCD, drug misuse, ADHD, eating disorders, Bipolar Disorder, and other illnesses.

For them to be successful, cognitive behavioral clinicians will have a strong interaction with their customers, such as positive listening skills and a good personality fit. This is because the patient and therapist are working together to discuss the issues at hand and the reasons for the patient's thoughts and actions toward those issues. The aim is to alter ways of thought so that the individual suffers less consistently unpleasant mental conditions.

The Global Coalition for Behavioral Wellbeing is in favor of CBT as it has outstanding research evidence promoting its application in the therapeutic diagnosis of mental illness. CBT has gained broad acceptance among both clinicians and patients alike. Increasing numbers of psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, and psychiatric nurses are getting CBT training.

Research show CBT's effectiveness against a wide range of disorders. Those experiments are well controlled, the data is appropriately reviewed, and the findings speak for themselves. For starters, CBT has been shown to have substantial advantages when managing bipolar depression, culminating in fewer treatment days, reduced suicide rates, and decreased levels of para-suicidal or self-injurious behavior.

- How Does Cognitive Behavioral Therapy Differ from Other Treatments

The method and general focus of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is a bit different from many other, more traditional treatments. For example, CBT:

- Works on changing your thought patterns and on modifying behaviors in the immediate present
- Specifically addresses your problem thinking and undesirable behaviors.
- Is goal-oriented. Clear goals are set out for each session as well as for the long-term.
- Is educational. You monitor your feelings and thoughts, and then you commit these to paper. The therapist will also teach you essential coping skills, such as problem-solving.
- Allows you to play an active part in your learning and recovery. You will also complete "homework" assignments that are reviewed at the beginning of the next session.
- Employs multiple strategies, including role-playing, behavioral experiments, and guided discovery.
- Is time-limited

PART 1 – IDENTIFY

CHAPTER 1

BELIEFS AND MENTAL MODEL

- What is a Mental Model?

A mental model is an internal interpretation of an external reality. This personal interpretation of external systems typically forms the foundation on which we base our thoughts, ideas, and decision-making processes. A mental model explains the thought process behind an individual's perception of how things work. The mental model is created and developed by an individual based on their experiences, perceptions, and their understanding of the world around them.

These mental models determine how we think and understand situations as well as influence the way we look at problems, make decisions and identify opportunities around us. The creation of mental models involves the integration of acquired knowledge and past experience. This integration enables inferences to be drawn from our past experiences to help us understand current circumstances.

Experience is an important component in the structure of mental models. When you have experienced a particular situation in a certain way in the past, you will tend to evaluate similar occurrences based on that past experience. For instance, if you were attacked by a dog as a child you might be prone to developing a fear of all dogs. This is because every time you encounter a dog, your brain will interpret the situation as a dangerous situation because your past experience was not pleasant. It is therefore important to recognize that past experiences, whether good or bad, influence our thoughts and behavior.

Mental models enhance our understanding of different experiences and complex systems. These models also allow us to create hypothetical simulations that we can use to predict possible outcomes of certain courses of action. For instance, when faced with a decision, we usually run through the outcomes of what each particular choice would result in. This mental stimulation not only aids in making decisions but also helps us in preparing for the possible outcomes and probable consequences of those decisions.

By enabling us to create simplified internal representations of complex external situations, mental models increase our understanding by structuring and arranging knowledge in a way that we can understand, recall and use it. Without a solid understanding of what is going on around us and how things work, it becomes difficult to adapt to our environment, cope with situations or find our place in our ecosystem and the larger world.

In the workplace, your ability to perform effectively will largely be determined by your understanding of your own role, how this role interconnects with those of your colleagues and ultimately how your function contributes to the general objectives of your company. Having a clear understanding of your place in a system is essential for personal growth, understanding the opportunities available to you and for creating sound relationships.

The human brain uses mental models as thinking tools or filters to simplify complex concepts and information into understandable and simplified concepts. Since the brain is not capable of handling all the information and details we see in

the world around us, it creates models to simplify this knowledge into a thinking process that we can understand. The more models we are able to create in our brain, the better our overall understanding of different concepts will be.

Our judgment is positively impacted by having a broad base of mental models because they put us in a position where we can perceive, interpret and gain an understanding of a situation from multiple perspectives. This objectivity yields better thought processes because it ensures that beliefs, prejudices and emotions do not cloud our judgment. Bad decisions are more often than not borne of the failure to base our choices on fact and logic and relying on emotions to direct our thoughts.

Understanding of different mental models gives us insight not only into our own actions and behavior but also into why others act and behave the way they do. Our interpretations of the world vary from individual to individual based on our own unique experiences, attitudes, beliefs, preferences and, personality. Any new knowledge we acquire is filtered through the mental models we have created and developed in our minds. Hence your set of mental models will play a major role in your thinking and decision-making process.

Mental models are incomplete and constantly changing. Our understanding of the world is typically based on our experiences and the knowledge and information we are exposed to. As our environments and experiences change so does our view and perception of the world. Our mental models are therefore constantly evolving to keep up with our experiences and learning. We increase our models as we go through life so as to progressively improve our thought processes and deepen our understanding of the world and the systems around us.

When we are children, we have a basic understanding of things, but as we grow older and learn more, this understanding is bound to increase. For instance, a child of six knows that a car will get them from point A to point B, when they are twenty, they will probably have a grasp of how this movement is accomplished. And if they pursue that line of education they may eventually understand how the different parts of the car engine work to create motion. As we learn and have more experiences, our mental models expand and evolve to accommodate the increasing knowledge of different subjects.

Mental models are not factual representations of reality. They are unique interpretations of phenomena that are based on a person's perception. Our perceptions and understanding of the world around us differ from person to person based on our individual experiences, views and beliefs; hence our mental models are not necessarily objective or factual. We each develop our models to explain our own view of how the world works.

A mental model is therefore not an objective view of reality but it is biased based on the individual's understanding. As such, it cannot be taken as a factual or comprehensive representation of reality. While all perspectives will have factual elements, they cannot be said to contain the entire truth. For a comprehensive understanding of reality, we need to utilize multiple and varied mental models that represent different points of view and that will equip us with a multi-dimensional outlook.

Mental models simplify complex knowledge. A mental model is a thinking tool that is used to interpret different concepts and explain the relationship between things and how they work. In economics, the law of supply and demand is used to understand market dynamics. It helps you understand the concepts that affect the balance in the market place. One of the facts of this law is that if supply in a market of a particular product exceeds the demand, you should expect a fall in prices. On the other hand, when the demand for a particular product is higher than its supply, prices will undoubtedly rise. This business model is based on experience with market trends and is used to understand the dynamics in the business world.

Each mental model represents a possible outcome. We use mental models to create simulations of different scenarios and infer possibilities and probable outcomes that we could expect in any given situation. When you filter information through a particular mental model, the mind will arrive at a possible outcome based on the information at hand and past experience.

Mental models are predictive in nature. This is why they give us better clarity in decision making. By enabling us to foresee the possible outcome of a particular choice or action, they equip us to make choices with the full knowledge of what consequences we can expect. Mental models give an indication of what to expect in the future through mental simulations using different scenarios.

- What is Belief?

Core beliefs are often formed in childhood and reinforced throughout life. They can also form during traumatic events in

adulthood, such as the death of a loved one, fighting in a war, or being the victim of a violent crime. We tend to accept evidence that supports our beliefs and reject evidence that does not, so we may hold our core beliefs strongly even if there is little evidence for them. We often support dysfunctional core beliefs by focusing on one or two areas of our lives that aren't going well, rather than looking at our lives overall. However, with Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, you can challenge and change dysfunctional core beliefs. It's important to remember that core beliefs are ideas, not facts. How strongly you feel something is not an indicator of how true it is.

In identifying your beliefs, you will have to do some digging within yourself. Some people have a hard time understanding how their thought processes connect to negative emotions, so it may be helpful to start by identifying automatic thoughts and assumptions before uncovering core beliefs. Some people may also find it painful to explore their core beliefs, so it may be better to start by addressing automatic thoughts.

CHAPTER 2

AUTOMATIC AND INTRUSIVE THOUGHTS

- What Are Automatic Thoughts?

Automatic thoughts are a central aspect of the CBT theory. Automatic thoughts are those that come into our minds quickly, without effort. They are short and related to the specific situation at hand. They occur during or right after the situation, as an “instinctive” response. They don’t include reflection or careful logic but usually seem quite reasonable. Some are perfectly logical; others are known as “dysfunctional automatic thoughts.”

If you feel that another thought better connects to the problem, you can focus on that instead. Or, if you feel that the issue underlying that particular automatic thought is not as important as other issues, you can set it aside and focus on other thoughts that had a stronger impact on your mood. When evaluating a series of automatic thoughts, assess how intense the feelings they stimulated were, and choose the thoughts that had the biggest impact.

Often, these types of dysfunctional thoughts result from cognitive distortions, or “thought traps,” which are essentially mistakes we make in the thinking process. Automatic thoughts tend to fall into a few categories of cognitive distortions. Identifying the general patterns can be helpful in changing the thoughts that are a part of that pattern. It may be helpful to write down some of your automatic thoughts and then look for patterns.

- What Are Intrusive Thoughts?

Intrusive thoughts are another type of common but upsetting thought. Our brains generate many thoughts and ideas over the course of a day. Some feel completely normal, productive, and helpful, and we view them as reflective of who we are. Some thoughts may strike us as odd or confusing but are easily dismissed and don’t cause much distress. We can also experience thoughts that seem bad, scary, or sickening—things that don’t fit with who we are or that make us feel terrible, yet are hard to get rid of. These are known as intrusive thoughts.

Intrusive thoughts are thoughts, ideas, or impulses that are unwanted and upsetting but continue to occur. They are difficult to stop or control, which often makes them more distressing. They may interrupt activities and thought processes and cause feelings of doubt, shame, guilt, confusion, fear, and anxiety. Intrusive thoughts are common symptoms of anxiety disorders, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but they can occur independently as well.

There are several types of intrusive thoughts, which may be treated in different ways. Obsessional intrusions usually relate to something that a person finds upsetting, disgusting, or repugnant, such as violence, taboo sexual acts, or his or her religious beliefs. These are often addressed within an OCD framework. Worry intrusions are anxious thoughts about future events or threats. Usually, dealing with anxiety through a range of CBT techniques will help reduce the frequency and severity of worry intrusions. Trauma-related intrusions are sudden recollections of past traumatic events. Addressing the feelings around these

events with a therapist may help.

Examples of Intrusive Thoughts:

- Unwanted sexual thoughts involving a family member, child, or animal (obsessional intrusion)
- Unwanted sexual thoughts involving a coworker whom you are not attracted to (obsessional intrusion)
- Thoughts of committing a crime or violent act that you know you would never do, such as killing your spouse or harming your baby (obsessional intrusion)
- Fear that you won't be able to stop yourself from saying something inappropriate in public (obsessional intrusion)
- Worries that you no longer believe in your religion, briefly thought something forbidden, or performed a ritual incorrectly (obsessional intrusion)
- Repeated, intensely felt doubts about your ability to perform on an upcoming exam you have studied for (worry intrusion)
- Recurrent, distressing thoughts about contracting a rare disease and dying (worry intrusion)
- Repeated thoughts about a humiliating event that happened in childhood (trauma-related intrusion)
- Unwanted, upsetting recollections of a violent event you experienced as an adult (trauma-related)

These are just some of the many forms that intrusive thoughts can take. Many people are surprised to realize that others have experienced similar types of intrusive thoughts. Knowing this can be reassuring and can help you reach a better understanding of intrusive thoughts as a common phenomenon, not a uniquely personal illness or failing.

Almost everyone has intrusive thoughts, but people respond to them in different ways. The key difference between people who do not struggle with their intrusive thoughts and those who do is not that the former do not have them, though they may experience them less frequently or intensely, but that they are able to dismiss upsetting, unwanted thoughts as meaningless. Those who struggle with obsessive thoughts tend to attach great significance to the thoughts and conclude that they really do believe or feel those things or really will commit those acts. They begin to build a narrative around the thoughts, with implications about their own character, behavior, and future actions.

The most important thing to understand about intrusive thoughts is that just having a certain thought or image does not mean it is true. Having an intrusive thought about an unacceptable violent or sexual action doesn't mean you actually want to or will commit the act. If you are religious, having a distressing blasphemous thought doesn't mean you truly believe it. Experiencing recurrent anxious thoughts about a future event does not mean that those fears are well-founded or that the bad outcome is likely to occur.

Steven Phillipson, Ph.D., is a true expert in the field. He reminds his patients that they are not "mentally ill." Instead, they simply have an anxiety disorder. He also prefers to call intrusive thoughts "creative associations." This attitude encourages patients to embrace their experience of these common, if sometimes disturbing, thoughts.

CHAPTER 3

EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

What is it about emotions that can hang us up when we are trying to cruise along in life? A major life-altering event is understandable, but what accounts for the brakes being slammed on life with emotions like depression, overwhelming sadness, jealousy, or rage? Are you doomed to being subjected to your daily ration of emotional energy? You can learn to adapt to and work around emotions once you have a full understanding of what they are, where they come from, and how much control you can exercise.

- What Causes an Emotional Response?

Negative emotions are typically tied to some of our deepest held beliefs about self-worth, life-satisfaction, and abandonment. Positive emotions tend to tie in to already held memories of happiness, bliss, acceptance, and affection for others. As social creatures, humans are driven hard by emotions and emotional responses to outside stimuli. Although many people define themselves as “loners” or solitary personalities, they are just as socially dependent on feeling confirmation and acceptance as anyone else. It is a part of human nature.

If you get devastating news, such as a death in the family or a serious medical diagnosis, the brain takes in this information, and the electrical activity hits full-tilt. Feelings of impending abandonment and not being able to see the person you love anymore can be temporarily overwhelming. Fear of death can also be a debilitating sensation, initially. The body responds by crashing in a way that causes overwhelming sadness and grief to take over. Getting news of a promotion at work or a new baby on the way can have the opposite effect. It can leave you feeling like you are walking on the clouds. It directly correlates to our deepest held beliefs of self-worth and can be a strong response.

- How to Temporarily Push Emotions Out of the Picture

Receiving traumatic news of family illness, accident, or death cannot be completely pushed aside and should not be. Moments like these will consume your immediate thoughts and time with good reason. Other, lesser events such as losing your job or a breakup with a partner can be temporarily pushed off when you are trying to make it through a day at work or other activity. A few things to try are:

- Put in earbuds and listen to some uplifting, up-tempo music.
- Send your resume to ten awesome companies offering totally amazing jobs.
- Take yourself out to lunch to a nice, brightly lit café.
- Take a walk and reconnect with nature to regain a calm feeling.
- Avoid talking to others about the issue while emotions are raw.

- Identifying Emotional Triggers

Learning what triggers certain emotions will help you avoid situations that can become unpleasant. No one knows and understands your emotional make up more than you and those closest to you. Unfortunately, you are one of the few that cares about your personal emotional health and well-being. Identify and obey your personal limits on triggering events, and avoiding subjecting yourself to situations that bring a negative emotional response. Pre-planning is often necessary.

- Sad and Upsetting Events

Hearing news that is upsetting or creates a lingering sadness has a way of completely disrupting your day. Developing mental toughness should include disciplining yourself to withstand or avoid situations that can lead to triggering feelings of sadness or upset.

- Giving and Receiving Anger

Anger is one emotion that needs to be completely brought under tight control. It can lead to violent actions brought to you or done by you to others. Rage can get out of control quickly and often with little reason. People have submitted reasons for murder being something as slight as getting an ugly look or being in a bad mood. Trivial reasons for such dastardly crimes are rare, but it happens. It demonstrates how quickly triggering anger can lead to an action that cannot be taken back. It is a lack of self-control that is the polar-opposite of mental strength and toughness.

Before lodging any complaints about the anger dished out to you daily, ask yourself if you are completely innocent of gifting people with an angry tirade now and again. Anger can manifest in many ways, even as passive-aggressive.

- Negative Emotions

Any emotion you experience that interferes with what you are trying to accomplish can be considered negative. You may be besieged with joy that makes it difficult to be still. It is not a wonderful feeling at midnight when you need to be up early for work the next day. Anger, jealousy, insecurity, and any number of emotions that leave you feeling somewhat out of control are negative and need to be dealt with to experience peace. Never let emotions make you feel tied down and controlled.

- Sadness and Depression

Overwhelming feelings of sadness and depression must be eliminated to consider yourself mentally tough. No matter how much you prepare yourself, things will happen that will leave hurt, pain, and sadness. The death of a spouse, loss of a pet, a divorce, foreclosure, and many other life events can leave you feeling nothing short of shaken and sad. The danger of not dealing with sadness is that it can lead to depression long-term.

- Being Ruled by Emotions

Mental toughness means drawing a line on being ruled and dragged around by your emotions or the emotional demonstrations of others. It is not difficult to completely lose control of your life by allowing emotional states to determine what you get done, where you go, and how limited your attempts to accomplish tasks are. You will never be able to live life to your fullest potential until you have firm emotional control. How controlled are you by emotions? You may consider yourself ruled by emotions if:

- You lose at least a half-day of work one or two days each week due to personal emotional upheaval.
- Emotional arguments are a near-daily occurrence in your home.
- Work stoppage from anger or arguing amongst employees is a frequent problem.
- You have given up on getting along with some people.
- People easily get under your skin.
- You feel tired and depressed daily.
- You feel angry constantly.
- You feel lethargic and tired all the time.
- You worry and fret over the smallest details.
- You feel awkward in a group.
- You take statements too personally.

If any of these are a frequent problem, it might be time to begin working on getting better emotional control in your life.

PART 2 – PLAN

CHAPTER 4

HOW TO SET GOALS IN YOUR LIFE



Goals are very important. They keep you motivated and focused. Going about life without goals is shooting aimlessly, and you will not achieve anything meaningful, you will become discouraged and frustrated. To set your goals, you must write them on paper with the expected date of achieving them. They act as a constant reminder and help to keep you in check.

Goals are essential because they give you a target or a purpose. Goals are also important because they enable you to measure your progress. When you set a big goal, you set up other smaller goals that guide you toward achieving the big goal. This lets you check your progress and helps you celebrate small successes.

Another importance of goals is that they help you overcome procrastination. Setting goals makes you accountable. They serve as reminders of the things you need to achieve and by when. This enables you to use your time well and avoid postponing doing things. Goals are also motivational. They set a base for your drive and give you a solid endpoint.

You cannot go about life without direction. If you have no purpose in life, then you have no reason for living. Every successful person sets out with a goal in mind that they want to achieve.

- What is Your Vision?

Having a vision is one of the most important things if you want to be successful. It is your most important mental picture. It doesn't have to be just one image or goal; it can be a set of goals that are long-term. It defines your desired state in the future; it communicates what you desire to achieve over time. On a personal level, a vision can be termed as your WHY, while at an organizational level, it should define its purpose for existence.

- Purpose of a Vision

A vision is what describes what you are doing because people want to know. However, every person or organization should have a vision. There are two main reasons why you should have a vision, these are;

- First, a vision acts to inspire and give you energy. It helps guide you and give purpose to all your efforts. When you come to terms with your WHY, you get connected with your core values. It opens up your strongest motivations, making a connection between your daily work and strongest values, hence making you unstoppable.
- A vision helps give you direction in a world full of choices. It allows you to focus on what needs to be done and what should not be done for your achievements in the future. When you become clear about your vision and goals, it becomes easier to say yes or no with valid reasons and no fear of rejection.

- How to Identify and Develop Your Vision

When you are looking to identify your vision, it is best to do this in a quiet place where you find inspiration and no distractions.

When building your vision, your main question is usually WHY. What are your dreams, how do you visualize your future? Once you identify your WHY, then it becomes easy to identify your WHAT and HOW. Focus on your biggest and long-term mental picture now.

When coming up with your vision, consider the following:

- Unique – ensure that your vision is unique and fits into your values and passion. This means imagining yourself maybe three years from now in the role. How do you see yourself, and do you like your role?
- Simple – a vision must be simple, clear, and easy to understand. You are likely to need other people to help you actualize it, like employees; they need to be able to understand your vision in order to work towards its actualization.
- Focused – a good vision is not broad. It is narrow and precise.
- Bold – a vision needs to be brave and big. It must test your abilities and skills.
- Beneficial – a good vision has a purpose, and it is intended to benefit you as well as others.
- Aligned – your vision should be aligned to your objectives and ways of achieving it. For purposes of authenticity, ensure that there are no contradictions with your objectives.
- Inspiring – write down your vision in a manner that is inspiring. Your vision must be inspiring not only to you but to your team as well.
- Engaging – a vision should be engaging; it must arouse your curiosity and that of your team.
- Overall, to be successful, you must have a vision and work towards that vision as it acts as a road map to your destination.
- Making and Achieving Goals

If you desire to attain anything in life, setting goals is one of the most important things to do. People who do not set goals tend to have no direction and believe that life just happens to them, and that luck is what determines what they have or do not have in life. Setting goals is the difference between having control over your life and letting life have control over you. When you take charge of your life, it means you enjoy it, while knowing where it is headed. You put work towards it until you arrive at your destination.

How to set and achieve your goals:

- Let Your Goals Align with Your Purpose

You may sometimes think that you have set goals, and you are not motivated to achieve them, yet the goals look very good and relevant. The problem is not inadequate motivation but that your goals lack alignment with your life purpose. There are two ways to set goals. The traditional and superficial way is where you set goals based on what you think you should do or accomplish. These goals can be achievable, and they do work, but they are the kind of goals that you will likely drop because they are not in harmony with your higher self or purpose. If you achieve them, you may not have the feeling or experience you expected because the goal was not aligned with your purpose.

When setting goals, focus on your deepest desires, passions or dreams, and your calling. Do not allow anything to dissuade you by telling you that it is unachievable. Set goals that are aligned with your purpose and soul.

- Let Your Goals Be Visible

Knowing what you want is not enough. It is important to write down your plan for what you want to achieve and how you plan to achieve it. You should also make time to check your goals often so that you never get distracted from them. When you write them down, keep them somewhere you will see them daily in order to stay focused.

- Get a Partner for Accountability

Goals are supposed to be achieved, especially when connected to your purpose in life. When you set goals, share them with someone so that they help you stay on course and avoid distractions.

- Identify a Goal That is Worth Your Life

This simply means ensuring that the goals you set are important to you. In the event that you find challenges or obstacles, you must still stay motivated and find the strength to keep moving on. When a goal is not important to you, it is easy to give up on it when you face challenges.

- Prepare for Obstacles

You already know that your journey will not be smooth and that you will face opposition and obstacles. You must be mentally prepared for any roadblocks you may come across. If you do not anticipate these roadblocks beforehand and prepare for them when they happen, they can discourage you, and you may give up. As you set your goals, think of all the possible roadblocks and prepare for them.

- Stop Procrastination

Procrastination is when a person tries all they can to avoid doing unpleasant tasks. Many people like procrastinating. You have a job that you must complete, but you do not want to because it is not pleasant to do it. There are various reasons why people procrastinate. These may include:

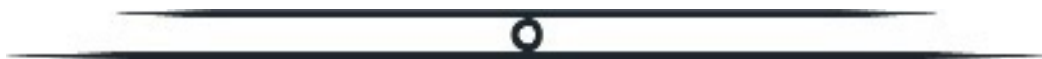
- They find the task to be unpleasant, and they would prefer to be doing something else instead. For instance, not many people want to change their behavior. They would rather stay with what is familiar rather than come up with ways to eliminate or change the habit.
- Sometimes a person has no idea how to carry out a task, and as such, prefers to avoid it altogether. For instance, a person may know that something is not right with the way they react to situations and behave. However, they avoid making changes in their behavior because they don't know how to do it or to ask for help.
- Most perfectionists have a habit of procrastinating. They do this either because they feel they have nothing to change concerning behavioral change, or because they think they have no time to change perfectly.

Changing behavior is not a pleasant task. However, it must be done, and avoiding procrastination is a sure way to achieving your goal. Once you have identified the behaviors and thoughts you want to change, you must avoid procrastination. There are various strategies to help you avoid procrastination. These include:

- A reward system – encourage yourself to do it first then have a way to reward yourself once you have done it. Try and face the unpleasant task of dealing with your negative thoughts or analyzing your negative behaviors in the morning when you are fresh.
- Do it often – if you find yourself struggling to analyze things in your past that may be contributing to your current behavior, you can break them into small tasks. Practice evaluating yourself every day for a few minutes to establish what the unpleasant things are. When you do it more often, you start getting used to it and realize it is not so bad after all.
- Note it down – have a diary or a day-to-day to-do list. When you have things written down, it is hard to ignore them. For instance, if in your to-do list, you have indicated meditating for 20 minutes each morning, you will find it difficult to skip to the next task without completing the first one.
- Have an accountability partner – some people struggle with motivating themselves. For example, if you have decided to throw out physical clutter that could be causing you anxiety and stress, you may find it hard to part with some items. Get someone that you will be accountable to who will help you through the journey of getting rid of the clutter.
- Ask yourself the benefits of putting it off against doing it – asking this kind of question will help persuade you to do the unpleasant thing of transforming your thinking patterns.

CHAPTER 5

FACE YOUR FEARS



Unsurprisingly, fear lives at the heart of every phobia. But it isn't the usual, healthy fear that everyone feels from time to time. Whereas healthy fear prompts us to make a decision and fades as we move forward, anxiety creates a fear that persists long after the trigger is behind us. It sticks to us like a shadow, and as time passes by it worsens until it's well beyond our control and has come to dominate our lives.

What many people find when they begin CBT is that when they stop to analyze what triggers their phobias and what thoughts said phobias produce, the fear is often both irrational and out of proportion. It's a tremendous relief to be sure, but how do we get to a point where we can even see the distortions that clearly?

Let's talk about the distortion first.

Fear, to a degree, is a healthy response to the things and situations we perceive as dangerous. It may influence a decision we make for a brief period of time, but once that decision is made it's gone. The prolonged fear through phobia follows us around because our attention is fixated on the trigger moment; we never give ourselves the chance to put the fear behind us. As a result, we feel as though we need to be constantly on guard. And as we keep thinking about it our brain scrambles to find more and more ways for what we fear to become a reality, limiting how we choose to live our lives.

Even more damaging is how we eventually find other things to become afraid of: "Well, this may not happen, but what if this does?" Because of the cyclical nature of our thinking, we seek these things out even though they make us totally miserable. It's almost like an addiction, and in short order, we have a list of reasons to be afraid that's increasingly more removed from where we started. To get on with living we need to take a step back and put them in a proper perspective. Generally, you can do this by trying one of the strategies outlined below.

Play the script until the end: This strategy involves examining what the worst-case scenario is in a given situation. It is especially helpful for those dealing with intense fear and anxiety. This exercise is beneficial in helping you determine what your underlying fear outcomes are. The idea behind this technique is to conduct a thought experiment or a 'rehearsal' in your mind. You set out to imagine the worst possible outcome to a situation, and then let the event play out in your mind. By doing this, you can learn that no matter what happens, things will likely turn out okay.

To start, you will want to articulate what you're afraid of. Is it a consequence of something you think you've done? Is it how you perceive others will feel about you, and if it is, be honest with yourself and put it down on paper. The benefit of having your fear in a tangible form cannot be understated.

Now write how you think this could come to reality. This part proves to be difficult for some, but it's also very revealing as to how you think. How does what you fear become a reality? Explain it in fine detail. Connect as many dots, as many as there

may be.

Finally, how realistic is the result? Let's say that, for example, you have a phobia regarding being around large groups of people and you avoid going out with friends. One of your fears could be that they'll learn of something embarrassing you did years ago and will think less of you because of it. How would they learn about it? Obviously, you don't want to tell them, so it must be some other way. Does someone else know? Perhaps an old friend you haven't seen in a long time was present. They could resurface and decide to tell everyone. It's entirely possible, sure, but how possible is it? This is where the details of the previous step come into play. How many dots did you have to connect to make your fear reality? This is a useful way to gauge how plausible your fears may or may not be. Of course, because of the way your phobia distorts your thinking, you may find it difficult to see things as they really are. This is when an outside perspective—like that of a professional therapist—can be useful.

Situation exposure hierarchies: This exercise involves putting all of the things that you find yourself avoiding because of your current issues on a list, and then rate each on a scale from 0 to 10 in terms of how much trouble the list item causes you. For example, someone with severe social anxiety might place asking someone out on a date at the top of his list with a rating of 10, but asking for someone to hold the elevator might be at the bottom of the list with a rating of 2.

It is important to be thorough when you make your list so that you don't have any serious jumps between numbers. The end goal of this exercise is to slowly work your way from the bottom of the list to the top so that each new activity slowly adds to your overall level of discomfort. The idea is that by the time you have mastered the activity you will have become used to that level of your specific stressor, so you can more easily move on to the next. As such, it is important not to get ahead of yourself and try and bite off more than you can chew. A slow and steady buildup is going to be far more effective than a dramatic spike all at once. Journaling is sometimes combined with exposure therapy so that you can record and understand how you felt during the exercise, and how you managed the feelings that you had.

An example of exposure therapy would be if you were afraid of bees and wasps and you eventually worked your way up to being able to put yourself in the vicinity of them to illicit the fearful response. Then, as you are in their presence and the fear begins to arise, you recall information about bees and wasps that remind you about how positive they are to the environment and how unlikely it is that you would be stung by one. Continue to remain in their vicinity and allow the fear to run its course.

Interoceptive exposure : Interoceptive exposure is another technique used to treat panic disorder and anxiety. It involves exposure to feared bodily sensations that simulate how they feel during a panic attack. The purpose is to then challenge the unhelpful and automatic thoughts that have been associated with these sensations, and to be able to manage them in a controlled environment. During interoceptive exposure, individuals learn to maintain the sensation without panicking and learn that the symptoms and feelings that they are experiencing are not, in fact, dangerous or threatening.

Therapists use this exposure to physical sensations as a way to simulate a panic attack in order to change the experiences associated with the attacks into more benign experiences. Physical symptoms associated with panic attacks include excessive sweating, elevated heart rate, dizziness, trembling, and chest pains.

Clients who suffer from panic disorders avoid situations that might cause panic attacks. An example of such avoidance is a person that gets into a car accident. Each time the person drove after that they were afraid of having an accident, which caused them to have anxiety. Due to anxiety, even small experiences while driving cause panic attacks. The person avoids driving altogether to avoid panic attacks. However, avoiding the situation only makes it worse.

In order to lessen the effects of the panic attack, the interoceptive exposure method imitates the physical symptoms of a panic attack. This can be done by holding the head down between the legs and pull up quickly to produce a head rush. Other examples are to breathe very quickly to induce hyperventilation or spin around in a chair to mimic dizziness. Repeated exposure to the physical symptoms makes panic attacks easier to deal with when they do occur.

Interoceptive exposure should only be done with the help of a licensed therapist. Clients unfamiliar with the technique could hurt themselves by attempting to reproduce the panic attack on their own and are unlikely to get any therapeutic value out of it. Before starting interoceptive exposure the client should discuss with the therapist the methods he or she plans to attempt.

To practice dealing with the issues that particular sensations call forth, practice the following:

Breathing

- Rapidly breathe in and out, taking full breaths each time (1 minute)
- Hold your nose and breathe through a straw (2 minutes)
- Hold your breath (30 seconds)

Physical exercise

- Run in place (2 minutes)
- Walk up and down the stairs (2 minutes)
- Tense all the muscles in your body (1 minute)

Spinning or shaking

- Spin as fast as you can while sitting in an office chair (1 minute)
- Spin while standing as fast as you can (1 minute)
- Shake your head back and forth before looking straight ahead (30 seconds)
- Put your head between your legs and then stand up quickly (1 minute)
- Lie down for a minute and then stand up quickly (1 minute)

Unreality

- Stare at yourself in a mirror (2 minutes)
- Stare at a blank wall (2 minutes)
- Stare at a florescent light and then read something (1 minute)

Nightmare exposure and rescripting: Nightmares are unavoidable. Individuals are likely to have bad dreams if they are dealing with heavy issues in their lives. This is a technique that is used in CBT to help individuals replace the feelings they had after having a nightmare. If the nightmare caused intense fear in the person, the emotions could be redirected into something more positive.

In order to arouse the feelings you experience in relation to your nightmares, you must first begin to recall them in as much detail as possibly. As you do, the emotions accompanying the nightmares should begin to arise once more, typically overcoming you, sometimes in a rather intense manner. With these emotions now stirring up once again you can identify what emotion you would rather experience and develop a new image associated with your desired emotion. After moving back and forth through the process of awakening the emotions relating to the nightmares and then rescripting them with new desired emotions and images, you train your mind to adjust its focus each time the nightmare is aroused. Typically, what will end up happening during your sleep then is that if the nightmare begins to start up, your mind will naturally switch to the preferred emotion and image that you have rescripted it with. As a result, you should no longer experience disturbing nightmares.

Note that when you are dealing with nightmares, rescripting can take time since nightmares typically happen when you are asleep. It can therefore be challenging to tap into them with your conscious mind. You might need to continually use the rescripting method for several nights over before you find complete freedom from your nightmares. If you do not experience instant relief, you need to continue practicing your rescripting process until the nightmares begin to go away. Trust that as long as you stay committed they will disappear in due time and you will no longer have the disturbing or distressing experience of your nightmares.

CHAPTER 6

TOOLS TO HELP YOU TRACK YOUR GOAL PROGRESS



Goals can be short-term, long-term or somewhere in between. You can take each of your long-term goals, break them down to smaller parts, and take measures to accomplish each one.

So how can you achieve these goals?

In the journey of goals realization, you will find lots of things that can cause you to detour in the process. The regular ups and downs of everyday living are a few of these things.

This is where goal-setting comes in. A goal setting device is something that will make it a lot easier to keep on track in the pursuit of achieving your goals. Goal setting tools can include motivational reading, and exploring information that can help you reach your goals. There are specialized resources and tools like worksheets, forms, and sure techniques such as breathing exercises to assist you.

Utilizing a goal-setting application will help you address some issues faster and much easier than doing it alone. Ninety percent of individuals that use goal-setting tools attain their goals.

Articles are another wonderful goal-setting tool. The reason behind this is they concentrate on a particular topic, are short, and can be chosen for each specific goal. Words are a simple and effective goal setting tool.

Words can influence you and alter your thinking and behavior. Constantly attempt to choose your words carefully. Use good words, not in just in speaking but also in thought.

Money is a superb goal-setting tool. By using money as a focus for your goal-setting, you are centered on the need for keeping healthy goals. This can lead to a calmer and more contented life.

Using money as a goal-setting application shouldn't be identified wrongly as earning money as the primary goal. There is a classic saying that "no one on their deathbed has stated he wishes he had invested more hours making money." By utilizing money as a tool, rather than a goal, your whole outlook on life will change.

There are lots of software programs out there that are being used as goal-setting tools. Using software will help you set your goals in a more organized, supple, and planned way. It allows you to state what you wish to accomplish, list all the areas in your life you feel are important, and your expectations of each.

Such applications allow you to create an action plan and a to-do list for attaining each goal. The benefits are the products are in the right location, there are no papers to lose, and absolutely no poor penmanship to decode. This particular software allows you to become your own life coach.

Goal setting is very important, and goal-setting tools are important. You need to get the correct tools to enable you to start on the right track. You can use common tools such as affirmations and inspirational quotes, to name a few.

You have the choice to go a little more high-tech by using a software program to monitor your progress so that you can see where changes are required. The option is yours.

- Delightful goal setting

Nowadays, there are fantastic internet programs that can make goal setting fun and simple. When goal setting is fun and simple, you are more likely to stick with it long enough to get the success you truly desire. Some of these include:

1. Goal Buddy
2. Mint
3. Basecamp
4. Google Calendar
5. VisonBoard.me
6. Lifetick
7. GoalsOnTrack
8. Goalscape
9. BizOnTrack
10. Shrewd Goals Templates

PART 3 – ACT

CHAPTER 7

CBT TECHNIQUES



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is essential in today's world that is filled with sad and depressed people. These techniques are meant to help you recalibrate your brain to give you more control over your thoughts by reinforcing new patterns. They help one easily recognize those negative thoughts in their heads, leave them behind and live free.

Now, let us discover a few of the most effective Cognitive Behavioral Therapy strategies and techniques. The techniques are plenty and vary depending on whether they are administered by a professional or patients themselves.

- Cognitive Restructuring Techniques

Cognitive restructuring techniques help patients identify their thinking patterns that are usually responsible for their negative thoughts, moods and ineffective behavior. There are numerous cognitive restructuring techniques available, with the most common one involving the tracking of dysfunctional thoughts. This is done by recording one's thoughts on a thought record; from there, healthier and more flexible thinking patterns are devised based on the records obtained.

- Graded Exposure Assignments

The exposure technique helps people approach the things they fear the most, systematically and harmlessly. Fear is what hinders people from getting into a particular situation, and avoiding what you fear increases your chances of developing anxiety.

Systematic exposure helps people tackle their fears by helping them master their feared situations and tackling them one by one. When one level is tackled, the next level of exposure is more complicated. Eventually, a person will gain enough confidence for them to face that which they fear the most, which often is the root of their negative thoughts and anxiety. This technique has an effectiveness rate of 90% with some cases of anxiety disorders.

- Activity Scheduling

The activity scheduling technique was designed to help people master the behaviors that they should be doing more. The technique works by first identifying the behaviors that are beneficial to a person, then coming up with a schedule that dictates the number of times that behavior should be repeated. The behaviors or practices are simple tasks such as meditation, working on specific projects or simply going for a walk.

This technique has proven to be quite helpful in helping depressed people complete tasks due to procrastination.

- Successful Approximation

A successful approximation is yet another technique that helps get people get tasks done. It is used on people who find it difficult to get tasks done either due to the feeling that the task is overwhelming or simply because they are not familiar with the task at hand.

With this technique, a person gets to learn and master a task that is similar to the one they are supposed to accomplish, but less difficult. Accomplishing the simpler tasks prepares them to complete the more complex tasks with ease.

- Exposure and Response Prevention

This Cognitive Behavioral Therapy technique is particularly effective for people who suffer from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. This is a common disorder that is characterized by compulsions and obsessions. With people suffering from OCD, their compulsions and obsessions are more debilitating and prevalent than in normal people.

For this technique, you practice exposing yourself to a situation that would normally spark compulsive behavior in you. Your task is to refrain from that behavior and then to write down your thoughts. This method, combined with journaling, can help you understand how you feel about the changes you are making while tracking your progress over time.

- Interceptive Exposure

The interoceptive exposure technique for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is meant for treating people who suffer anxiety and panic attacks. The body is exposed to sensations that are feared, in order to elicit the feared response. It then activates any unhelpful beliefs that are associated with the response and creates room for new learning about that sensation.

In simpler terms, a person who is exposed to this therapy technique is brought to understand the symptoms of a panic attack. At the same time, even though this can be very uncomfortable for them, they are not dangerous.

- Play the Script Up to the End

This is yet another Cognitive Behavioral Therapy technique that is meant to help those who suffer from fear and anxiety. The individual undergoing the therapy is taken through a thought experiment. They are required to imagine the worst-case scenario of a certain outcome. By doing so, they get to understand that even with the worst-case scenario occurring, they are still most likely to come out of the situation alive and well.

This technique, basically, teaches you that that monster you are scared of right now is not a monster after all.

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

This therapy technique requires you to relax one group of muscles in your body at a time until your entire body relaxes. The technique can be helpful when you are trying to meditate and when you are practicing mindfulness. It allows you to control what goes through your mind and what does not.

- Functional Analysis

Functional analysis is one of the most popular and effective Cognitive Behavioral Therapy techniques. It helps you learn more about yourself, particularly the things that cause you to behave in certain ways and the consequences of those behaviors. With this technique, it is much easier to know whether particular behaviors that a client exhibits are adaptive and drive the client towards their set goals, or whether those behaviors are self-defeating and destructive.

- Fact and Opinion

The fact and opinion technique for Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is very helpful when it comes to recognizing thoughts and beliefs that are true and those that are not. The technique is based on the simple reality that thoughts are not facts.

It can be a bit hard for someone to see sense in this or even accept that some of their thought and beliefs are flawed. But through this therapy technique, it becomes much easier for you to gain clarity and know what exactly are facts are what are not.

- Brainstorming Solutions

Talking to a therapist or a friend can give you a revelation of the true cause of your negative thoughts and depression. Once you have figured out the cause, jot it down. Write down a sentence that is simple and clear that states what the main cause of your problem is. Now shift your focus to brainstorming on ideas that can help you to overcome that problem.

The belief that things cannot get better is usually the hallmark of depression. By writing down the things you can do, you get your mind to believe that there is actually something you can do about it and that there is still hope for you.

It is also important to try and actualize the solutions you have listed. For instance, if you think you are lonely, you can sign up

on an online dating platform or you can visit a club where you will meet new people and establish new friendships.

- Words of Affirmation to Counteract Negative Thoughts

Another Cognitive Behavioral Therapy technique you can adopt when battling your negative emotions is giving yourself words of affirmation that counteract those negative thoughts. Remember these reaffirming words and repeat them often to remind yourself that you can actually overcome those negative thoughts. These words, with time, will create new beliefs in your mind and those negative thoughts will be replaced by positive affirming thoughts.

These self-affirming statements should not be far from the negative thoughts in your mind. The reason simply is that your mind might not accept it. For instance, if the negative thought that you want to get rid of is “I feel so depressed right now,” your self-affirming statement should be something like “Every life comes with its own challenges. Mine is no different” as opposed to “I feel happy right now.” You will no doubt have noticed the difference in the two phrases. The recommended one that is close to the negative thought brings a positive vibe to counter the negative thought, while acknowledging that indeed the negative thoughts are based on realities of life.

Sometimes affirmations can become too routine and might need to be refreshed. You do not have to tell yourself the same things over and over again in the same manner. You can rephrase your words or translate them into other languages to make them more joyful and exciting to hear and believe.

CHAPTER 8

COMMON TECHNIQUES

- Meditation

We've said it time and time again: meditation is good for your mental and emotional health. An integral facet of relaxation training, which is used to treat anxiety, obsessive thoughts, OCD, phobias, and maladaptive behaviors, meditation in and of itself can be greatly beneficial.

Just in case you needed reminding, meditation helps relieve your stress, facilitates better sleep, reduces muscle tension and body pain, reduces blood pressure, boosts your immune system, deals with your worries and anxieties, clears your mind, increases positive emotions, and promotes greater focus, awareness, and emotional control.

Millions of people from all over the world attest to how practicing meditation daily has changed their lives for the better, so why not do the same? Set aside 10-20 minutes a day to meditate and sit in tranquil silence. Find a comfortable, safe space, be it in your room or on your bed, and set your timer. From the moment it starts ticking to the moment it stops, try to think about nothing but your breathing. Work on identifying your emotions and releasing all the negativity you feel. Find some peace of mind, and when you're done, go on about your day with a better, more rational mindset.

- Nature Therapy

If you feel that sitting in silence for a few minutes a day and doing seemingly nothing is really not for you, then nature therapy is a good alternative you can try. Nature therapy (sometimes also known as "ecotherapy") is all about reconnecting with Mother Nature. It is founded on the belief that all human beings are a part of the circle of life here on Earth and that our souls all yearn to be at peace with our natural environments.

Doesn't it feel good to go outside, breathe in the fresh air and bask in the sunshine? Don't you feel a certain serenity wash over you when you enjoy the beauty of the great outdoors? In the modern age of technology where humans have become more urbanized and screen-driven than ever, nature therapy provides a calming, therapeutic effect because it reminds us of our place in the natural world. Practicing nature therapy can give you a sense of balance and harmony in your life.

So make time in your busy schedule to spend a day at the beach, go camping in the woods, or take a weekend trip to the lake house or golf course. Leave behind all your worries and stresses for the day, and your emotional and mental wellbeing will be all the better for it.

On the other hand, even if you live in a bustling city and work a strenuous job you just can't leave behind, you can still find the beauty in nature in small ways—like going for a walk in the park or tending to your garden. Anything that gets you outdoors and brings a sense of purpose to your experience is already nature therapy in and of itself.

- Stargazing

Similar to nature therapy, stargazing has also been found to be very therapeutic to our mental health, perhaps because it

satisfies our innate human need for connection and meaning in life. Looking up at the vastness and beauty of the inky, black night sky and its twinkling stars reminds us that we are not alone in the Universe; we are all living on the same cosmic plane, under the same beautiful sky.

Even the ancient Greeks as early as 750 B.C. gazed up at the stars and looked to the night sky for guidance. When it's just you and the stars, time seems to stand still. You'll find that your thoughts tend to clear and your connection with the world around you strengthens. It can make you feel imaginative, inspired; or calm, hopeful, and at peace with yourself and the world.

With that said, it's important that you go out on your roof or look out your balcony window every once in a while to marvel at the night sky, because it can do a lot to help you find peace in your life and give you a new perspective. It helps you slow down and contemplate the greater meaning of life. When you're with others, it also provides the ideal ambiance for having deep, meaningful conversations and making great memories.

- Physical Activity

Another way you can improve your life—and perhaps the most obvious of all the ones listed here—is by becoming more physically active. For those of you out there already rolling your eyes and hating the thought, I implore you to listen: you don't have to go to the gym every day, but regularly engaging in exercise and making sure you work up a sweat every other day or so will do wonders for your physical, mental, and emotional health. This is especially important if you work a desk job or have a sedentary lifestyle.

Some alternatives to working out at the gym include: jogging, biking, swimming, dancing, boxing, hot yoga, wall climbing, horse riding, gymnastics, or playing a sport like basketball, football, soccer, badminton, tennis, volleyball, field hockey, or even fencing. There are so many ways you can get active and take care of your body; choosing the right one for you is a matter of what you enjoy and whether you'd like to develop your stamina, strength, flexibility, or coordination.

We all know that exercise is good for you, because it keeps your muscles working, burns calories, and allows you to release toxins from your body in the form of sweat. Exercise also releases endorphins in our brain, which creates positive feelings and helps us feel less pain. It also relieves feelings of depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as promoting muscle growth and bone strength. It boosts your energy, clears your skin, and minimizes the risk of chronic illness. It's also been shown to help you relax more and sleep better, which brings us to our next point.

- Better Sleep

Getting a good night's sleep does a lot to improve a person's overall functioning. Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep every night, but the quality of sleep that they're getting matters too. Sleep promotes better heart health and better blood flow. It reduces stress, makes you more energized and alert, improves your memory, facilitates weight loss, enhances the collagen in your skin, and allows your body and your organs to repair themselves.

Conversely, not getting the needed amount or quality of sleep on a regular basis puts a person more at risk of developing depression, heart disease, diabetes, and even certain cancers. It weakens your immune system, impairs your cognitive functions (i.e., memory, decision-making, reasoning, problem-solving), promotes wrinkles, and lowers your metabolism. So it's not hard to see why you need to make sure your body is getting the amount and quality of sleep that it deserves.

You can do this by improving your sleep hygiene. Try to go to sleep and wake up at the same time every day to regulate your body clock. Resist the urge to sleep in and stick to a strict sleep schedule. It's also good to have a nightly routine of things to do before you go to bed, like reading, brushing your teeth, or listening to music. Put your phone away and don't look at any electronic screens for at least 1 hour before you go to bed, because it makes it more difficult for you to fall asleep. For the same reason, avoid drinking any caffeinated drinks like coffee or soda 3 hours before bed and take naps only between 11 AM to 3 PM for no more than one hour.

- Healthy Eating

Finally, another way you can take better care of your mental and emotional wellbeing is by eating healthier and having a well-balanced diet. Observing proper nutrition helps a person lose weight, regulates their metabolism, fights against chronic disease, keeps their heart healthy, strengthens their bones and teeth, improves their memory, and puts them in a more

positive and energized mood.

Still, in spite of all these benefits, many of us still find it difficult to eat healthier because of our cravings for pizza, burgers, donuts, soda, chocolate, cookies, and candy. While these foods may be delicious and addictive, they are also low in nutritional value and negatively impact our health. The first step towards change may be the hardest, but over time, it'll get easier and easier to do, and your body will thank you immensely for taking care of it.

Some tips to help you start eating healthier are: drink herbal tea instead of soft drinks or juice; have at least one day a week where you don't eat meat; gradually quit eating fast food; eat fresh fruits when you're craving sugar or candy; avoid food that's high in saturated fat (like pizza and burgers) or processed sugar (like milkshakes and ice cream). A nutritious diet is one of the foundations of good health—physically, mentally, and emotionally speaking—so make sure you take good care of yourself by following these tips.

CHAPTER 9

ADVANCED TECHNIQUES

- Graded/Gradual Exposure

This exercise is specially created with the intention of reducing fear and anxiety by slowly and progressively facing them and coming in contact with that object, place, situation or person. Graded/gradual Exposure is actually perceived to be one of the most common and effective methods for overcoming certain psychological problems. Professionals from all over the world have the same favorable results regarding this treatment and say that it has really helped multiple individuals around the globe in coming to terms with the things they fear the most.

So, here's the story: Individuals tend to avoid the things they don't want or fear the most. As a result, their fear of that particular object, place, person or situation will only increase as they think about it. However, if they try to expose themselves to that particular fear in a gradual manner, they may be less inclined to fear it. This will slowly reduce their fear until it ultimately disappears.

To better understand it, here's an example. A person who is extremely afraid of being in closed and confined spaces, termed as claustrophobia, will typically try their best to avoid being put in that certain situation. Through graded/gradual exposure, therapists will try to coax them into facing their fear little by little, initially by putting them in a large yet closed area, and then gradually reducing the enclosed space each session. With this method, they are slowly facing their fear and coming to terms with certain facts and realities. At the very end of the treatment, most claustrophobic people would be able to withstand and curb their fears and are no longer fit to be called claustrophobic.

Graded/gradual exposure is connected to CBT and may actually promote it since it also does what CBT does. It alters the way that individuals think and how they perceive certain things. With graded/gradual exposure, individuals are faced with their fears and shown what reality is actually like and different alternatives from their perspective.

Graded/gradual exposure also changes the way a person reacts, responds and behaves in a certain situation. This is also connected to the way they think. Thoughts are at the root of their behavior. Due to the fact that it changed their thoughts, it also ultimately made an impact on their behavior.

In CBT, an individual who has a fear of heights (acrophobia) will have to alter the way they perceive their fear. When placed in a situation that involves heights, they need to alter their negative thoughts and transform these into positive ones. Once this is done, their mind will relax along with their body and act more naturally instead of screaming in fear.

People with this fear are slowly exposed to different height ranges. As they gradually go higher while they progress, they will learn that their fear will slowly disappear. Once it disappears, their mind would have already been altered with favorable as well as positive ideas and their behavior towards the situation would have also changed from screaming or panting in anxiety

to calm composure.

- Activity Scheduling

This is a prominent Cognitive Behavioral Therapy technique that is often regarded as effective and efficient for individuals. This is also known to be very helpful for those who experience or deal with different psychological problems, especially depression.

People who are battling mental disorders, such as depression, often find it tough to stay active and at times, lie on their bed throughout the entire day. So, in order to avoid being passive the entire time, activity scheduling is one of the many solutions they can use in order to solve their passive state and make an effort to become much more productive for the entire day. Activity scheduling includes taking part in different activities and behaviors that they normally wouldn't do as a result of anxiety, depression, and other psychological problems they might be currently facing. It entails a two-step process that can essentially help the individual be a lot better in the end.

It begins with monitoring personal activities. Individuals take note of their activities throughout the entire week and see the different things they have achieved throughout the course of a week. This can show people that they can actually achieve a lot of things if they put their heart to it. Once the set of activities are listed and made, looking at it will improve the individual's mood when they realize the different things they were actually able to accomplish. Secondly, they have to rate the intensity of the symptoms of depression they are experiencing alongside each activity. Through this, they become able to identify the different activities that can actually be more helpful for them and keep their mind off disturbing or depressive thoughts. If they look more closely at the pattern of activities that help them become happier and see the connection of each activity, they can devise an itinerary of things that can introduce wellness and possibly cure depression.

This technique caters to the way an individual acts in every situation. It monitors their movement and ways of behaving in a certain scenario. Through this, their behavioral aspect can be influenced and aided significantly. Activity scheduling is one of the many activities that can help an individual in their CBT journey.

Activity scheduling can be essential in pointing out the different activities that can promote wellness and happiness for an individual. In this process, they are given specific tools to find out which ones are actually helping them overcome this illness and what makes it worse. Activity scheduling is often used by different therapists to treat depression all over the world. When used effectively and accurately, it can lead to great results.

- Behavioral Activation

CBT is known to be extremely helpful for aiding different mental disorders. Behavioral activation is one of the CBT skills that can ultimately help individuals overcome their psychological problems and create a better life for them in the future. It is also noted by many therapists to be extremely useful in treating depression. It is a long process that will ultimately lead to a better and fitter state of mind.

This process starts with getting to know your own feelings and coming to terms with the things you are currently experiencing. Individuals have to understand how they feel, where these emotions come from and what triggers them. Afterwards, they need to take note of the things they typically do on a daily basis. When this is done, they have to find out what they want to get out of life. They should see their goals and objectives. Then, their energy has to be directed towards wellness and motivation to do the things they want and accomplish their objectives. Ultimately, it all depends on making a good and positive change, even if it is little by little just to show progress in their activities.

Here's an example of how it's used: A man who deals with anxiety and depression often has different moods throughout the day/week. There are days where he feels ecstatic and joyous and some where he feels extremely depressed. Then, when he actually takes note of the different things he has done throughout the day, he notices that there are actually some activities that are considered to be emotional triggers for him. Since he is aware of the things that might potentially trigger him, he tries his best to stay away from those to keep a calm and collected vibe. He changes the way he acts towards these specific situations which changes his mood throughout the entire day. So, in this method he is able to identify the different emotional triggers he includes in his daily routine and is able to find a way to deal with those triggers.

Behavioral activation is a useful and often used tool in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy because it deals with both the cognitive and behavioral aspects. It helps a person to understand his/her situation and come to terms with their daily activities which may be impeding them from leading a good and normal life. It helps them figure out a way to negate their unfavorable thoughts and turn them into positive ones.

- Problem Solving

Problem solving is another common and notable technique used in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. In this method, individuals are taught how to solve their issues, cope with the different problems they are faced with and try to regain better control over their lives. Problem-solving uses a unique way of dealing with psychological problems. It directly deals with life's challenges and tackles them head-on. It causes patients to immediately face their problems with the use of cognitive and behavioral interventions.

This method teaches individuals how to have an active role when extremely difficult decisions. As a result of repeated disappointments or chronic mood problems, some individuals may prefer to take the back seat and become passive during tough times. However, problem-solving is here to teach individuals that they have to get more initiative and do whatever it takes to arrive at the goal they want.

CHAPTER 10

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH ANXIETY

Strong emotions arise before thoughts that are related to them are fully formed, not afterward, as it likely appears when you look back on a particularly emotional incident. As such, you will often find that it is easier—and more effective—to change how you feel about a situation than what you think about a situation. As such, if you want to use CBT to help your anxiety, then the following exercises are a great way to work on calming your feelings directly:

- Focus on How your Feelings Change

When working with CBT, it can be easy to get so focused on the way your feelings are currently aligned that it can be easy to forget that feelings are fluid, which means they are always open to change, even after you have already put in the effort to work on them for another specific reason. Likewise, just because you spend a month or more working on your feelings of anxiety, it doesn't mean that you aren't still going to get a little anxious every now and again. Rather, it is important to take the new anxiety in your stride and see how severe it ends up being before you get too stressed out about it, possibly causing yourself far more mental strife than you would have had you just taken the small amount of anxiety in your stride in the first place.

You may also find it helpful to verbally acknowledge how you are feeling in the moment and how you expect those feelings to change once the anxiety has passed. For example, you might say, "Currently I feeling a little anxious, which is natural given the situation. When the feeling passes, I anticipate feeling clear-headed and calm once more."

Additionally, you may find it helpful to keep a close eye out for the first signs that the feeling is passing and the anticipated change is about to begin. Not only will focusing on the anxiety being over actually make the end come on sooner, it will also stop you from reacting poorly to the anxiety at the moment. Feelings always shift, and keeping this fact in mind may be enough to push things in the right direction.

- Act Normally

While Generalized Anxiety Disorder is considered a mental illness, anxiety itself is a useful survival tool when doled out in moderation. It is only when things get out of hand that it goes from being helpful to harmful, sort of like an over-eager guard dog. The truth of the matter is that your anxiety response only kicks in because your body is responding to the current situation as if there was a threat. Regardless of whether or not the threat is real, a perceived threat is enough to set off the

response.

As such, one way to train your anxiety to be selective effectively is to give it the type of feedback it understands so that it knows it is not currently needed. Anxiety takes its cues from what you do along with a basic type of emotional pattern matching, which means that if you act as though everything is currently normal, then the anxiety will back off and calm down. As such, you are going to want to do things such as maintain an open body posture, breathe regularly, salivate, smile, and maintain a calm and measured tone of voice.

If you can successfully adopt just one of these behaviors when you are feeling stressed, then you can successfully alter your feedback enough that your fear response, directly from the sympathetic nervous system, receives a message that says everything is fine. In fact, one of the most common ways of mitigating an oncoming feeling of anxiety is to chew gum. If you don't have any gum handy, simply miming the act of doing so is going to be enough to make you salivate, convincing your body that nothing interesting is going on.

The reason that this is so effective is that you would never have the luxury of eating a delicious meal during times of serious crisis, which makes your body naturally assume that nothing that taking place is a legitimate threat. This, in turn, changes the feedback loop the body was expecting and causes the anxiety to retreat into the background. Just knowing that you have this quick trick in your back pocket can give you a boost of confidence that takes you past the point where your anxiety would trigger in the first place.

Remember, anxiety functions are based on the expectation of something catastrophic happening in the near future. All you need to do is prove that this is not the case, and you will be fine.

- Discover Underlying Assumptions

As a general rule, if you feel anxious about a specific situation, then this is because you are afraid of some potential consequences that may come about as a result of whatever it is that is taking place. However, if you trace those fears back to their roots, you will often find that they aren't nearly as bad as you may have assumed they would be when they were just a nebulous feeling of anxiety.

For example, if you are anxious about attending a party, then looking inside to determine the consequence that you are afraid of might reveal an internalized fear of meeting new people. Tracing that fear back, you might discover that it is based around the consequence of other people not liking you, which you are determined to avoid due to issues in your past.

However, if you trace the consequence of people not liking you, then you may find that it makes you upset because it reinforces existing feelings regarding your general likeability. Once you get to the ultimate consequence that is causing you anxiety, you can look at the problem critically and determine what you can do to solve the issue that you are avoiding. In this instance, reminding yourself of people who do like you is a valid way to avoid the issues you are afraid of.

This exercise is also especially effective for those who are dealing with relationship issues, as they can clearly describe all of the fears they have associated with the relationship falling apart. In the process, they will come to understand that things will continue as normal after the relationship falls apart and that they will be able to move on if the relationship is not intact.

- Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Another useful technique in combating anxiety is known as progressive muscle relaxation. This exercise involves tensing and then relaxing parts of your body in order. The reason for this is because it is impossible for the body to be both tense and relaxed at the same time. Thus, if you feel an anxiety attack coming on, a round of concentrated tense and release exercises can cut it off at the source. Progressive muscle relaxation exercises may be done routinely or before an anxiety-provoking event. Progressive muscle relaxation techniques may also be used to help people who are experiencing insomnia.

To get started, find a calm, quiet place that you can dedicate to the process for approximately 15 minutes. Start by taking five, slow, deep breaths to get yourself into the right mindset. Next, you are going to want to apply muscle tension to a specific part of your body. This step is going to be the same regardless of the muscle group you are currently focusing on. Focus on the muscle group before taking another slow, deep breath and then squeezing the muscles as hard as you possibly can for approximately five seconds. The goal here is to feel the tension in your muscles as fully as possible, to the point that you feel a

mild discomfort before you have finished.

Once you have finished tensing, rapidly relax the muscles you were focusing on. After five seconds of tensing, let all of the tightness flow out of your muscles, exhaling as you do so. The goal here is to feel the muscles become limp and loose as the tension flows out of them. It is crucial that you deliberately focus on the difference between the two states; in fact, this is the most important part of the entire exercise. Remain in this state of relaxation for approximately 15 seconds before moving on to the next group of muscles.

CHAPTER 11

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH ANGER



In response to being ignored, criticized or overwhelmed, it is natural to feel angry, annoyed or irritated. In fact, as long as it is expressed appropriately, anger can lead to constructive change and other healthy coping mechanisms. Unfortunately, when the anger is not expressed properly, such as when outbursts are frequent, long-lasting, or particularly intense, then outbursts can be quite harmful.

It is important to keep in mind that anger, in this instance, isn't limited to showy displays of yelling or shouting, and internalized anger is often just as bad as externalized anger—and is potentially more harmful to the person experiencing it. It can also lead to more serious results such as self-harm or damage to property. Some people can even become trapped in cycles where they become angry, and then they feel guilty about it, then they get angry again when someone brings up the previous incident. It doesn't take a rocket scientist to understand that excessive and uncontrolled anger can easily cause problems in all facets of life. It can lead to strained relationships with co-workers, friends, and family and maybe even issues with the law.

There are many different reactions to anger—both immediate and delayed. As an example, many people are far more likely to go out of their way to avoid someone who is angry all the time as opposed to someone with a cheerful disposition. What's more, those who are angry on a regular basis are more than twice as likely to suffer from chronic headaches, heart problems, stomach issues, and more. Even more consequences of untreated anger can occur in the long-term. Those who don't deal with their anger issues could find themselves prone to mood swings and withdrawing from social situations. They also typically develop problems related to anxiety, self-esteem, and erratic drug use. Untreated anger has also been linked to instances of increased cancer cell growth.

Luckily, CBT is an effective treatment for excessive anger, as it can help you to understand when you are deflecting anger from the true source of the problem onto those around you. Nevertheless, before you try the exercises outlined below, it is important to keep in mind that anger is a natural emotion, and there are times when being angry is a perfectly valid response. Learning to distinguish between these moments and periods where your anger is uncontrolled, exaggerated, or associated with otherwise dysfunctional behavior is crucial to improving all aspects of life.

Additionally, you will need to remember that the behaviors you exhibit are patterns just like any other, which means they have

been developed, reinforced, and repeated countless times throughout your lifetime.

When it comes to dealing with your anger issues while in guided CBT, it is important to keep in mind that there are various approaches to doing so. Some individuals may find success by exploring the experiences that cause them to become angry, while others might need to look at the issues that lead to anger as an automatic response in the first place. Regardless, the following techniques have proven to be helpful for many individuals dealing with a wide variety of anger-related issues.

- Increased Personal Awareness

Many people tend to lose focus when they become angry to the point where they don't have a clear sense of the boundaries of their anger. They don't understand where it is coming from or what exactly is taking place that makes them angry. Once again, a journal will help to ensure you are moving in the right direction—just make sure you are writing in it every day, or even multiple times per day if you find you have trouble recalling everything clearly at the end of the day.

When chronicling your angry episodes, it is important to ask yourself the following questions:

- When do I find myself getting the angriest?
- Where do I find myself getting angry most frequently?
- What situations am I in most often when I get angry?
- What events tend to trigger my anger?
- What sorts of memories tend to trigger my anger?
- Are there any images that seriously trigger my anger?
- How do I feel physically when I become angry?
- What is my emotional state like when I am angry?
- What thoughts frequently move through my mind when I am angry?
- How did I handle the most recent situation that made me angry?
- Is the way I behaved during the most recent time I was angry par for the course?
- If so, why? If not, what made this time special or unique?
- What is the general response like when I get angry?

By answering these questions, you will become more aware of the results, reasons, and nature of your anger, which will go a long way towards allowing you to develop a more well-defined sense of self-worth, while also improving your self-control—two things that should go a long way towards improving your ability to handle anger in a healthy fashion.

When journaling, it is important to keep track of the times that you did not become angry, despite experiencing triggers, just as you did those times that you did become angry. While the two types of experiences are often going to be quite different, when you do see overlap, you will be able to analyze the two events side by side in order to determine what it is that allowed you to keep your cool in one situation while losing it in the other. While increased awareness of the reasons behind your anger is useful, it is likely only the first step towards improving your anger once and for all.

- Anger Disruption

Disruption and avoidance techniques work by removing yourself from the anger-causing situation, either physically or mentally. While this might be as simple as getting up and leaving the room to prevent yourself from blowing up at the person you are speaking to, things won't always be this simple, or leaving the room might not be a realistic option for one reason or another. At the very least, you are going to want to give yourself time to think things through and delay the need for a response by asking the other party for time to think about whatever is causing the issue or to verify your information before continuing.

You may even decide that it would be wise to continue the conversation via another medium entirely such as email. Not only will this provide you with the time you need to cool down before explaining yourself, but it will also ensure that when you do, you have all your ducks in a row and will be able to elucidate your points clearly and effectively. Regardless of the path you choose, giving yourself the time you need to calm down is crucial to shorting out the pattern of anger that you are falling into when you get into a yelling match with another person face to face. Taking some time and getting some space will make both

of these far easier to avoid.

- Cognitive Shift

When you get angry, it will often cause you to make already bad decisions that much worse simply because of the way you view them in your mind. This often leads to one or more types of negative, limiting thoughts that make it less likely that you will be willing to come to any type of compromise. As such, the next time you are angry, try stopping for a moment and reframing the situation in a more moderate way. While this won't always lead to a tenable solution, simply considering it should be enough to cause your mind to stop being angry and start being productive.

If you can't get yourself out of that angry mindset, silly humor might be able to get you there. Silly humor isn't about laughing all your problems away; rather, it is a type of cognitive reframing technique that can help cut your anger off at the source. For example, if you find yourself getting angry during rush hour traffic, instead of referring to the other drivers by unflattering, derogatory statements, find a silly image and refer to the other drivers by that description instead. If you can make yourself laugh every time you say it, you likely won't remain angry for long.

CHAPTER 12

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH DEPRESSION

- Restructuring

Challenging your thoughts is going to be the most powerful tool. Just like with anxiety, look for the factual data and analytics of a situation to put some logic into your thoughts. When we can look at the factual data that can be numerically measured, it can be harder to have depressive thoughts about our situation. It is not about just being grateful for what you have, but instead looking at the positive things in your life rather than only putting an emphasis on the negative.

Always ask yourself realistic questions and test the evidence that you have for a particular prediction. This isn't going to make you feel better right at that moment. However, if you start this combative of automatic thoughts right now, it will get better each and every day. You have to be patient and willing to put that time in.

Both the automatic thoughts and the restructured thoughts can have the same basic meaning at the core, but the restructured ones are more positive and encouraging. There is almost always a positive twist to even the most terrible of situations, and it is up to you to find it.

Write down your most common automatic thoughts. In the second column, find a way to restructure that thinking, or put a positive twist on the scenario. When you let those thoughts pop in, remember that they are automatic responses. Create new automatic responses, but this time positive ones.

- Combating Thoughts

Now that you have some Cognitive Behavioral Therapy tools, you have to look at yourself as a warrior fighting against the cognitive distortions. You are holding a shield, and you have to fight off all the distortions your mind is throwing at you. Sometimes, they might still slip pass, but it is up to you to keep them from destroying you. It might seem impossible, but you should always combat your negative thoughts as they come toward you.

Humans are obsessed with labels. Not just ones that come from a label maker, but more general ones, like good/bad, fat/skinny, ugly/pretty, useful/useless, smart/stupid. We like to put things into one category, especially if you are someone with depressive tendencies and polarized thinking.

A good rule of thumb is to never say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to a small child. Picture someone you love

more than anyone, maybe a spouse, a best friend, or your own child. If no one comes to mind, imagine yourself as a little four-year-old, so cute, innocent, and free from the hard experiences you go through as a teen and adult. Would you call them ugly, stupid, or worthless? No, most likely not, so why is it OK to say that to yourself?

- Look at the Root

When using CBT, you want to go back to that time a specific event took place and think about why that event or comment affected you so. Sometimes, when a person states something related to our insecurities, it can be a form of validation, good or bad. If you think you are not intelligent and someone makes a small joke about your level of smartness, it can cut pretty deep, even though it wasn't meant to be hurtful at all. This is because it is an unspoken validation from the other person that our deepest and darkest thoughts are right, even though that wasn't the other person's intention.

Remember that small instances are just that. Though they might have become defining moments, they don't have to anymore. Most of the time, if you ask a person about certain small instances that stick with you, they end up not even remembering that they said that in the first place!

Once you identify the reason something is there, it takes away the meaning. Think of it as a magic trick. Someone that can make a person disappear seems incredible! But then you realize they are able to do this because of smoke and mirror tricks. When you discover the magician's methods, the magic isn't there anymore. When you remember why it is that you might be so insecure and investigate an issue back to the root, you can already alleviate the negative impact that it has had on you.

- Journaling

Expressing your feelings is an incredibly effective way to overcome your mental illnesses. Holding things in can be like a plastic bag or even a boat. If you put too much in, it is going to sink or break. The same can be said with your mind. If you are not properly expressing your feelings in a healthy way, then it is going to take a toll on your mental and physical health. Journaling is completely subjective. Everyone's mind is different, and that means their journal should be as well. What you decide to put in your journal is up to you. The main idea is that it should be an expression of your emotions, recording of your different feelings, and a go-to for helpful reminders or a guide to overcoming anxiety and depressive thoughts. It is something you can go back and look at to see different information that will help you continue in your recovery.

There shouldn't be any rules for journaling, but there are a few guidelines you should have. You should write in it every single day. If you miss a day, then you might miss another, and before you know it, your journal is sitting empty on a shelf. You don't have to spend hours on it a day. Even if you just open it and write "bad day," on a page, that's enough. It is a reminder that on that day, you didn't have enough mental energy to write in the book, and you can go back later and pick out the things that caused you to have such a bad day.

- Quantitative Data

Some people aren't creative or have trouble expressing their emotions, and that's completely fine. They might not be able to write full entries. Writing might be awful to you, and the sound of it alone gives you anxiety. That's completely fine. You don't have to sit there every day and write a "Dear Diary" entry. Sometimes, you just have to track your moods and keep things in order like you would if you were balancing a checkbook.

Instead of trying to be creative or expressive, you might just want to take down quantitative data for your journal. Maybe you work better with charts and graphs.

This might include jotting down numbers from one to ten as a way to measure certain feelings. You might simply keep a mood meter, rating your level of depression and anxiety every day.

Look at your journal for answers that aren't always easily identifiable. Even if you are creative, this method of journaling can still help as well. You could aim to implement both, but at the end of the day, it is up to you to figure out what works best with managing your depression.

- Writing Letters

Sometimes, we stay quiet in situations that require us to speak up because we don't know how to process our emotions. One way to change this is to write letters. This can be a part of your journal, or it can be completely separate. Maybe you write one

to yourself at five years old, and one when you are fifty. Write a letter to yourself yesterday, angry that you weren't able to get as much work done as you hoped. Write one to your ten-year-old self, letting that kid know that it was OK they didn't make the volleyball team or that it wasn't their fault their parents fought all the time.

Write one to yourself in the future. Tell yourself how much you have thought about them and how you are hoping that they are doing well. By doing this, you are expressing emotions that you have kept inside. Other times, you might want to write letters to other people. Maybe you are angry, so you write down everything you hate about them. While it might be hard to go through those feelings, it can be incredibly therapeutic to get your thoughts out.

Whether you keep these letters or not is up to you. You can tear them up, grind them down, shred them, or throw them into a lake (polluting not encouraged). You could burn them, use them to pick up your dog's poop or bury them in the backyard.

- Unraveling

When unraveling, you have to make sure that you are looking at the cause and effect of different cognitive distortions you are having. One end will be the cause, and the other end will be the effect. When you have it all raveled together, it can be hard to process. When things are laid out perfectly, you will be able to see easier the things that upset or frustrated you.

What you have to unravel is going to be different for everyone, but some important steps can help you do this:

- Identify the symptom of anxiety. What is it that has made you decide to use CBT?
- Pick out what cognitive distortion might have led to your symptoms. Do you often deflect? How are you framing the issue? Are there moments of catastrophizing?
- Reflect on the issue and see the ways they've grown roots and spread. How have they affected other parts of your life?
- Look to your past to see what might have caused the issue in the first place. Was there a specific trauma, or did you experience prolonged abuse?
- Come up with a solution for resolving this issue. Which method of CBT is going to be the most useful for you to overcome it? Sometimes, unraveling will be enough in itself, but other times, you have to use multiple methods.

This is just one simple method of unraveling. It starts with the issue and ends with a solution. Though it looks easy, it won't always be that simple to carry out step five, the methods of recovery. Looking at it in these simple steps, however, can be important in helping ensure that you are looking at your anxiety and depression from a logical sense.

CHAPTER 13

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH OCD

It is a given fact that all people experience unwanted intrusive thoughts. These are not limited to people who have been diagnosed with OCD, and intrusive thoughts are not just negative but can also be positive. So, the truth of the matter is, we can never be free from unwanted intrusive thoughts.

So, in overcoming OCD, the focus must be given to our physical and emotional response to these thoughts. We must try to achieve not having anxiety or any type of mental or physical compulsion once faced with these thoughts.

With the proper treatment and support, the challenge of achieving this is minimized. Most people do recover from OCD without it ever coming back. Now let's look at a number of CBT strategies that can aid in alleviating and treating obsessive thoughts:

- Habit Reversal Training

Habit Reversal Training or HRT is one of the most commonly used types of behavioral therapy in treating OCD. It reverses the habits formed by individuals that are typically performed in certain situations and helps them overcome the urge to do it. This is also helpful in treating different behaviors caused by a variety of conditions, like Tourette's Syndrome.

HRT is seen to be highly effective in helping people with unwanted behaviors or habits, such as hair pulling, tics, repetitive behaviors, or nail-biting. When treating OCD, it is highly recommended to use this type of behavioral therapy since it helps them get rid of the urge to follow the compulsion and minimize or possibly stop their repetitive behavior. This training is made up of five different parts that can help individuals overcome their disorder. It starts with:

- Awareness Training

If you want to minimize or put an end to your behavior, it is important to recognize and accept it beforehand. How can you put an end to something if you are not aware of it? The same goes with this; you can't stop your behavior if you aren't even aware of its presence. Through awareness training, individuals pay attention to their behavior and work at diminishing it. This step allows you to figure out when you typically perform this particular behavior, and what are some triggers and signs before you actually do it are. Awareness training helps individuals know and understand their behavior more deeply and find out things they never knew before.

- Identifying and Strategizing

This step identifies the problem in your behavior and partly continues the work done in the first step. Once you've identified all the triggers and urges you have, it is time to strategize new behavior or a way to combat your urge. This new behavior will replace the old one. It is important to practice this new behavior and become aware of it. Whenever you want to go back to the old behavior you have been so used to, you can try to do this instead. For example, if your typical behavior in response to nerve-racking situations is biting your nails, the new behavior you'll have to do is to purse your lips instead.

- Finding Your Own Motivation and Sticking with Your Plan

When doing something difficult, we tend to find a source of motivation to keep us going or to remind us why we're here in the first place. The same goes with Habit Reversal Therapy; there will be some instances where you'll question what you're doing or why you're even doing it in the first place. This is why you need to write down a list of all the reasons you want to go through HRT and make this a source of your motivation. Find all the people you want to do this for and all the problems you've had because of your unwanted behavior. After finding your motivation, it is important to stick with your HRT and try to comply with it until the very end.

- Reducing and Relaxing

These unwanted behaviors tend to show up whenever a person's body is put under a great amount of stress. So, it is important to reduce your stress level and eliminate any triggers that may induce your tics. Relax your body more and give it enough time to rest. In this part, it is important to know different relaxation techniques. Some also coincide with CBT techniques such as deep breathing exercises, progressive muscle relaxation, mindfulness meditation, and the like.

- Testing and Training

After all the different processes you've gone through, it's time to test out and practice your new skills and behavior and see how you respond to different situations. You may be placed in front of triggers, and it is important to train yourself to get rid of the urge to go back to your old habits. This is the most crucial step of all because it displays all the work you've done in the past. Once you've practiced this new behavior enough, it will soon become an automatic response for you, successfully replacing the old behavior you once had.

These steps can help individuals overcome their unwanted tics. With a little effort and concentration, they can possibly get through and develop new behavioral patterns.

- Imaginal Exposure (IE)

OCD is a complex psychological problem. With a lot of different types and subtypes, it can be difficult to determine which treatment is best for each individual. Some treatments require a lot more intensive procedures than others. Let's look at Exposure and Response Therapy, for example. This type of therapy can be applicable for people who have OCD about physical things like about getting germs from touching a doorknob. The simple ERT procedure would be to let them touch multiple doorknobs without letting them wash their hands. However, it cannot apply to individuals who have more complex OCD behaviors. For example, individuals who are afraid of losing loved ones cannot perform ERT. So, as a substitute for this, they can undergo Imaginal Exposure or IE. Through IE, individuals experience visualization of different scenarios that expose them to their fears or OCD. Imaginal Exposure will expose them to seemingly real-life situations and train them on how to react to these particular situations.

Imaginal Exposure is for more complex and harder to handle OCD problems. Some opt to go through visualizing different scenarios, while others choose to write imaginal exposure stories. Through visualization, patients are asked to undergo the following process:

- Think of a particular situation that triggers your OCD (like losing the ones you love).
- Once you've identified the situation, start imagining yourself in the scenario (you may be facing it by standing or looking at it).
- Afterward, try to picture that specific scenario over and over again until it does not induce any visible or emotional trigger in you.

- After being exposed to it several times, try your best to come back to that scenario until you can accept that it isn't reality, and it will not always be like that. This will reduce your negative emotions and change your behavior towards different circumstances.

Through visualization, individuals can easily access their minds and visualize their OCD triggers. By confronting their worst fears, they can slowly reduce their level of anxiety and the intensity of their emotions.

There is also another way to use Imaginal Exposure, and that is through writing imaginative stories. These stories entail your greatest fear, and through them, you find a way to confront these emotions. Through writing your fears, you can let out everything you feel and expose yourself to the different OCD triggers within you. This short story will write will consist of your obsessive thoughts taken to the worst-case scenario. Individuals with OCD may not be too keen to begin or go through this type of therapy. However, it can be very crucial in allowing them to overcome their greatest fears and face their negative thoughts once and for all.

Here are some tips on how to write your own imaginal exposure short story to get the best results and to really impact your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors:

- Make Your Story from Your Perspective

As you are trying to overcome your own fear, it is important to write things from a first-person point of view. This is so that we will actually feel the things we "did" in the story and keep it as close to our hearts as possible. This will allow you to see the consequences of your actions and actually feel the story. In the cognitive aspect, the brain will process the information as if it was your own doing, therefore making the therapy effective.

- Always Keep it Realistic

It is important not to go beyond the bar. There is a fine line between reality and imagination, so you mustn't go beyond that line. Keep things around the aspects that you think may happen if ever you did a certain act. Don't go far from the actual topic and try to keep things as realistic as possible.

- Use Authenticity

Be authentic about the thoughts you're currently thinking about and the emotions you're currently feeling. Only talk about the things that are bothering you. If it isn't actually a problem, then don't bother to write about it.

- Focus on the Now and Write in the Present Tense

Write your story in the present tense so that you'll actually feel you're living in it at the exact same moment. Don't go and write about it as if it happened a year ago; write things as if they are fresh and currently happening.

- Keep it Concise

When writing, it is important not to beat around the bush. Keep things as short and concise as possible. If it isn't actually important, then don't bother to write about it. Don't waste your time writing about things that don't actually keep you up at night. Rather, focus on things that detail the most important and vital part of your illness. Of course, for those with a flair for the language, it is alright to give free rein to your creative expression. Just stay on point while doing it.

- Go to the Limit

Take your fear of the worst possible scenario. Make it out to be the worst thing that could ever happen to you in your entire life. In this way, you become exposed to the worst things and learn how to cope with situations like this.

Imaginal exposure can be of great use for individuals who cannot undergo ERT. It can also be extremely helpful for OCD since it exposes them to different made-up scenarios that also resemble real-life situations. Through IE, individuals can touch on both their cognitive and behavioral aspects, which will, in turn, produce positive thoughts and better behavior.

CHAPTER 14

CBT TECHNIQUES FOR DEALING WITH INSOMNIA

- [Changing Your Sleep Behaviors](#)

We will go over a comprehensive tutorial of the behavioral components of CBT as related to insomnia: good sleep hygiene, stimulus control therapy, and sleep restriction therapy. Your baseline self-assessment and sleep logs will help you decide what changes might be necessary to increase your chances of getting deep, solid, restorative sleep. You will be given the rationale for each strategy to help you think about your motivation to make changes. Many of these strategies may be familiar to you. Often, the most effective sleep interventions don't consist of one simple change like a sleeping pill, the right sound machine, or the perfect pillow. The most effective interventions are typically ones that address the whole sleep system: the mind, the body, and the environment, as well as thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. Successful interventions typically involve making a series of changes in your sleep behaviors.

- Sleep Hygiene

In general, hygiene is about daily practices that keep us healthy and prevent disease. Personal hygiene includes all the basics—bathing, washing our hair, and washing our hands. In the same vein, sleep hygiene is about staying healthy by building daily practices that increase the probability that we will get good quality sleep. However, it is easy to develop habits that are enjoyable and feel restful but do not support long-term restorative sleep. This makes sense—it feels good to curl up in bed and watch a movie when you are fatigued or take an afternoon nap when you are sleep deprived. But these types of behaviors may be perpetuating and exacerbating insomnia. In the following sections, I'll discuss some alternatives that tend to promote and support healthy sleep.

- Set a Regular Sleep Schedule

Going to bed and getting up at about the same time every day, including on the weekends, is a habit that will support your body's internal clock via external cues. This is discussed more in the section on stimulus control therapy (see [“The Pavlov Connection: Stimulus Control Therapy”](#)). This is an important part of improving your sleep hygiene.

- Reduce or Eliminate Naps

Napping during the day reduces our sleep drive, and you may want to try and give them up altogether until you reach your

sleep goals. If you do need to nap, try to keep it to 20 to 30 minutes and avoid early evening naps.

- Check Your Sleep Environment

It's important that you have checked the following things in your sleep environment:

- Make sure you have a comfortable bed and bedding.
- The bedroom temperature should be comfortable and cool but not cold. A common suggestion is to aim for 65 degrees Fahrenheit, which is significantly cooler than what most people are used to.
- Aim for a restful bedroom environment: quiet, dark, and free from distractions.
- Monitor Substance Intake

What substances we ingest can have a huge impact on the quality and quantity of our sleep. The effects can last much longer than we realize:

CAFFEINE: works by blocking the effects of adenosine, a chemical that builds up in the body over the course of the day when we are awake. Adenosine fuels the sleep drive, and once its concentration peaks, you begin to feel very sleepy—unless, of course, caffeine is standing in the way. Caffeine has a half-life of about five to seven hours, which means that even seven hours after your last cup of coffee, you may still have up to 50 percent of that caffeine in your system. Sensitivity to caffeine and its effects varies, but if you think caffeine is a contributing factor to your insomnia, it is best to stop ingesting it as early in the day as possible—ideally before noon or even earlier. Also, remember that caffeine not only exists in coffee, soda, and some teas but also some energy drinks, medicines (including some pain relievers and decongestants), and chocolate. Decaffeinated coffee contains up to 30 percent of the caffeine in a regular cup of coffee.

NICOTINE: can cause fragmented, lighter sleep even hours after smoking. Regular smokers may also wake earlier than they want to due to nicotine withdrawal. If you smoke, quitting is one of the best things you can do for your health.

ALCOHOL: may appear to help you fall asleep, but evidence shows that it reduces the amount of deep sleep we experience and causes sleep to be more fitful throughout the night. Skipping the nightcap is helpful, avoiding alcohol for at least three hours before bed is even better, and for some people, not drinking alcohol at all is the best choice for sleep.

MEDICATIONS: can also impact your ability to obtain restorative sleep for many reasons. Discuss your medications with your physician to see if they may be contributing to insomnia.

- Why Does Alcohol Impact Sleep?

Some people believe that the relaxing effects of alcohol help them sleep more soundly. Sleep researcher and neuroscientist Matthew Walker is an expert on why the opposite is true. In *Why We Sleep*, he explains that alcohol is a central nervous system depressant and works by sedating the brain. The prefrontal cortex of the frontal lobe is the first area impacted by alcohol. This is the part of the brain responsible for restraint and controlling our impulses, so when it is sedated by alcohol, we experience the initial feelings of well-being and letting loose. Over the course of an evening of drinking, the impact of alcohol on the brain causes us to feel more tired, but, as Walker states, alcohol-induced sleep is not natural sleep, as evidenced by altered electrical brainwave activity. Alcohol disrupts the structure of our sleep and reduces the amount of time we can achieve both REM and slow-wave deep sleep. Even moderate-to-light drinking can cause more arousals during the night—awakenings we may not be aware of. Finally, alcohol's relaxing effects can loosen muscles, including those of your airway, which can increase snoring and is especially concerning for those individuals with sleep apnea.

- Monitor Light Exposure

Melatonin is a naturally occurring hormone in the brain that promotes sleep. Light, including both sunlight and artificial light, suppresses the release of melatonin, causing us to feel more awake. Bright light early in the morning is a helpful way to wake up and shake off sleep. It is helpful to reduce light exposure one hour before bedtime, including turning off all screens and dimming the lights, so that melatonin can be released.

- Get Regular Exercise

There is a reciprocal relationship between physical activity and sleep. Regular daily exercise is linked with deeper, longer, better quality sleep, and getting a good night's sleep is linked to more physical energy and exertion the next day. Exercise

alone has been shown to have strong positive effects on mental health (such as reduced depression and anxiety). Building this cyclical relationship can lead to a multitude of mental and physical health benefits. The timing of exercise is also important, however, as physical exertion too close to bedtime can disrupt the body's ability to initiate sleep. Aim to do your workout at least two to three hours before bedtime.

- Eat Wisely and Eat Less Sugar

Diets heavy in carbohydrates, especially sugar, are associated with less deep sleep and more frequent awakenings, so monitoring sugar intake and lowering your intake if it is high is a good idea. You can also time your last meal so that it promotes restorative sleep. It's better to avoid heavy meals close to bedtime and aim to feel neither too hungry nor too full before bed. If you are in the habit of snacking right before bed, you may want to keep the snack on the smaller side and avoid things like soda, candy, cookies, chocolate, ice cream, or other high-sugar foods.

- Create a Calming Bedtime Ritual

Practicing a calming bedtime routine every night helps your body and mind unwind. Your bedtime routine can include reading, meditating, or any activity that feels calming, settling, and pleasant. A warm bath can also be especially helpful. After getting out of the bath, our core body temperature tends to cool quickly, and a decrease in core temperature enables the body to initiate sleep.

CHAPTER 15

DAILY CBT TECHNIQUES

- Low-level Physical Exercise

Low-level physical activity can offer some great benefits, and I recommend that you use this type of exercise as much as you like, as long as your body is okay with it. These types of exercises are least likely to worsen stress. Instead, they should feel very relaxing.

Low-level physical exercise can be a walk, a yoga session, an easy bike ride, a hike, or anything else that isn't very physically challenging. Doing low-level physical exercise every day can be perfect for your stress levels and it doesn't have to be that difficult. All you have to do is walk around for a bit (preferably in nature).

- Resistance Training

If you have the energy for it, doing some resistance training once in a while can be very good for your resilience to stress and your overall health.

Resistance training is when your body pushes against a force. The most common types of resistance training are weight lifting and other types of strength training. It sounds stressful for the body to do some heavy weight lifting, you might think. And you would be completely right. However, it is a bit more complicated than that.

Resistance training does put some stress on your body in the short term. This is not necessarily a bad thing if you have a proper routine, though. The key to appropriate training for a resistance routine is enough recovery time. I recommend six to nine days between sessions. When you do resistance training this way, you will make your body momentarily stressed after the exercise. However, when you allow your body to recover for six to nine days, it will increase your resilience to stress in the long term. So, when you follow this routine, you exchange some short-term stress for long-term stress relief and resistance. However, if you're already very stressed, you might not want the temporary stress increase from resistance training. That's why I recommend that you only do resistance training if you feel like you have enough energy to do it. If you do, it can be very beneficial for you and make you more resilient to stress over time.

- Aerobic Exercise

Aerobic exercise is very popular, and it can be beneficial. However, it can also require a lot of effort and time, which can be quite stressful.

Aerobic exercise, also known as endurance training or cardio, can be something like running, swimming, or cycling. Or it can be almost any sport that requires constant movement. If you have an existing practice of this type of exercise that you like,

you can keep doing that, especially if it also includes good social relationships. However, aerobic exercise is typically not the first type of exercise that I would recommend for people with chronic stress issues. That's because endurance training is frequently seen as something you must do every day, or at least three to four times a week, for 30-60 minutes to get good results. This can be a lot of time for you to invest. Plus, it can be very taxing for your body and just put more stress on it. Also, you don't have to do aerobic exercise for several hours every week to see excellent benefits from your exercise routine. If you have an aerobic exercise that you like that makes you feel better, you can keep doing that. However, I would only do aerobic exercise several times a week for the fun it can provide, not necessarily for the fitness benefits. If you have fun doing it, it can be great. However, if you want the health benefits and better resilience to stress in as short a time as possible, there are better ways.

- HIIT

High-intensity interval training (HIIT) gives you a combination of the good effects of aerobic exercise and resistance training in a very short amount of time. It improves your mitochondria; it helps with detoxification and weight loss and dramatically increases growth hormone levels. In other words, it is perhaps the best way to exercise for your health.

In a HIIT workout, you shift between doing high-intensity intervals and resting. For example, you can sprint for 60 seconds and then sit or lie down for 90 seconds. And when I say sprint, I mean sprint. You want to get some real effort into those 60 seconds, so your heart rate rises as much as possible. Because when your heart rate is high, you get the benefits of aerobic exercise while you're relaxing between the intervals.

However, HIIT doesn't have to be running. It can be anything that allows you to do a high-intensity interval and get your heart rate up quickly. The best thing about HIIT is that it takes very little time. You simply do the intervals for as long as you can, or for a maximum of 15 minutes in total. This means that you will, at most, be doing six sprints or other high-intensity activities. Furthermore, just doing this once a week will give you amazing benefits. You don't have to put more time into it. When you combine HIIT with low-level physical activity throughout the week, your exercise routine will require almost no time, and it will give a whole bunch of benefits. Your resilience to stress should also increase significantly.

Again, it's important to mention that you should always listen to your body. If your fatigue becomes worse after doing HIIT, it might not be the right thing for you at that moment. If that is the case, you can try to do HIIT later when you are less stressed. However, as with resistance training, HIIT should only put stress on your body in the short term, whereas it should increase your resilience to stress in the long term.

Generally, HIIT is very beneficial, and it probably won't hurt you to try it once. You can do one high-intensity interval for 60 seconds and see how you feel the next day or a few days after. If you feel better, you can go for more the following week. If you feel worse, you might want to wait some extra time before you try it again.

When it comes to exercising, the most important thing you can do to minimize stress is to ensure that your body is fully recovered after a workout before you start a new one. If you feel like your body isn't fully recovered after exercising, you should relax or only do some light movement until you're fully recovered.

- Nutrition

What one eats directly impacts the way he/she feels. Aim to eat a balanced diet made up of low-fat proteins, fruits, vegetables, and complex carbohydrates. Lessen your consumption of foods that may negatively affect your mood or brain, such as alcohol, caffeine, saturated fats, and foods that have high chemical preservative levels or hormones.

Do not skip your meals. Aim to eat something at least every 3 to 4 hours since going for a long period between your meals might make you feel tired and irritable.

Minimize refined carbs and sugar. You may desire or have a craving for baked goods, sugary snacks, or comfort foods like French fries or pasta, but these foods quickly cause lower energy levels and a crash in the mood.

Concentrate on complex carbohydrates. Increase your intake of foods, such as whole-wheat pasta, baked potatoes, whole-grain bread, and oatmeal as they can enhance serotonin levels without causing a crash. Increase your vitamin intake; eat more leafy greens, citrus fruit, eggs, chicken, and beans. Eat superfoods like spinach, brown rice, and bananas that are rich in

nutrients for boosting mood.

Omega-3 fatty acids can also play a vital role in steadying and stabilizing one's mood. Some of the best sources are fatty fish, such as salmon, mackerel, anchovies, sardines, and herring.

When preparing fish, you should bake or grill rather than fry them.

- Practice the Power of Positive Thinking

The power of positive thinking is undeniable. When you think positively:

You receive better results. When you love the new evidence of improvement, you strive further to achieve it continuously.

You better notice your flow of behaviors and choices. You are better inclined since you know how you are feeling and thinking.

You create better results, and others in your life respond in kind.

You feel more at ease.

You behave more hopefully, thanks to the elimination of the negative cloud raining over you daily.

You have less time for negativity when embracing optimism.

You allow your mind to be fueled with more positivity, which has amazing effects on your physical, mental, and emotional health.

You actively choose to utilize the power of positive thinking each day.

- When Faced With a Challenge, Choose Positive Responses

Problems are inevitable. It is just a part of life. We all face them, but how we interact with issues has an enormous effect on our overall wellbeing. When you negatively react, you end up majorly draining your energy and negatively affecting your health.

Positively facing the challenges at hand does not necessarily mean you are forced to be happy about them. It is about learning to choose the best perspective in all situations. We all have a choice of what type of perspective we want, which, in turn, affects how we feel.

Here are ways to embrace positivity no matter the scenario(s) you are faced with:

Instead of locking in your first negative thought, ask yourself these questions instead:

- What is the situation teaching me?
- What is a positive, more peaceful way I can interpret and approach this situation?

Take a moment to breathe and count to 10 (sounds too simple but works wonders).

Take note of how you are feeling and thinking.

Realize that you can pick your perspective, and nothing can make you think anything you don't choose to. Remember that your mind is a sacred place that is yours alone.

- Practice Self-Love

The bulk of all positivity and the greatness that comes with it begins with you. It has little to do with what is happening in your life and everything to do with whatever is happening within yourself. When you feel good about yourself, it is much easier to jump on the path of positivity.

If you don't believe or love yourself, you are bound to face numerous challenges when it comes to generating the positive attitude that is required for success in life. To help create a better relationship with yourself, you need:

- To do something at least once per week that is an act of self-care. Think about any action you take to make yourself feel nurtured and supported. Even think about things you do for others or that you do for those you deeply love and start doing similar things for yourself!
- To practice the art of forgiving yourself instead of beating yourself up about weaknesses, goals that are unmet, regret, mistakes, the past, or guilt.
- To take stock of the things you do love about yourself. Anything from skills, achievements, triumphs, strengths, etc. Learn to enjoy the journey you have been on so far.

- Be Thankful

Gratitude always has the power to instill more happiness in our lives. Scientifically, it gives our brains a big dose of dopamine, which is a ‘feel-good’ chemical that erases negative emotions and thoughts.

CHAPTER 16

USEFUL TOOLS



There are many simple tools that can help you understand your thoughts better, as well as what they might be rooted in. It is important that you use and maximize them in order to fully immerse yourself in the treatment. In this chapter, we present you with some of the most common CBT tools and how you can use them better.

- Journaling

Think of journaling as a means of gathering data about your thoughts and your different moods. When writing in your journal, always try to expand on the mood or thought. Answer some of these questions:

- What was the source?
- How intense was the thought or the mood?
- How did you respond to it?

This tool can help you better identify your emotional tendencies and thought patterns. Having a record enables you to look back and see everything from an outsider’s perspective. A journal helps prevent you from being in your head too much as well—this may lead to negative thinking if you’re not careful.

- Make Room for Pleasant Activity Scheduling

The idea here is to indulge yourself in an activity that stimulates positive feelings in you. For some, this could be a good book and a good cup of coffee, for others it could be catching up with friends. What’s important is that it must be an activity that’s healthy for you—so, no binge eating or smoking. These things might stimulate the pleasure sensors in your brain, but they can actually worsen your overall state of mind.

Sugar can cause energy crashes. Smoking can cause addictions.

A good option to try here is to create a regular exercise routine for yourself. Regular, as in, something you do quite often if you cannot manage to do it every day.

The Benefits of Exercising:

The physical and mental benefits of exercise have long been established. All experts agree that regular exercise can help fight against diseases and improve overall wellness. Exercise is not only good for your physical body, but for your mental health as well.

Numerous studies have shown that exercise can reduce fatigue, enhance overall cognitive function, improve concentration, and increase alertness. Regular exercise can also help you focus better as well as increase your energy levels. More

importantly, it can help you manage your stress and anxiety levels.

When stress affects the brain, along with its nerve connections, the body feels the same negative impact. This is why you need to condition both your mind and body when you are stressed or anxious. Since your body gets pumped up with adrenaline during moments of stress and anxiety, you need to put this adrenaline rush towards physical activity, such as aerobic exercises, to make you feel better.

Furthermore, scientists say that regular aerobic exercises can significantly reduce levels of tension, improve sleep, boost self-esteem, and increase and stabilize mood. So, even if you are too busy with work and you do not have time to go to the gym, you can still exercise. You can perform exercises in five minutes and still reap the same benefits as you would when you spend half an hour to one hour at the gym.

- Mindfulness Meditation

There's a wide range of benefits to this, but it is one of the most effective CBT techniques when it comes to dealing with AUTOMATIC THOUGHTS. It enables you to disengage from obsessing and rumination, allowing you to stay grounded. In this manner, your feelings and behavior would not be swayed by any of the negativity that may go on in your mind.

The Benefits of Mindfulness Meditation:

Numerous studies have shown that mindfulness meditation is effective in managing depression, pain, and anxiety. It is about training the brain to focus on the present moment instead of regrets from the past or anxiety about the future.

Whenever you worry, you focus more on what might happen in the future and what you have to do about it. This can make you anxious and stressed. Through mindfulness meditation, you can break free from these worries and bring your attention back to your present.

Mindfulness is about observing your thoughts and acknowledging them before finally letting them go. It refers to your ability to stay aware of your current feelings as well as moment-to-moment external and internal experiences.

When you practice mindfulness meditation, you are able to determine where your thinking causes problems. It also helps you get in touch better with your emotions. In essence, mindfulness is about acknowledging and observing your anxious feelings and thoughts, letting go of your worries, and staying focused on the present moment.

Mindfulness meditation can help you stay focused and calm in the present so that you are able to bring balance back to your nervous system. Mindfulness meditation has long been practiced in different parts of the world to reduce anxiety, stress, and depression among other mental health issues.

- Cognitive Reframing

Cognitive reframing or restructuring is one of the core parts of CBT. It is also considered to be a very effective treatment when it comes to common issues that people face, including anxiety disorders, binge eating, and depression.

How to do it? It's basically taking something that's making you feel bad, and turning it into something that's good.

Reframing Anxiety as Excitement

When you reframe your anxiety as excitement, you are able to devote more resources and energy to the situation. According to Alison Wood, an assistant professor at Harvard Business School, the ideal way to deal with anxiety is to get excited. This finding is in contrast to the belief of most people, which is to keep calm.

You see, your emotions occur at two levels: arousal and valence. Arousal refers to the physical sensation that occurs in the psych world while valence refers to the way you interpret this arousal mentally.

Whenever you become anxious, your heart rate soars. When this happens, you experience high arousal, and that is a negative valence. So, whenever you feel anxious, you have to reframe it as a feeling of excitement instead of dwelling upon it with feelings of dread. By reframing it, your heart rate soars, but with it comes positive feelings instead of restlessness.

Recognize that You Are Doing Alright

Every day, you have to recognize that you are doing alright. During random moments of your day, take a pause and congratulate yourself on being fine.

Rick Hanson, a neuropsychologist who writes for *Psychology Today*, says that your instincts for survival make you constantly

fearful and unsettled. While these instincts protect you by preventing you from letting your guard down completely, they also make you anxious.

Are you feeling anxious? Tell yourself that everything is alright and that it is okay to be feeling this way. It's only natural—after all, you're doing something huge and EXCITING. Do not let the feeling dictate negativity in your mind. Use it instead as a fuel by reminding yourself that you're doing just fine.

- Write Down Self-Affirmations

This may seem similar to reciting positive affirmations, but there is one distinct difference and that is THE TOPIC OF YOUR AFFIRMATIONS. This exercise centers on you as an individual and on your core values—ones you may have formed during childhood. These are the ones that have the strongest association with feelings of positivity, especially if they are somehow related to your family.

For example: If you find yourself having a bout of anxiety before presenting a new idea to the company, tell yourself “My mother always taught me that there are no big challenges, only people who are not up to the task.” Repeat that thought until the negative thought is gone and you're only filled with these encouraging words.

Always make sure that you affirm core values before any challenging situations, especially if you start feeling terrified or plagued by thoughts of failure and rejection. By doing this, you can stay positive in any situation.

So, the next time you go to a job interview or face a difficult situation, pause for a while and remember your core values. Take a deep breath and recall the values that you grew up with.

These core values may be about your family, relationships, creativity, or career success among others. Select one of these values and determine why it is important for you. Get a piece of paper and write down your reasons as to why it is important. Be as vivid as possible.

Psychologists and researchers agree that this can help reduce stress and anxiety. In a study that involved eighty-five undergraduate students, it was found that writing about core values helps reduce stress levels.

The participants were told to give five-minute speeches as members of the audience yelled at them to speak faster. Before they gave their speeches, however, the participants selected the value that they thought to be most important as well as the value that they thought to be quite irrelevant. Then, they wrote about such values.

- Imagery-Based Exposure

This exercise involves you recalling a recent memory that produced an intense feeling of negativity within you. Now, once you have it in mind, analyze the situation.

For example, say you found yourself in a distressing situation at work where you ended up arguing with one of your officemates. They might have said something hurtful that left you reeling and completely out of it.

Yes, the exercise might bring back some of those feelings, but try focusing on the purpose at hand instead of those emotions. Remind yourself that the situation has passed and now you're merely studying it to gain a better understanding of how you reacted.

Next, label the thoughts and emotions that you went through during the conflict. Identify and write them down.

How does this help? Well, by visualizing this situation, it can actually help you take away its power to trigger the same emotions in you. Exposing yourself again to those negative feelings and urges will take away some of its ability to affect you once more.

- Thought Recording

For this exercise, you will be testing out the validity of your thoughts. Basically, this involves gathering and then analyzing any evidence for and against a thought you might have. What this enables you to see is a fact-based conclusion on whether said thought is valid or not.

For example, you might think that your boss thinks badly of you and that they find you inadequate for the job. You would need to gather all the evidence that makes you believe this is true, such as “He wasn't smiling as I was making my presentation and he asked many questions as if to embarrass me.” Then think of evidence that is against this belief, such as

“He did give me a pat on the back after the presentation” and “He also told me to keep it up. If he thought ill of me, he wouldn’t have encouraged me in that way.”

The goal here is to create a more balanced picture in your mind, as well as get rid of the unreasonable negative thoughts that you have formed prior.

CHAPTER 17

PREVENT RELAPSES

Firstly, we have to know the meaning of lapse. A lapse is a brief return to feeling down or to your old habits. It is a common and temporary situation. As opposed to a lapse, a relapse is a complete deterioration or complete return to your initial state of health after a temporary improvement.

For example, you had a phobia of spiders, and now you know that it is best not to scream when seeing one. Somewhat, you calm yourself down, breathe, tell yourself some coping thoughts, and gradually ignore the spider. So, if you see a spider in a room one day and you scream, that is a lapse. If you then go back to screaming and running whenever you see a spider, then we can call that a relapse. Lapses can progress to relapses, but this should not necessarily happen. You can stop a lapse from escalating into a relapse.

- When Does a Lapse Become a Relapse?

The general belief that what you say to yourself after a failure can make or break you is very much applicable here. What you say to yourself and think after a lapse can lead you back to the right track or throw you into relapse. Seeing a lapse as a failure can keep you sick and lead to a relapse. A better perspective is that you were able to have emotional wellness before; you can have it again; process whatever happened before and learn from your mistake.

Going back to our spider-phobia example: if, after avoiding the spider all day, you said to yourself, “It looks like I’m bringing back old habits; I need to do better tomorrow and get myself together!” you would discover that your lapse would probably decline or stop completely, and now you can face your anxieties and fears head-on. If you avoided spiders all day, and at the end of the day said to yourself, “All that I did was a waste, now I’m here again. I’m such a jerk! Why am I even trying when there is no cure?” this is not really helpful, and it won’t help your recovery.

- Can I Prevent Lapses and Relapses?

Yes, you can prevent lapses and relapses, and here are seven clues you can use:

- Do Not Give Up on Practicing

The best way to prevent a lapse is by regularly practicing your CBT skills. If you practice regularly, you will be in good shape to handle whatever situations you might face.

- Understand Yourself (Red Flags)

Relapse doesn’t happen suddenly. It occurs over a period of time. Preventing relapse by understanding yourself is not complicated. Understand yourself by identifying your triggers, asking for help, and sharing your feelings.

- New Challenges

We are all works in progress, and you are no exception. This means there is always a chance to get better, and you can work on yourself and live a more fulfilling life. It will be less easy to backslide into your old ways if you deliberately work on new ways of overcoming your anxiety. An excellent way to prevent lapses is by challenging yourself regularly and taking up new scary situations. Make a list of cases that sound scary to you and initiate anxiety when you think of them, and work on them.

- Learn from Your Past Experiences

Lapses are not synonymous with failure, rather they are opportunities to learn and get better. Figure out the situation that always leads to you having a lapse and make a plan that will help you deal with these situations better in the future.

As I said earlier, what you say to yourself after a lapse can impact your behavior. Have a few positive things that you say to yourself. CBT has helped you, and you cannot throw away everything you have learned. Going back to the beginning means having anxiety and not knowing how to handle it. Going back to practicing your CBT skills will help you master your anxiety again in a short time.

- Be Kind to Yourself

Remember that lapses are not the end of the world; take it easy on yourself and learn. No one is above making mistakes. We all try to speak nicely to people, so do the same to yourself; don't say harsh things to yourself. Lapses can be a blessing in disguise at times because you get a chance to learn that you can go back to fashion out a new formula of dealing with your situation.

- Enjoy Yourself

Make sure you always take the time to rest and relax from all the hard work you are doing. Appreciate yourself; buy yourself a nice meal, get something new, or hang out with your friends. You can also reward yourself by pampering yourself and taking some time to relax.

- Tips for Preventing a Relapse

People suffering from episodes of depression can have crushing, intense feelings. The following strategies can help prevent depression relapse:

- Have supporting relationships.
- Avoid isolation. It is imperative to surround yourself with understanding, kind, and supportive people.
- Avoid and modify depressive thinking patterns.
- CBT can help you change your thinking style.
- Follow your prescribed medication.
- Work together with your psychiatrist and follow any treatment pattern they give you.
- Be ready for a relapse. It is advisable to plan for relapse and act upon signs as quickly as they appear.
- Correcting and Coping With a Relapse

Having a return to unhelpful anxiety reactions and old thought patterns might mean that the initial treatment is not working effectively. We recommend that you ask for a doctor's advice and preferably change your treatment strategy. Another treatment option is the use of medications like antidepressants or mood stabilizers with the doctor's prescription. If you've been on medication before, and it seems to be failing, you can talk to your doctor about a change in dosage.

CHAPTER 18

OTHER TYPES OF COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

- The Multimodal Model (MMT)

In multimodal coaching, the emphasis is placed on the distinct dimensions of the human personality:

- Behavior - These are the traits that an individual may present
- Affect - Positive or negative influence on our emotions
- Sensation - Automatic sensations in our bodies such as sweating, heart racing, tension, etc.
- Imagery - Mental pictures
- Cognition - Our thought processes
- Interpersonal relationships
- Drugs – Biological intervention

These aspects can be easily remembered by using the acronym BASIC ID. While all people experience these same dimensions in one form or another, it also has room to address the uniqueness of each individual. You can think of it in the same way music is composed. Music is always composed of the same notes of the scale, yet no two musical pieces are exactly alike. The same is true for the billions of people who have these seven dimensions in their personality; you may find some that are similar, but none of them is exactly the same as another.

The goal of the MMD is to help the individual make the changes necessary to move them from their current personality to become a more progressive and better individual. It is not likely that any of us will ever reach our full potential. However, by applying the MMD model, it can help us pinpoint the areas in our personality that may need adjusting and help us make the necessary changes.

In this type of therapy, the patient is asked a series of questions relating to these modalities to help determine exactly what kind of help they need.

- Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing Therapy (EMDR)

This is a form of therapy specifically developed to help people who are suffering from traumatic events. Traumatic memories or images may pop up in their minds without warning, triggering all sorts of negative emotions and actions. EMDR makes it

easy to access the part of the brain that processes these images or memories and helps them to resolve the issues that are triggering them.

Through EMDR, in much the same way as the body can heal from physical trauma, people learn that the mind can actually heal itself from psychological trauma. By learning how the body heals from physical trauma, such as a cut or a break, you can begin to understand how the mind automatically works to repair itself. If the location of a previous injury is repeatedly injured, the pain will recur. However, once the object that caused the injury is removed, and the threat has passed, the body will immediately begin to heal.

With EMDR therapy, we see that psychological trauma can be healed in the same way. The brain actually wants to be mentally healthy, but if the system continues to be blocked by repeated recurrences of the traumatic event, it can leave a lasting scar which can cause a great deal of suffering. However, once the imbalance is removed, the mind can begin to heal itself.

During therapy sessions, the patient must address emotionally disturbing material and some form of external stimulus at the same time.

Once therapy has been completed, the patient can find relief from their own negative beliefs and can move on to more positive things in their life. This healing is done through a detailed series of protocols and procedures designed to activate the brain's natural healing process.

How Does it Work?

There are eight phases of EMDR treatment. Eye movement and other types of exercises that promote bilateral stimulation encompass a significant part of the session. The clinician will first pinpoint the memory that is triggering the negative behavior by asking the patient to recall various aspects of the traumatic event. At the same time, the clinician will have the patient track his hand movements as it crosses the patient's field of vision.

This will cause the client's mind to process the memory and the feelings that are associated with it, thus triggering a shift in their emotions. For example, a rape victim may associate a feeling of disgust or horror in recalling the event, but after the shift takes place, could demonstrate positive feelings of survival and strength.

All of this is done without the need for a lot of talking. Therefore, the results of this type of therapy do not stem from the conclusion that the clinician has gleaned from the talk but instead from the patient's own internal intellectual and emotional processes. The result is that a patient will leave the session feeling empowered by the same traumatic event that originally had broken them.

In this type of therapy, the damage created by the traumatic event didn't just heal the patient; it literally transformed them. The patient's thoughts, feelings, and behavior are part of a delicate balance of emotional and mental health.

- Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy Method (REBT)

The theory behind this type of therapy is that humans do not act rationally in many situations. Logic is not always a part of our make-up. Computers and machines all perform their functions rationally. They take in data, analyze its logic, and provide an acceptable output. Humans, on the other hand, receive millions of tiny little inputs every day, process them very differently from machines, and instantly produce a wide variety of outputs; some of them may fit in a lot of things, but many others do not.

REBT was designed to train us to think more rationally to change our dysfunctional behaviors. Its goal is to break down our natural instincts to think irrationally, stop us from making unreasonable assumptions, and make realistic assumptions instead. This can change our inappropriate and destructive behaviors to much more positive ones. Since most of our negative thoughts and assumptions come from the irrational side of our beliefs, we react to them in inappropriate ways. It was thanks to these theories on negative thoughts that REBT therapy was developed.

- Dialectical Behavioral Theory (DBT)

Sometimes referred to as 'talk therapy,' DBT stresses the psycho-social components of treatment. The basic theory behind DBT is that there are people who will react to situations in a much more extreme manner than others do. These are usually the result of emotional reactions to events in their romantic, family, or social relationships.

The general idea is that there are some people whose arousal levels can increase much more quickly than that of most people. Their emotional reactions are often at a higher level, and it takes much longer for them to return to normal after an episode. These people commonly experience extreme emotional swings, they only see the world in black and white, tend to find themselves in an endless line of crises, and they spend most of their life jumping from one issue to another. In most cases, they have no means of coping with these sudden emotional outbursts and, therefore, can get no relief.

- Structured Individual Psychotherapy Sessions

In a weekly one-on-one session with the therapist, the emphasis is on addressing problem-solving behavior and issues that may have occurred in the previous week. With these types of patients, there could be issues that spring from suicidal tendencies or tendencies that lead to injuring themselves, and these will take priority. After that, they will address specific behaviors that could interrupt the therapy sessions.

The therapist focuses on teaching and reinforcing adaptive behavior with an emphasis on teaching them how to better manage their emotional trauma when it occurs rather than removing the negative experience entirely. The ultimate goal is to get patients to improve their social skills, so they have better relationships and can interact more successfully with others.

CONCLUSION

CBT is a well-known psychotherapy treatment that is notable for its positive results and feedback. It has helped thousands of individuals overcome different things and helps them regain control of their lives. It caters to different aspects of how a person responds to a certain situation or problem.

CBT is quite a complex and intricate method to understand. It is composed of several different aspects that should be understood before initiating the process. The three main parts of CBT are: thoughts, emotions and behaviors. These are all interconnected and can significantly impact one another.

Starting off with the chain, thoughts are one of the most crucial and important aspects where negative thoughts are present; they may lead to negative emotions that can also trigger negative behavior. With that being said, everything lies within what the individual's train of thought is and how they deal with it.

Emotions are also crucial since this greatly indicates what and how a person might feel. Behavior deals with how a person interprets their thoughts and emotions and how they want to handle as well as express themselves in any particular situation. In this chain, the behavior is mainly dependent on a person's thoughts and emotions. It deals with the cognitive aspect of a person as well as their behavior.

In terms of their train of thought, individuals will learn how to accept the current situation they're in and, instead of choosing to think about the negative thoughts and emotions, they learn how to focus more on the positive aspects in life. They try to see the silver lining in each situation and try to shed light on favorable emotions.

As for the behavioral aspect of CBT, it alters the way that different individuals react to various scenarios. When faced with a problem or situation, CBT allows them to take control of how they might behave and respond to it and lets them be a better person.

This book began with an explanation of why CBT is important, especially if you consider yourself a pessimistic thinker or have been struggling with negative feelings and self-destructive behaviors. I introduced CBT to you as an effective solution to your troubles and elaborated on its guiding principles, mainly: our thoughts control our emotions and behaviors.

I also discussed some useful tools of CBT, expounding the importance of journaling, mindfulness meditation, behavioral activation, and affirmations, as well as a guide on how to do them. There are also different ways CBT handles issues and helps with specific problems. The book was largely devoted to dealing with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), anxiety, depression, insomnia and panic disorders you also learned all about how to use CBT in treating them. There were several techniques discussed.

Once all the major areas of psychological distress and dysfunction CBT could resolve were already addressed, I also outlined a comprehensive 21-day, step-by-step guide on how to use different CBT techniques for dealing with more general problems. Some additional tips on how to continue improving your life even after your treatment process with CBT has ended were also

discussed.

Now with the knowledge at hand, you have no excuse but to seize the opportunities life has presented to you to change and continue on that journey to self-development and wellness, not just for yourself, but for the community at large. This is only a guide that points out various ways and does not confine you only to the information it relays. Go all out and do your research as well as consult and try out different new ideas.

With discipline and sheer determination, this book is just one of the many arrows in your quiver. Aiming for success using this arrow does not assure you of direct and quick success, but how you use it and the strategies you execute will determine your level of success.

As we wrap up, take a moment to consider how magnificent it is that you are treating yourself. The amount of personal power that it takes for you to recognize that you need support, and to have the willingness to step up and support yourself, and the amount of trust that you have placed in yourself and your ability are all admirable and prove that you are a strong, capable, and worthy individual. You can heal from your emotions, and if you remain dedicated, you will.

Life After Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

Now that you've learned all about CBT and successfully applied it to deal with your own personal difficulties, it's time to finally move on with your life. The hardest part is over, and what waits ahead for you is a brighter future.

Ending your therapy can be difficult, because often people just can't believe that it's over. While some feel a sense of fulfilment or emotional closure when they're done, others don't, which can make it harder to say goodbye. However, bear in mind that just because this journey is over doesn't mean you should forever close your door on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Problems are a natural part of life, and you can expect to apply everything you've learned here later in your future.

What's more, even if you don't have any problems to deal with at the moment, it's still good to practice some of these CBT techniques to take care of your mental health. So keep journaling, keep meditating. Always think before you act and be critical of your thoughts and emotions. Unlike a lot of life's endings, ending this journey that you've had with CBT shouldn't be a sad one, so be happy and keep all your learning with you as you move forward into the future.

DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

*The 4 DBT Skills to Overcome Anxiety by Learning How
to Manage Your Emotions. A Practical Guide
to Recovering from Borderline Personality Disorder*

INTRODUCTION

DBT works as a continuous relationship between clients and therapists. In this type of therapy, patients are encouraged to sort out their life problems in collaboration with their therapists. This demands that people role-play new methods of interacting with others, finish homework assignments, and rehearse skills like calming themselves when upset.

These skills form a crucial part of DBT and are taught to patients in weekly lectures and homework groups. In this way, individual therapists help their clients master the skills of DBT and apply them to their lives.

Four Stages of DBT

Treatment with DBT is commonly broken down into four levels. Clients are assigned to these levels based on the intensity of their behaviors. Therapists are instructed to follow the framework defined in these levels to help their clients. No specific timeframe has been allotted to these stages. The therapist and clients are allowed to take as much time as required, depending upon the client's target.

Level One

In level one, the patient is usually miserable and has lost control over themselves: they may be attempting to harm themselves, using drugs, or involving themselves in other self-destructive activities. When such clients start DBT, they may liken their experience to "being in hell."

The main goal of this stage is to help move the client from a state of no control to one in which they learn how to get a better hold of themselves.

Level Two

In level two, clients often feel like their lives are filled with desperation. They have control over their harmful behaviors, but they are still suffering, mostly due to invalidation or past trauma. This often continues to the extent that it disturbs their emotional experience.

The main goal of level two is to assist such people to get out of their state of desperation and to reinstate the emotional experience. The treatment for people suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) falls into this level.

Level Three

In this level, the aim is to motivate the patients to live, find happiness and peace, and build self-respect. The therapist enables the client to live a normal life with moments of both happiness and sadness.

Level Four

For some clients, an additional fourth level is required to familiarize them with the concept of spiritual existence. This stage has been created for clients whose life of happiness and sadness does not help them find peace or feel connected to the world.

The main goal of this stage is to assist the client in moving on from a feeling of incompleteness to a life which grants them the ability to enjoy the feeling of freedom and joy.

What Makes DBT Different?

The world is convinced that DBT can do wonders, but why is it that it continues to work even when gold-standard treatments like CBT have failed?

In simple words, DBT tends to fill in the gaps left behind by most other therapies, including CBT. For example, CBT emphasizes changing behaviors and thoughts to the extent that the clients can be appalled. Most therapies targeting

problems like stress, anxiety, PTSD, etc. do not encourage or support their clients to accept where they are right now. They invalidate people by using cognitive distortions as justification that their feelings are wrong. That's where DBT differs.

DBT Promotes Acceptance-Based Behaviors

Dialectical Behavior Therapy is a form of CBT, but what makes it more successful and unique is its emphasis on dialectical thinking and mindfulness. Instead of treating the symptoms as problems to be solved, this therapy puts equal focus on the acceptance of experiences by incorporating acceptance-based behaviors.

Dialectical thinking is a philosophical stance in which two truths or ideas, which seemingly oppose each other, exist at the same time. For example, a person coming for help may need to accept where they are right now as well as requiring motivation to change.

In simpler words, while DBT helps people promote feelings of acceptance, it makes them acknowledge that they have the capacity to create more positivity and do much better. This is something that can exclusively be achieved through DBT.

DBT Works with Emotions

DBT is a form of in-depth therapy that involves the process of learning cognitive and emotional skills and applying these skills to your life. It helps tackle distressing and difficult emotions and helps you improve your capacity for emotional regulation. By improving your emotional regulation, you are able to control and express your emotions in a much better way.

DBT Enhances Capabilities with Skills Training

What makes DBT different to other approaches is that it focuses on improving the capabilities of clients by teaching them different behavioral skills. Skills training is taught in a classroom setup. A group leader is assigned to every class, and their primary responsibility is to teach different skills through classroom activities, lectures, and take-home assignments.

This homework helps the client apply the skills they learn in class to their daily experiences. The groups meet every week for about 2.5 hours to discuss the happenings in their daily lives. To grasp the full curriculum, an average person requires 24 weeks. Sometimes, the program may be repeated to form a 1-year program.

Skills Training in DBT revolves around four different modules, each of which helps the client become stable in their lives. These modules include:

Mindfulness: This is the skill which helps you become aware and present in the current moment.

Distress Tolerance: This refers to the skill which helps you tolerate pain in tough conditions, instead of changing the situation.

Interpersonal Effectiveness: This refers to the skill of asking for whatever you need and learning to say no without compromising your self-respect and in your relationships.

Emotional Regulation: This refers to the skill of changing the emotions you wish to change.

But how does acquiring these skills help people?

Problematic behaviors occur as a way to manage a situation or resolve a difficult problem. While such behaviors provide a temporary solution or relief in the short term, they are rarely effective in the long run. DBT acknowledges this and assumes that patients are doing everything in their capacity, but at the same time, they need to acquire new behavioral patterns in relevant contexts.

DBT helps such clients develop behavioral skills in the following four areas: emotional regulation, distress tolerance, mindfulness, and interpersonal effectiveness. These skills help clients acquire useful ways to navigate situations occurring in everyday life, and help them tackle challenges.

DBT Enhances Motivation Through Individual Therapy

DBT is an individual form of therapy that is focused on improving the client's motivation and helping them apply learned skills to tackle specific events in their lives. It is a unique approach that helps them accept their flaws, yet motivates them to get up and do better instead of treating them like victims who need sympathy.

DBT Ensures Generalization

DBT includes telephone coaching and other types of coaching to provide clients with in-the-moment support. The goal is to coach them on how to use DBT skills to cope with hard situations as they arise.

Therapists are available all the time to guide clients through difficult situations, which is something that seldom occurs in other therapy sessions.

DBT Structures the Environment via Case Management

DBT incorporates case management strategies that help the client manage their own life, including their social and physical environments. Therapists apply the same validation, problem-solving, and dialectical strategies to enable the client to analyze their problems without any external help. This empowers them to manage their problems on their own with minimal

interference from a therapist unless absolutely necessary.

Thanks for downloading this book. It's my firm belief that it will provide you with all the answers to your questions.

CHAPTER 1

WHAT IS DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY?

Dialectical Behavior Therapy, or DBT, is a form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy that focuses on solving behavioral problems by incorporating dialectical processes and acceptance-based strategies. It is best suited to the needs of patients suffering from intense emotional distress that prevents them from experiencing a good quality of life.

DBT was developed by American psychology researcher and author, Marsha Linehan. She created the therapy as a result of her struggles with schizophrenia and suicidal thoughts at a young age. She was institutionalized for her mental illness until the age of 18.

Convinced that CBT left a gap that needed to be filled, Linehan developed DBT at the University of Washington years later. DBT consists of four key skill areas and main components: interpersonal skills training, distress tolerance, emotional regulation, and mindfulness training.

DBT treatment can be delivered in many ways, typically consisting of individual therapy sessions and/or DBT skills groups. For example, while some patients may complete individual therapy sessions without attending any skills group, others might opt for group sessions without individual therapy.

An individual therapy session consists of a one-on-one session with a DBT therapist. This ensures that the patient's therapeutic needs are attended to. Over the course of the treatment, the therapist will also help the patient apply DBT skills on a daily basis, appropriately address daily struggles that occur, and stay motivated.

DBT skills groups, on the other hand, encourage members to learn and practice skills with each other while they are led by a DBT therapist. Members provide mutual support and listen as others share their experiences.

Therapists in a group session teach skills and lead members in group exercises. Each member is assigned homework, which often involves practicing mindfulness exercises.

Group sessions are typically completed within six months. Weekly sessions are conducted with each one lasting around two hours. The exact length of each session depends on the needs of each member.

HOW DBT WORKS

To build a life worth living, which is the main goal of DBT, client and therapist first sit down and make plans. They then set their goals and expectations.

There are five components in a standard DBT treatment program: a) a skills group, b) individual therapy, c) skills coaching, d) case management, and e) a consultation team. This section will provide an overview of the standard program.

Led by a therapist group leader, group sessions for teaching and learning behavioral skills happen every week and last about 2.5 hours. They are run like a class, and homework assignments are given so that patients can practice their newfound skills.

Twenty-four weeks are required for the entire skills curriculum, and this can be repeated to create a 1-year program. Depending on the situation and the needs of the patients, a shorter subset of this curriculum can also be taught.

The Four Skills Modules in DBT

The purpose of this skills group training is to improve clients' capabilities so they can effectively deal with the problems and challenges that arise in their daily lives. They learn from these four skills modules:

1. Mindfulness (being aware of ourselves and the situation we're in),
2. Distress tolerance (learning how to tolerate our pain in tough situations),
3. Interpersonal effectiveness (learning both assertiveness and respect of other people), and
4. Emotion regulation (learning how to change our negative emotions).

Of these four skills modules, mindfulness and distress tolerance belong to the acceptance strategy of DBT; interpersonal effectiveness and emotion regulation belong to the change strategy.

Individual Therapy

The purpose of an individual psychotherapy session is to improve the motivation of each patient. Personal issues and struggles are talked about, with the therapist encouraging the patient in the light of DBT's focus on acceptance and change. Skills learned in group sessions are also reinforced. Furthermore, a real relationship of mutual help between therapist and patient is formed; the therapist becomes a true partner in the process, not just a teacher or observer.

Like with the skills group training, an individual therapy session happens every week and runs concurrently with it.

Skills Coaching

DBT patients can call their therapists at any time of the day, to ask for advice whenever problems arise. The goal of skills coaching is to train patients to practice and apply the skills they are learning in their lives.

Case Management

This is about helping patients manage their own lives. The therapist advises on the things to be done but intervenes only when necessary.

The Consultation Team

The therapists themselves are part of a consultation team, in which they are given support for the work they are doing. This way, they will stay motivated and competent. This kind of emotional support is especially needed for difficult cases.

Clients who choose to undergo Dialectical Behavior Therapy often have several behavioral problems to be treated, not just one. The therapist will then have to prioritize problems according to the following hierarchy: (1) threat to life, (2) interference to therapy, (3) interference to quality of life, and (4) the need to learn new skills. For example, suicidal thoughts of a patient will be dealt with first, before alcohol abuse.

Lastly, there are 3 to 4 stages of treatment for DBT. Stage 1 corresponds to the initial life of the patient being out of control. Stage 2 corresponds to continued silent suffering after some control has already been achieved. Stage 3 corresponds to the challenge of living life: setting goals, gaining self-respect, finding happiness. And Stage 4, which is needed only by some, corresponds to finding a deeper fulfillment and completeness through spirituality of some kind.

IS DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY REALLY EFFECTIVE?

So, does it really work? The answer is a resounding yes. DBT is a treatment based on evidence, and research has shown that it is indeed effective against the mental health illnesses it is used on, which are many. It is also found to be effective on people of diverse backgrounds (in terms of age, gender, sexual orientation, and race), and it's already been implemented in more than 25 countries.

DBT has also received recognition from official authorities, like the American Psychological Association.

CHAPTER 2

DBT APPLICATIONS

DBT is most effective for people who experience emotions very intensely. They tend to be easily overwhelmed by life and relational stressors to the point that they feel that their emotional responses are out of control. Consequently, they often act in an impulsive manner in an attempt to temporarily relieve some of their distress. However, their reactions over the long term tend to create additional problems.

DBT was initially used to help individuals who were diagnosed with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). This was and continues to be a very effective form of therapy to use with these individuals. However, in more recent years, DBT has also been very successfully used with other individuals who demonstrate severe mood swings and are unable to apply coping strategies to successfully deal with these intense and sudden emotional urges. Many of these people struggle with severe depression, PTSD, eating disorders, severe compulsory disorders, Bipolar Disorder, ADHD, anger management, and/or substance abuse. Many people who seek out DBT also engage in self-harm, as this therapy has been shown to be very effective in helping individuals with this level of emotional trouble.

In order to really understand more about the person who generally does well in DBT, let's take a look at the specific characteristics that many of these people share. People who do well with DBT usually have a high level of emotional vulnerability. What this means is that they are prone to experiencing emotions in a very reactive and intense way. Sometimes, they are just hardwired to feel emotions more intensely than the average person. In fact, DBT theory asserts that the automatic nervous system of an emotionally vulnerable person is predisposed to be reactive to relatively low levels of stress. Their nervous system also takes much longer to return to baseline levels when the stressor is removed. Additionally, some people have mood disorders such as major depression or generalized anxiety that is not being effectively controlled by medication, and that influence how intensely they experience their emotions. Consequently, emotionally vulnerable people tend to have quick, intense, emotional reactions that are difficult to control. This keeps them on a roller coaster ride throughout their lives.

However, clinicians have found that most emotionally vulnerable people who seek DBT treatment are not JUST hardwired to have more intense emotions or have mood disorders. Typically, they have also been exposed to invalidating environments for extensive periods of time. Such environments generally stem from early childhood, but could have occurred at any point. These environments did not provide them with the support, attention, respect, or understanding that they needed to properly work through their emotions. Invalidating environments can range from ones involving severe emotional or physical abuse to mismatched parent and child personalities. Consider the shy child who is born or adopted into a family full of extroverts, and who is constantly teased about his or her introverted personality. Or perhaps it's the child with ADHD who has a mother and stepfather who are inflexible and constantly yelling at them. These are both examples of environments that are invalidating. When the person who already has a predisposition to experience more extreme emotions is placed in an environment that does not support or validate their feelings, they can become even more emotionally vulnerable. They may then begin to demonstrate even greater emotional reactivity because they inadvertently learned that the only time they were taken seriously was when they demonstrated extremely emotional behavior.

Let's take the introverted child as an example, and let's say it's a boy. Say he was constantly told by his father that he had to "man up" and become more aggressive in his approach to life. He felt ridiculed and began to think that there was something wrong with him. So, one day when his father was addressing him, the boy began to cry uncontrollably. His father immediately

lightened up, and his mother came rushing to his aid, showering him with tons of attention. Then it happened again. And then again. An interesting thing began to happen. The young boy's unconscious mind began to see a pattern that looked like this: 'My dad harasses me, I cry uncontrollably, the hassling stops, I get lots of attention.' He began to do it more and more because it worked and each successful demonstration inadvertently reinforced the behavior. His emotional outbursts became validated, and then it ultimately becomes an ingrained coping skill.

The process described above unconsciously reinforced the child's emotional vulnerability, and you guessed it – made it worse. This is typically the pattern you see with people with Borderline Personality Disorder, Bipolar Disorder, eating disorders, and other disorders that DBT treats. The next section will give an overview of several of the disorders that are successfully treated with DBT.

Borderline Personality Disorder

People with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) experience emotions more intensely and for longer periods of time than other people. They are prone to frequent and chronic outbursts to the point that many mental health professionals have described this population as one that is experiencing an unrelenting crisis. They are nearly always in crisis mode as they have generally not learned the coping skills they need to better regulate their intense emotions.

Individuals with BPD are emotionally vulnerable, and it takes them much longer to return to baseline following an event. In addition, one of the patterns that therapists have described regarding people with BPD is their tendency to take on the same belief system as the invalidating environment that they are subjected to. This results in their own "self-invalidation," where they reject their own emotions and ability to solve problems. They also tend to develop unrealistic expectations for themselves and experience intense shame and anger when they fail to meet their goals or when difficulties arise.

Another defining characteristic of individuals with BPD is their tendency to make rigid and unrealistic demands of themselves and others. When things don't go as they planned or desire, they often resort to "blaming." Blaming is a thinking error that many people with BPD have. They blame everyone and everything for their problems and have trouble acknowledging the personal behavioral changes that need to be made in order to see different outcomes in their lifestyle.

Individuals with BPD have a poor sense of self and tend to struggle with interpersonal relationships. They tend to seek out individuals who will take control and solve their problems for them so that they can shrink back and not have to do so. However, they tend to wear the mask of competence so that others think that they are capable of solving their own problems and dealing with their intense emotions. Although they may have mastered certain areas of their life, they have not been successful at generalizing their competence in other areas.

Due to the lifestyle that most people with BPD have created, in combination with their difficulties in returning to baseline following an emotional event, they end up experiencing significant traumatic experiences on an ongoing basis. They also tend to avoid experiencing negative emotions altogether because they do not know how to regulate even healthy negative emotions. As a result, they do not know what to do when an emotional situation arises that they are unable to tolerate, which throws them into an intense and prolonged emotional state.

People with Borderline Personality Disorder sometimes engage in cutting or other self-harm and suicidal behavior to deal with the intense emotional pain. Emotional vulnerability is often seen in individuals who are suicidal or engage in chronic self-injury. The individual is highly emotionally reactive, and when exposed to very severe trauma such as physical or emotional abuse, they begin to think about suicide. Eventually, in an attempt to be relieved of the ongoing pain, they try to kill themselves and are taken to hospital. Here, they are given loads of attention, and for the first time, they begin to feel like they are being validated and taken seriously.

Consider the boy who engages in some type of self-injury, such as cutting or burning himself because he finds that it provides temporary relief. When someone else finds out that this is happening, people are suddenly taking him seriously. Similar to the experience of the first example, he is finally feeling validated.

What do you think happens in these two situations? Over time, the boys both continue to engage in these behaviors, because it is the only time they feel validated and supported. It becomes an ingrained coping skill.

Eating Disorders

An eating disorder is an illness whereby a person has eating habits that are considered irregular. However, the illness goes beyond simple disruption of food intake, as the person experiencing the eating disorder generally feels severe distress regarding their body weight and/or shape. In an attempt to regulate their appearance and feel better about themselves, people with eating disorders may begin to eat significantly less and become obsessed with exercise. This emotional and behavioral disturbance can occur in both sexes and generally has an extreme impact on the physical and emotional well-being of the person.

Although eating disorders can occur at any developmental stage, they typically emerge during adolescence or early adulthood and often coexist with other psychological and behavioral conditions such as substance abuse, mood disorders, and anxiety disorders. The three most common types of eating disorders are discussed below.

Anorexia Nervosa

An individual who experiences anorexia nervosa usually demonstrates a strong obsession with their weight. Due to their poor and unrealistic perceptions of body image, they are fearful of gaining weight and often refuse to maintain a weight that is healthy. Many people who struggle with this disorder limit the amount of food they eat to the point that their caloric intake cannot sustain their health. Even when they are visibly underweight and their appearance begins to generate concern in others, they continue to view themselves as overweight. Anorexia can lead to major health issues such as infertility, heart problems, organ failure, brain damage, and bone loss. People with this disease have a high risk of death.

Bulimia Nervosa

Individuals who struggle with bulimia generally fear being overweight and are very unhappy with the appearance of their body. This disorder is characterized by the cycle of binge eating followed by overcompensation for the binge eating. For example, a person may sit and eat excessive amounts of food in one sitting and then follow the eating with forced vomiting, excessive exercise, extreme use of laxatives and diuretics, or any combination of these compensatory behaviors. The cycle is done in secret as they generally harbor a lot of shame, guilt, and lack of self-control. Bulimia can also lead to health problems such as gastrointestinal problems, dehydration, and heart issues that result from an imbalance of electrolytes caused by the eating-purging cycle.

Binge Eating Disorder

Individuals who struggle with binge eating often lose control of their eating but do not engage in the purging process as with bulimia. Consequently, many people who experience binge eating may also have the corresponding disorder of obesity, which increases health-related problems such as heart disease. As with individuals with other eating disorders, individuals who battle this disorder often have feelings of intense shame, guilt, embarrassment, and feelings of loss of control.

It is believed that the development of eating disorders is multifaceted, as the disorders are generally quite complex. Some of the things that contribute to the emergence of an eating disorder include biological, psychological, and of course, environmental factors. These factors include:

- Biological factors such as irregular hormone functions and a genetic predisposition

- Nutritional deficiencies

- Psychological factors such as a negative body image and poor self-esteem

- Environmental factors such as a dysfunctional family unit

- Professions and careers that promote excessive thinness – like modeling

- Sports that promote thinness for performance such as gymnastics, wrestling, long-distance running, and others

- Sexual abuse in childhood

- Family, peer, and media pressure to be thin

- Transitions and life changes

Here are some of the signs and symptoms that someone may exhibit when struggling with an eating disorder:

- Chronic and excessive dieting even when underweight

- Obsession with caloric intake and the fat content of food

- Demonstrating eating patterns that are ritualistic. These rituals might include behaviors like eating alone, breaking food into small pieces, and hiding food for later consumption

- A fixation on food. Some individuals with eating disorders may prepare delicious complex meals for other people but refuse to eat the meal.

- People with eating disorders may also suffer from depression or lethargy

Although DBT has been shown to be very successful in treating individuals with eating disorders, they may need additional support in the early stages of treatment. Additional support may include being monitored by a physician to address any health issues that may have developed as well as working with a nutritionist until weight is stabilized. Often, the nutritionist will develop an individualized meal plan to help individuals return to a healthy weight.

Bipolar Disorder

This is also often referred to as Manic Depressive Disorder because of the individual's tendency to vacillate between manic episodes and more depressive states. This disorder is characterized by unusual and extreme changes in activity levels, energy levels, mood, and the ability to perform daily tasks. The symptoms are not the same as normal mood fluctuations, as they are severe and generally quite extreme to the point that individuals may damage relationships, jeopardize performance at work and school, and even contemplate suicide.

Like most psychological disorders, there is generally no single cause for Bipolar Disorder. It is often an illness that develops from a combination of biological and environmental factors. Many factors act together to produce the illness or increase the

risk of the illness manifesting.

Genetics seems to play a role in the emergence of Bipolar Disorder as research has identified some genes that are more likely to influence the development of the disorder. Other research has shown that children from particular families or those who have a sibling with the disorder are more likely to develop the disorder themselves.

However, research has also shown that environmental factors play a strong role in its emergence. In identical twin studies where siblings share the same exact genetic makeup, when one twin develops the disorder, the other twin does not always. This indicates that something other than genetics is at work, which points to environmental triggers.

Individuals with this condition experience strong emotional states known as “mood episodes.” Each episode can last for days or months. Each episode reflects an extreme change in presentation from the person’s normal behavior. An exceedingly joyful, ecstatic state that is full of increased activity is typically the “manic” episode. The sad, dysphoric, hopeless, and sometimes irritable and explosive state is the “depressive” episode. A “mixed state” is when behavior characteristics of both a manic and depressive episode are present at the same time.

Here are some symptoms that are characteristic of Bipolar Disorder:

The manic episode includes symptoms such as:

Feeling “high” for a long period, demonstrated by an excessively happy mood

Fast-talking and hopping from one idea to another. This is reflective of running thoughts.

Being easily distracted

Excessive activity level and taking on many new projects

Restlessness

Limited sleep

Unrealistic thoughts about what one can do

Impulsiveness and preoccupation with pleasurable and risky activities

The characteristics of a depressive episode include:

Long periods of extreme irritability

Long periods of sadness or hopelessness

Losing interest in events that a person once loved

Tiredness and feeling sluggish

Difficulties remembering, concentrating, and decision making

Change in eating, sleeping, and other habits

Suicidal ideation, gestures, and/or suicidal attempts may also be present

Bipolar Disorder can occur even when a person’s mood swings are low. For example, hypomania, which is not severe, is experienced by some individuals with Bipolar Disorder. The individual may feel good during a hypomanic episode and is even highly productive. However, though they are functioning well, their friends and family note the significant difference in mood. The mood change is so remarkable that family and friends may wonder if symptoms of Bipolar Disorder are present. Hypomania may easily become full mania or symptoms of Bipolar Disorder may occur if a person does not get proper treatment.

As previously mentioned, Bipolar Disorder can be present in a mixed state. This is when a person experiences both depression and mania simultaneously. In a mixed state, one may feel very disturbed, experience sleep disruption, lose their appetite, and may even think of committing suicide. Individuals in this state may have a feeling of being hopeless or sad while still feeling extremely energized.

When experiencing a severe episode of depression or mania, an individual can experience psychotic symptoms such as delusions or hallucinations, as well. The psychotic signs tend to show and strengthen the extreme mood of an individual. For instance, if a person has psychotic signs in a manic episode, he may believe that he is the president of a country, has vast wealth, or has some kind of special power. Psychotic signs in a depressive episode might include believing that she is homeless, ruined, penniless, or a criminal on the run. Unfortunately, sometimes individuals with this condition are misdiagnosed with schizophrenia or another reality testing disorder because of their mood-induced hallucinations.

Individuals with Bipolar Disorder also often have the co-occurring disorder of polysubstance abuse or dependence. Anxiety disorders, such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and phobias, also co-occur quite often. Bipolar Disorder also sometimes co-occurs with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). People with Bipolar Disorder also have a higher likelihood of diabetes, headaches, thyroid disease, heart disease, migraine obesity, and other physical sicknesses.

Bipolar Disorder usually begins to develop in the late teenage years or during early adulthood. However, some people have their first symptoms during childhood, while others may develop symptoms later on in life. At least half of all cases start before the age of 25.

Types of Bipolar Disorder are as follows:

- Bipolar I Disorder
- Bipolar II Disorder
- Bipolar Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (BP-NOS)
- Cyclothymic Disorder or Cyclothymia

If not diagnosed and treated, the bipolar condition can become worse. It becomes severe as episodes become frequent. This delay can result in the person demonstrating behavior that significantly impacts relationships, personal goals, finances, housing, work, school, and many other areas. DBT has been known to help individuals with this condition lead healthier and more productive lives. Many times, DBT has helped individuals decrease the episodes' severity and frequency.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

The body has a built-in and naturally occurring mechanism that makes individuals seek to escape danger. This mechanism is known as the fight-or-flight response. When your brain receives the signal that there is imminent danger, your body goes into an automatic response mode. You naturally begin to feel afraid and your body gears up to either flee the situation to get to safety or to fight to ensure your self-preservation and survival. Your fear of dangerous situations triggers many split-second and unconscious changes in the body that prepares you to either flee or fight in a particular situation. This is a natural process that is biologically incorporated to help people protect themselves from harm. However, in certain individuals, repeated exposure to trauma, or exposure to one extremely high-level traumatic experience causes this normal "fight-or-flight" response to go haywire. When this process is damaged, and individuals become stressed or frightened even when they are no longer in danger, this is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

PTSD generally occurs after someone experiences a terrifying and/or life-threatening ordeal. The ordeal usually involves some type of actual physical harm or threat of physical harm. The harm or threat to harm may have involved the person themselves, a loved one, or the person may have witnessed a harmful event that happened to someone else or a group of other people. Some examples of situations that can cause PTSD are:

- War
- Rape or sexual abuse
- Terrorism
- Robbery
- Train wrecks
- Car accidents
- Plane crashes
- Natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and tornadoes
- Childhood physical abuse
- Domestic violence
- Hostage situations
- Torture
- Bombings
- Any other very traumatic event

PTSD is caused by a combination of genetic and environmental features. The way that a specific individual is biologically wired to deal with fear sensations and memories has a lot to do with the development of PTSD. People who are more emotionally vulnerable to fear due to their brain chemistry are more likely to develop PTSD.

Environmental factors also play a significant role in the emergence of PTSD. Environmental factors such as trauma that occurred in childhood, head injuries, or a personal history of mental illness may also increase a person's risk of developing the disorder. Also, personality and cognitive factors such as thinking errors, ability to tolerate distress, pessimism, and other cognitive-related factors increase risk. Similarly, social factors such as the availability of a support system help people adjust to trauma and may help them avoid the experience of PTSD.

PTSD Symptoms

PTSD symptoms are categorized into three groups:

1. Re-experiencing symptoms

Flashbacks.

Nightmares about the event.

Frightening thoughts that are intrusive and persistent. They pop up out of seemingly nowhere, and they are hard to get rid

of.

Obviously, re-experiencing symptoms can be very disruptive to day to day functioning. They may cause problems in a person's everyday routine and interpersonal relationships.

1. Avoidance symptoms

These symptoms are demonstrated when a person avoids anything that reminds them of the traumatic incident. They stay away because going near them triggers an out of control emotional response.

Feeling emotionally numb is also an avoidant type of symptom. Rather than risk feeling an intense negative emotion, they feel emotionally numb. They avoid any emotional experience at all in an attempt to avoid negative feelings.

Victims feeling strong worry, depression, or guilt without really knowing why is another example of an avoidant symptom. Rather than deal with the response to the incident directly, people with PTSD may have more generalized negative feelings. Victims may experience a loss of interest in activities they previously loved. Avoidance of all pleasurable activity is characteristic of PTSD.

Difficulties in remembering the dangerous incident are also common. Rather than deal with what happened, sometimes it's easier to just stuff the whole experience into the subconscious. This is an example of avoidance.

Change in routine is also avoidant in nature. Sometimes, people with PTSD will purposefully change their routines so they don't have to worry about dealing with a trigger. An example of this would be if a person avoids driving a car after a life-threatening car accident. This was very common after 9-11 when many people refused to get on airplanes after the terrorist attack.

1. Hyperarousal symptoms

People recovering from PTSD are often easily startled, and they may feel tense more frequently than before the traumatic event.

Their automatic nervous system is more active, so they experience troubles in sleeping and managing their anger. Angry outbursts may occur frequently.

It should be noted that hyperarousal symptoms are usually constant and are present even without a specific trigger.

It's completely natural for someone to experience one or even several of these symptoms after being involved in an event that is traumatic.

Keep in mind that children and teenagers may present differently when they are experiencing PTSD. In young kids, you may see:

- Reverting back to bedwetting after they have been potty trained

- Not talking after reaching a verbal developmental stage

- Reenactment of the traumatizing event when playing

In older children or adolescents, you may see symptoms that are more consistent with adult symptoms. However, you may also see an increase in disrespectful and explosive behavior. They can also become preoccupied with getting revenge or feel guilty for not doing more to prevent the event or the injuries that occurred in response to the event.

PTSD can happen at any age. Females have a higher risk of developing PTSD, and there seems to be a significant genetic link. Not all people who live through a risky event develop this condition.

There are several factors that determine if an individual will develop PTSD. Factors that increase the probability an individual getting PTSD are called risk factors. Factors that lower a person's chances of getting PTSD are called resilience factors. Some of these risk and resilience factors are present before the trauma, while others develop during or after a traumatic event.

Resilience factors for PTSD include:

- Access to an adequate support system following a trauma

- Having an effective coping strategy

- Feeling good about individual actions when there's trouble

- Therapy or counseling that addresses adjustment post-trauma

Risk factors for PTSD include:

- Experiencing a trauma

- Personal history of mental illness

- Physical injury

- Witnessing people getting killed or hurt

- Inadequate or lack of social support after an incident

- Loss of a home, job or a loved one

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

This is a psychological disorder that has the potential to be quite disabling if left untreated. It traps people into a relentless and never-ending series of behaviors and thoughts that are repetitive. They become overwhelmed with thoughts, fears, and images that they cannot control. So, they instead obsess about them continuously. These endless and negative thoughts produce anxiety that causes these individuals to feel an urgent and immediate need to engage in certain rituals, routines, or safety-seeking behavior. These compulsive behaviors are the person's way of trying to eliminate the anxiety that comes with obsessive and ruminating thoughts.

Although the ritualistic behavior generally does temporarily alleviate the anxiety, it becomes a chronic problem because the person must carry out the ritual again when the obsessive thoughts come back. This OCD cycle can really begin to impact the person's relationships and even personal health. It is not uncommon for a person with OCD to take up hours of their time that they would normally be using to engage in normal activities to complete the ritualistic tasks. People with OCD are often aware of their behavior, and they know that their rituals are unrealistic and problematic, but they cannot stop them.

Common obsessions include:

- Fear of dirt

- Fear of causing harm to others

- Fear of making a mistake

- Fear of being embarrassed

- Fear of behaving in a socially unacceptable manner

- Fear of thinking thoughts that are sinful or evil

- Excessive doubt and the need for constant reassurance

Common compulsions include:

- Repeating specific prayers, phrases, or words

- Washing hands, showering or bathing repeatedly

- Eating in a certain order

- Having to do errands a certain number of times

- Declining to touch doorknobs or shake hands

- Hoarding

While it is not entirely known what causes OCD, research has indicated that a mixture of environmental and biological factors is involved, consistent with most other mental and behavioral health disorders.

Biological Factors

It is thought by researchers that OCD comes from problems in the pathways that link the parts of the brain that deal with planning and judgment with the part responsible for filtering body movement messages. Moreover, some evidence shows that OCD is passed to children from their parents.

Environmental Factors

Environmental stressors can cause OCD in some individuals. Other factors may make the symptoms worse. Some of these are:

- Abuse

- Moving house

- Sickness

- Work changes

- Death of someone close

- School problems

- Relationship concerns

A recent statistic indicated that 1 million children and adolescents, and 3.3 million adults, are affected by OCD in the United States. This disorder responds well to therapies such as CBT and DBT.

Severe Major Depression

Almost everyone has experienced some level of sadness in their life. Sadness is a normal emotional response to bad situations. However, when sadness becomes so pronounced that it interferes with daily performance and activities, help may be needed.

Major depression or clinical depression is characterized by a depressed mood that is prevalent throughout the day and can be particularly prevalent in the morning. The disorder is characterized by a lack of interest in relationships and normal chores and symptoms are present every day for at least 2 weeks.

Here are the typical symptoms of major depression:

- Fatigue
- Indecisiveness
- Feeling guilty
- Reduced concentration
- Insomnia or hypersomnia
- Sluggishness or restlessness
- Recurring thoughts of death or suicide
- Weight gain or loss

Major depression affects almost 10% of the US population over the age of 18. Some statistics indicate that between 20% and 25% of all US adults suffer an episode of major depression at some point during their lifetime. Major depression also affects elderly adults, teenagers, and children, but unfortunately, the disorder often goes undiagnosed and untreated in these populations.

Almost twice as many women as men have been diagnosed with major or clinical depression, which means that more women than men will likely be in treatment. Hormonal changes, pregnancy, miscarriage, and menopause may also increase the risk. Other factors that boost the risk of clinical depression in women who are biologically vulnerable include environmental stressors such as increased stress at home or work, balancing family life with career, and caring for an aging parent. Being a single parent has also been shown to increase the risk of depression.

It is believed that one of the reasons that women outnumber men diagnosed with major depression is because men are less likely to report symptoms. In fact, major depression in men is extremely underreported. Unfortunately, men who suffer from clinical depression are less likely to seek help or even talk about their experience.

Signs of depression in men may be a little different than in women. Here's what you can expect to see:

- Increased irritability and anger
- Substance abuse
- Violent behavior directed both inwardly and outwardly (due to repressed feelings)
- Reckless behavior
- Deterioration of health
- Increase risk of suicide and homicide

Here are triggers that are common:

Grief from losing a loved one through separation, divorce, or death

Major life changes such as moving, graduating, job change, promotion, retirement, and having children

- Being isolated socially
- Relationship conflict with a partner or supervisor
- Divorce
- Emotional, sexual, or physical abuse

Individuals who experience the various disorders described in this section experience extreme difficulty regulating their emotions. In addition, there is generally a social component that contributes to the manifestation of the disorder. DBT takes the psychosocial components that traditional CBT therapies take into consideration with the intention of helping individuals learn how to manage their out-of-control emotions and behaviors. As you will see in the following chapters, two of the models of DBT emphasize acceptance while two of them emphasize change so that the individual feels both validated and motivated to make the necessary behavioral changes.

CHAPTER 3

WHY MINDFULNESS IS A SUPERPOWER



Mindfulness is having a wise mind and being present in the moment. There are many facets to being mindful. It consists of observing, describing, and participating in the present moment. What does it mean to do these things? It means not to let your mind wander. Bring it back to the present moment.

Even if you don't have BPD, or any diagnosed mental illness, learning mindfulness and learning how to live in the present without worrying about the future or the past is a useful skill for anyone.

Mindfulness is a basic psychotherapy technique used to treat anxiety, anger, depression, and other psychological problems. While it has its roots in the mysticism of eastern cultures, western science has studied the subject a great deal. Psychotherapists even recommend mindfulness meditation for individuals who are suffering from certain mental health

problems. Developing mindfulness is a crucial part of CBT, as well as DBT and ACT (Acceptance and Commitment Therapy). In fact, it is one of the four skills modules in DBT.

Basically, mindfulness is the state of mind that can be achieved by focusing our awareness on what is happening in the present. It also involves the calm acceptance of our feelings, sensations, and thoughts.

The challenge of focusing on the present may seem trivial for some, but this is actually easier said than done. Our mind may wander away, we lose touch with the present moment, and we may even be absorbed into obsessive thoughts about the things that have happened in the past or worry about the future. But regardless of how far our mind drifts from the present, we can use mindfulness to immediately get us back to what we are presently doing or feeling.

Even though it is natural for us to be mindful anytime we want, we can further cultivate mindfulness through effective ACT techniques that you will learn later on.

Mindfulness is usually linked with meditation. While meditation is an effective way to achieve mindfulness, there's more to it. Mindfulness is a form of being present, which you can use any time. It is a form of consciousness that you can achieve if you intentionally focus on the present moment without any judgment.

ELEMENTS OF MINDFULNESS

Attention and attitude are the two primary elements of mindfulness.

Attention

Many of us suffer from what is known as “monkey mind,” whereby the mind behaves like a monkey swinging from one branch to another. Our mind may swing away and back again, and we usually don't have any idea how we ended up thinking about something.

The monkey mind usually dwells in the past, ruminating on what has happened or what you think would have happened if you had acted differently. It also swings away to the future, being anxious about what could happen. Nourishing the monkey mind will steal away the experience of the present moment.

Remember, mindfulness is focusing your attention on what is happening now.

Attitude

Suspending judgment and kindness are the basic tenets of mindfulness. Hence, a genuinely mindful person knows how to accept reality and doesn't engage in arguing with it. This may seem an easy task, but once you begin practicing mindfulness, you will become aware of how frequently we judge ourselves and our thoughts.

Here are some examples of sentences used in the judgment of ourselves and others:

I'm not good at this task.

My shirt looks lame.

I don't like my home.

I really don't like my neighbor.

What a grumpy waitress.

Mindfulness is also the art of calming our inner judge. It allows us to erase our internal expectations and become more embracing of how things are in the present moment. But take note that this doesn't mean you don't need to make necessary changes.

Remember, you are only suspending your judgment so you can have more time to think about the situation and do something about it. The main difference is that you can make changes from an ideal state of mind for change and not during times that you are influenced by tension or stress.

Moreover, mindfulness will allow you to be more compassionate with yourself, more embracing of your experience, and more caring of the people around you. It will also allow you to be more patient and non-judgmental if you have some lapses. As you practice mindfulness, you can reshape your brain to become kinder and more compassionate.

HOW MINDFULNESS CAN RESHAPE YOUR BRAIN

In the past, people believed that the human brain could only develop to a certain level, usually from early childhood to adolescence. But various studies have revealed that our brain has the capacity to reorganize itself through forming neural connections. This is known as neuroplasticity, and it has no virtually no limits.

Neuroscientists shattered the old belief that the human brain is an unchanging, static organ. They discovered that despite age, disease, or injury, the human brain can compensate for any damage by restructuring itself. To put it simply, our brain is capable of repairing itself.

Studies also support the idea that mindfulness can significantly help in the brain's development. It specifically helps in the process of neuroplasticity. It is really amazing to know that we can change our emotions, feelings, and thought processes through neuroplasticity and mindfulness.

There are three major studies that show how mindfulness can rewire the human brain through neuroplasticity.

Mindfulness Can Improve Memory, Learning, and Other Cognitive Functions

Even though mindfulness meditation is linked with a sense of physical relaxation and calmness, practitioners claim the practice can also help in learning and memory.

Sara Lazar, a professor at Harvard University Medical School, pioneered an 8-week meditation program that primarily uses mindfulness. With her team of researchers from Massachusetts General Hospital, she conducted the program to explore the connection between mindfulness and the improvement of cognitive functions.

The program was composed of weekly meditation sessions as well as audio recordings for the 16 volunteers who practiced meditation alone. On average, the participants practiced meditation for around 27 minutes. The underlying concept of mindfulness meditation for research was on achieving a state of mind in which the participants suspend their judgment and just focus on feeling sensations.

Later, the team used Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) to capture images of the brain structure of the participants. A group of individuals who were not meditating (the control group) were also asked for an MRI scan.

The researchers were amazed by the result. Primarily, the study participants revealed that they experienced significant cognitive advantages that were proven in their responses in the mindfulness survey. On top of that, researchers also noted measurable physical differences in the density of the gray matter as supported by MRI scan.

The gray-matter density in the amygdala, the area of the brain responsible for stress and anxiety, was decreased.

There were significant changes in the brain areas responsible for self-awareness, introspection, and compassion.

The gray-matter density in the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for memory and learning, was increased.

This Harvard study reveals that neuroplasticity, through practicing meditation, can play an active role in the development of our brain. It is exciting to know that we can do something every day to improve our quality of life and general well-being.

Mindfulness Can Help Combat Depression

Millions of people around the world suffer from depression. For example, in the US, there are about 19 million people who are seeking medication to combat depression. This is around 10% of the whole US population.

Dr. Zindel Segal, a Psychiatry Professor at the University of Toronto, used a research grant from the MacArthur Foundation to explore the advantages of mindfulness towards alleviating depression. The research, that was mainly focused on the administration of mindfulness-based stress reduction sessions, was considered a success, and he conducted follow-up research to study the effectiveness of mindfulness meditation in patients afflicted by depression. This has resulted in the establishment of Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy or MBCT.

The study involved patients suffering from depression, with 8 out of 10 having experienced at least three episodes of depression. Following the stress reduction sessions, around 30% of participants who experienced at least three episodes of depression did not relapse for more than a year, in comparison to those who followed prescribed other therapies such as antidepressants.

Segal's study has become a precursor to studies sponsored by Oxford and Cambridge Universities in the United Kingdom, with both studies generating similar outcomes. The research has proved significantly valuable in using mindfulness meditation as an effective and healthier alternative to medication in the UK, and has convinced mental health practitioners to prescribe mindfulness meditation to their patients.

Mindfulness meditation and research studies on MBCT are gradually gaining a foothold within medical and scientific circles in the US and other parts of the globe.

Mindfulness Can Help in Stress Relief

A study conducted at Carnegie Mellon University has revealed that the practice of mindfulness, even for 25 minutes a day, can alleviate stress. The study, led by Prof. David Creswell, involved 66 participants aged between 18 and 30 years.

One group of study subjects was asked to undergo a short meditation session composed of 25 minutes of mindfulness for three days. This group was asked to do some exercises designed to get them to concentrate on their breathing while turning their focus to the present moment. The second group used the same time to assess poetry readings to improve their problem-solving skills.

During the evaluation phase, all the participants were asked to complete math and speech tasks in front of evaluators who were asked to look stern. All participants reported their stress levels increased and were asked for saliva samples to measure the levels of the stress hormone cortisol.

The group who was asked to practice mindfulness meditation for at least 25 minutes for three days reported less stress during the task, showing that practicing mindfulness even in the short term can increase the body's ability to handle stress.

It is interesting to note that the same group showed higher levels of the stress hormone, which was not expected by the researchers.

The research concluded that when participants learn mindfulness meditation, they have to actively work on the process – particularly in a stressful situation. The cognitive task may feel less stressful for the individual, despite an elevated cortisol level.

The team is now focusing on automating the mindfulness sessions to make it less stressful while reducing cortisol levels. But it is clear that even in the initial phases, short-term meditation can do a great deal in relieving stress.

OTHER BENEFITS OF MINDFULNESS

Aside from the benefits described above, mindfulness meditation provides great benefits for our emotional, mental, and physical health.

Emotional Benefits

Mindfulness allows us to be more compassionate. Those who practice mindfulness meditation show changes in specific areas of the brain that are associated with empathy.

Mindfulness meditation decreases our reactivity to our emotions. A study conducted in the Massachusetts General Hospital revealed that mindfulness reduces the size of the amygdala, which is responsible for fear, anxiety, and aggression.

Mindfulness meditation can help us avoid negative thoughts, which our brain usually resorts to once left on its own.

In 2007, a study was conducted among students who were taught meditation strategies. It revealed that mindfulness helped the students increase their focus and decrease self-doubt, anxiety, and depression. There was also a notable decrease in suspensions and absenteeism in schools where mindfulness sessions were encouraged.

Mindfulness is also now used to ease symptoms of anxiety and depression. Many psychotherapists now prescribe mindfulness meditation for patients who are suffering from depressive episodes.

Mental Health Benefits

A study published in the *Journal of Psychological Science* revealed that students who practiced meditation before taking an exam got better results compared to students who did not. The study discovered a link between mindfulness and better cognitive function.

Mindfulness increases the activity in the anterior cingulate, which is the part of the brain responsible for memory, learning, and emotional regulation. It also increases activity in the prefrontal cortex that is responsible for judgment and planning.

Mindfulness is linked to improved concentration and longer attention span.

Mindfulness meditation also increases the brain's neural connections and has been proven to fortify myelin, which is the protective tissue that surrounds the neurons responsible for transmitting signals in the brain.

Physical Benefits

Deep breathing can deactivate our sympathetic nervous system, which is responsible for our fight or flight response. It also activates the parasympathetic nervous system that is responsible for our rest and digest mode.

Mindfulness decreases the level of cortisol in the body. This stress hormone increases levels of stress and encourages hypertension.

In one study, participants who practiced mindfulness meditation reduced their risk of heart attack by more than five years and also reduced their blood pressure.

Mindfulness allows our mind to become aware of what we eat and has been used for weight loss programs.

Mindfulness is also responsible for increasing telomerase, which is believed to help in the decrease of cell damage.

Mindfulness meditation has been shown to increase the production of antibodies that combat the flu virus. This shows that meditation can help boost our immune system.

WHAT MINDFULNESS TRULY MEANS

Mindfulness means being aware of the things happening right this very moment in both our immediate surroundings and in ourselves — our thoughts, our emotions, our physical sensations, and our behaviors. The purpose of this awareness is to prevent us from being controlled by these events. This awareness must be nonjudgmental and passing, that is, we focus only on the facts and accept them, avoiding our own evaluations or opinions, and then we let them go.

Suppose your boss has severely criticized you about the work you've done. You know that you do not deserve it – both the criticism and the way it was delivered, and so you become very angry.

However, instead of letting your emotions dictate your response, you take a step back and mindfully think about the situation. You say to yourself something like this, 'My boss is under a lot of pressure right now, cranky and easily angered. His criticism of me was unfair. I did not deserve it, and so I got furious.' And then you move on.

There are different psychotherapy skills associated with mindfulness, and the above example is only one application of

them. Those who are learning these skills complete exercises, like meditation and mindful walking. But from this example alone, we can now easily understand and appreciate the benefits of mindfulness.

THREE STATES OF MIND

There is what is called the Wise Mind, which is one of the three states of our mind. This is the balance between our Reasonable Mind (when we act and behave based solely on facts and reason) and our Emotion Mind (when our thoughts and actions are dictated by our feelings). When we are using our Wise Mind — the wisdom in each one of us — we recognize and acknowledge our feelings, but we respond to them rationally.

The Wise Mind, or the practice of using our wisdom, is actually the first of the mindfulness skills. As illustrated in the example above, mindfulness helps us manage and control ourselves, especially in sudden and emotionally-intense situations, where we are more likely to react with our Emotion Mind. This benefit alone has many positive consequences in the long run — better relationships, more self-esteem and self-respect, better responses to unexpected crises, and lesser symptoms of anxiety and depression.

More importantly, when we are mindful, we also get to experience life more fully.

Mindfulness skills also train our minds, so we get the added benefits of improved memory, sharper focus, and faster mental processing. Our anxiety is also reduced, and we gain more control over our thoughts.

THE CORE MINDFULNESS SKILLS

And so, what exactly are these mindfulness skills? They are divided into three groups: Wise Mind, the “what” skills, and the “how” skills.

Wise Mind

As explained above, this is the middle state between our Reasonable Mind and Emotion Mind, where we recognize both our reason and emotions, and act accordingly.

The “What” Skills

These skills are in answer to the question, “What are the things you must do to practice mindfulness?” The answers are (1) observe, (2) describe, and (3) participate.

Observe

To observe is nothing more than to experience and be aware of our surroundings, our thoughts, our feelings, and the sensations we’re receiving. This is stepping back and looking at ourselves, especially for reorientation when we are too preoccupied with our problems.

Describe

To describe is to put words to our present experiences — acknowledging what we feel, think, or do — and using only the facts to do it, without our own opinions. For example, we say to ourselves, “My stomach feels hungry,” or “I’m thinking about my mother.” Doing this lessens distraction and helps our focus.

Participate

To participate is to give ourselves fully to what we are doing at the moment (eating, talking, or feeling satisfied). We forget ourselves in it, and we act spontaneously.

The “How” Skills

These skills, on the other hand, answer the question, “How are you going to practice mindfulness?” The answers are: (1) non-judgmentally, (2) one-mindfully, and (3) effectively.

Non-judgmentally. A non-judgmental stance sees only the facts without evaluating, and without personal opinion. We accept each moment as it is, including our circumstances and what we see in ourselves: our thoughts, our feelings, our values, etc.

One-mindfully. Practicing mindfulness one-mindfully is doing only one thing at a time, and giving it all of our attention — whether that be dancing, walking, sitting, talking, thinking. This is about maintaining our focus and increasing our concentration.

Effectively. Practicing mindfulness effectively is keeping our goals in mind, and doing what is needed to accomplish them. We do our best, and we do not let our emotions get in the way.

These core mindfulness skills are central to Dialectical Behavior Therapy, and they support all the other skills. They are called “core” mindfulness skills because there are a few other skills or perspectives on mindfulness that are less commonly practiced. We will not talk about them in detail, but among these other perspectives is one taken from a spiritual point of view,

designed for those who need further help in mindfulness in light of their spirituality.

MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

Now that we know the skills, it is time to apply them to exercises so that we can see them in action. The following is a small sample from the wealth of mindfulness exercises that have already been developed for DBT.

Meditation

To observe the present moment — in a nonjudgmental way — is the purpose of meditation.

To practice meditation, find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. The goal is daily meditation of at least 30 minutes. For beginners, 10 minutes is advised.

Sit on a chair or a cushion on the floor. Sit with your back comfortably straight, with your arms at your side, and your palms on top of your thighs.

Then bring your attention to your breathing — pay close attention to your inhalation, exhalation, and the sounds they make. Try to do this for the entire duration. Your breathing is what you are using to ground yourself in the present moment.

However, your mind will soon wander, and that is all right. Simply acknowledge your thoughts without judgment, and then return your attention to your breathing.

You may also experience some uneasy feelings while meditating, and that is all right too. Again, simply acknowledge your feelings without judgment, and then return your attention to your breathing.

Do this again and again, always returning to your breathing whenever you are distracted, until the time is up.

Mindful Walking

Mindful walking is simply practicing mindfulness while walking, to observe one's own physical body and surroundings.

First, take note of how your body moves and how it feels as you take your steps. Notice the pressure on your feet, and the aches in your joints if there are any. Notice the increased rate of your heartbeat.

Then, expand your awareness to what is around you. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? Do you feel the wind or the heat of the sun on your skin?

Five Senses

This is about using your five senses to observe your present moment. Notice at least one thing that you see, feel, hear, smell, or taste.

Mindful Breathing

You can do this mindfulness exercise sitting down or standing. If the time and place allow you to sit in a lotus position, do it, if not, no problem. You just need to ensure that you are focused on your breathing for at least 60 seconds.

Begin by slowly breathing in and breathing out. One cycle of breathing must last for about six seconds.

Remember to inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth. Allow your breathing to flow without any struggle.

While doing this exercise, make sure that you can let go of your thoughts. Also, learn to let go of the things that you have to complete today or pending projects that require your attention. Let your thoughts flow their own way and focus on your breathing.

Be aware of your breathing, concentrating on your consciousness as air enters your body and gives you life.

Mindful Listening

This mindfulness exercise is intended to develop our hearing in a non-judgmental manner. This is also effective in training our brain to be less distracted by preconceptions and previous experiences.

The majority of what we feel is affected by our previous experiences. For instance, we may hate a specific song because it triggers bad memories of a moment in your life when you felt really bad.

Mindful listening is designed to allow you to listen to neutral sounds and music, with a present consciousness that is not blocked by any preconceptions.

Choose music or a soundtrack that you are not really familiar with. Perhaps you have something in your playlist that you have never listened to, or you may choose to turn on the radio to find music that you can listen to.

Close your eyes and plug in your earphones.

The objective is to suspend your judgment of any music you hear – its genre, artist, and title. Don't prejudge the label and try to go with the flow of the music.

Let yourself discover the music, despite the fact that you may not like it at first. Let go of your judgment and allow your consciousness to be with the sound.

Navigate the sound waves by discerning the vibe of every instrument used in the music. Try to separate every sound in your mind and assess each.

Also, be aware of the vocals – their tone and range. If the music has several voices, try to separate them as you did with the musical instruments.

The goal here is to listen mindfully, to become completely entwined with the music without any judgment or preconception of the music, genre, or artist. This exercise requires you to listen and not to think.

Mindful Observation

This mindfulness exercise is one of the easiest to do but is also among the most powerful because it allows you to appreciate the simpler aspects of your surroundings.

This exercise is intended to reconnect us with the beauty of our environment; something we often ignore when we are driving to work or even walking in the park.

Select a natural object that you can easily focus on for a couple of minutes. This could be the moon, the clouds, an insect, or a tree.

Try not to do anything except observe the thing you have chosen to focus on. Just relax and try to focus on the object as much as your mind allows.

Look at the object and try to observe its visual aspects. Let your consciousness be consumed by the presence of the object.

Let yourself be connected with the object's purpose and energy within the natural environment.

Mindful Awareness

This mindfulness exercise is intended to develop our elevated consciousness and appreciation of simple everyday tasks, as well as the outcomes they achieve. Consider something that you do every day that you usually take for granted, such as brushing your teeth.

When you grab your toothbrush, stop for a few moments and be mindful of your presence, your feelings in that moment, and what that action is doing for you.

Likewise, when you open the door before you go out and face the world, take a few moments to be still, and appreciate the design of your gateway to the rest of the world.

These things don't necessarily have to be physical. For instance, every time you feel sadness, you may opt to take a few moments to stop, identify the thought as harmful, accept the fact that human beings get sad, and then move forward, letting go of the negativity.

It can even be something very little, like every time you see a flower on your way to work, take a moment to stop and appreciate how fortunate you are to behold such a visual delight.

Select a touchpoint that really resonates with you today and rather than going through your everyday tasks like a robot, take a few moments to step back and develop purposeful consciousness of what you are currently doing, as well as the gifts these actions will generate in your life.

Mindful Appreciation

In this mindfulness exercise, you will be observing five things in your day that you often ignore. These things could be people, events, or objects. This is really your call. At the end of the day, write down a list of five things that you noticed throughout the day.

The goal of this exercise is to basically show your gratitude and appreciation of the things that may seem insignificant in life. That is, the things that also play their role in our human existence, but we often ignore because we focus way too much on the "bigger and more important" things in life.

There are so many of these little things that we barely notice. There's the clean water that nourishes your body, the cab driver who takes you to your workplace, your computer that allows you to be productive, your tongue that allows you to savor that delicious lunch you had.

However, have you ever taken just a few moments to pause and think about your connection to these things and how they play a role in your life?

Have you ever stepped back and observed their more intricate, finer details?

Have you ever wondered what your life would be like if these things were not present?

Have you ever properly appreciated how these things give you advantages in your life and help the people you care about?

Do you really know how these things really work or how they came into existence?

After identifying these five things, try to understand everything you can about their purpose and creation. That's how you can genuinely appreciate the way that they are supporting your life.

Mindful Immersion

Mindful immersion is an exercise that will help you develop satisfaction in the present moment and let go of persistent worry about what the future may bring.

Instead of anxiously wanting to complete our daily work so we can get on to the next item on the list, we can take the task and completely experience it. For instance, if you need to wash the dishes, focus on the specific details of the activity. Instead of treating this as a common household chore, you can choose to develop a completely new experience by taking a closer look at each aspect of your action.

Feel the rush of water when washing the plates. Is it cold water? Is it warm water? How does the running water feel on your hands as you do the dishes? Be aware of the movement you use in scrubbing off grease.

The concept is to be creative and find new experiences for a task that is quite monotonous and very common. Rather than struggling through and persistently thinking about completing the task, be conscious of each step, and completely immerse yourself in the process. Choose to take the task beyond a routine by aligning yourself with it mentally and physically – and even spiritually, if you're the spiritual kind.

MINDFULNESS IS FOR ANYONE

You have now learned what mindfulness is, its benefits, the skills associated with it, and the exercises to boost yours. You will need it not just in CBT but also in DBT and ACT, as you'll see in the following chapters.

Without a doubt, becoming more mindful and learning these skills are very useful and rewarding. It is not just a treatment option for those who are afflicted with a mental disorder. Learning to act wisely, despite our irrational feelings, and being more observant of ourselves and the things around us, is sure to bring us more happiness and contentment. Nurturing our ability to be aware of every moment in our life is a beneficial practice that can help us better manage the negative feelings and thoughts that may cause us anxiety and stress.

Through regular practice of mindfulness exercises, you will be far less likely to succumb to bad habits and become influenced by fear of the future and the negative experiences of your past. You can finally develop your ability to set your mind in the present and manage the challenges of life in an assertive yet calm manner.

You can, in turn, reshape your brain to harness a completely conscious mindset that is free from the bondage of self-limiting thinking patterns. This will allow you to be totally present to focus on positive emotions that could enhance your compassion, and finally understand yourself and the people around you.

CHAPTER 4

FUNDAMENTAL DBT SKILLS



DBT DISTRESS TOLERANCE SKILLS

The distress tolerance skills module of DBT acknowledges the higher tendencies in certain individuals to exhibit negative behaviors. It recognizes that, for such people, these behaviors may be overwhelming; therefore, they need to be addressed at once. It is common for such people to become overwhelmed even when the slightest amount of stress arises, and they often end up developing negative behaviors. To help these people, most conventional treatment approaches emphasize avoiding painful situations. However, in the distress intolerance module, the aim is to make the clients acknowledge that sometimes it is impossible to avoid pain, and the best way to tackle such situations is to accept the things as they are and practice tolerating the pain associated with them.

The concept of radical acceptance forms the foundation of the distress tolerance module. This means succumbing to the reality of a stressful moment and acknowledging that there is nothing you can do to change it. By practicing the concept of radical acceptance without fighting reality or being judgmental, patients become less vulnerable to developing prolonged and intense negative feelings.

The distress tolerance module in DBT comprises four different skills. These skills are meant to help individuals cope with difficult situations and experience distress without making it worse.

Distracting

Self-soothing

Improving the moment

Focusing on the pros and cons

Distracting

Distraction helps the patient shift their focus from upsetting emotions and thoughts to neutral or more enjoyable activities. It basically deals in anything to help distract you from the distress, for example, a hobby, a quick walk in the garden, helping others, or watching a movie. These activities help clients separate themselves from a distressing situation or a troubled state of mind.

The acronym "ACCEPTS" is used to help individuals practice the skill of distraction.

Activities – Using positive activities to get over a distressing situation.

Contribute – Helping out people around you or your community.

Comparisons – Comparing yourself to people who have more difficult lives than you or to yourself at your worst.

Emotions – Making yourself feel different by provoking a sense of happiness or humor with corresponding activities.

Push away – Pushing your situation to the back of your mind for some time and replacing it with something less stressful on a temporary basis.

Thoughts – Trying to forget what's distressing you and diverting your mind to think about other stuff.

Sensations – Doing something intense to give yourself a feeling, which is different from the one that you are already going through, for example, eating a spicy meal or hopping into a cold bath.

Self-Soothing

The self-soothing module is all about teaching you to respect yourself and treat yourself kindly. It includes doing anything that helps you develop a positive image of yourself with the help of your 5 senses. For example, observing a beautiful view from the window (vision), enjoying the sounds of nature like birds chirping (hearing), lighting a scented candle (smell), enjoying a hearty meal (taste), and petting an animal (touch).

This skill entails using self-managed tools to calm clients when they are irritable and stressed. Learning to self-soothe is a significant milestone in the distress tolerance module of DBT. When you self-soothe, you treat yourself with care, kindness, and compassion. This helps you build resilience and makes it easier to bounce back from difficult situations.

Improving the Moment

In this skill, the basic aim is to utilize positive mental forces to improve your current image in your own eyes. This skill can be practiced by keeping in mind the acronym IMPROVE.

Imagery – This includes visualizing anything that relaxes you in order to melt away the negative thoughts.

Meaning – This includes deriving meaning or purpose from pain or a difficult situation. In simple words, it is all about finding a silver lining in everything you do. This helps the client find positivity in every situation and helps them learn something.

Prayer – This includes praying to God to gain strength and confidence. Prayer tends to strengthen the spiritual side of many clients and helps them pacify themselves.

Relaxation – This includes calming down your physical body and tensed muscles by doing relaxing activities such as listening to music, drinking warm milk, or getting a massage.

One thing in the moment – This encourages the individual to be mindful and focus on a neutral activity going on in the present.

Vacation – This includes encouraging clients to take a mental break from a difficult situation by imagining something pleasant or doing something that makes them happy. It can be anything, including taking a trip or simply ignoring all phone calls for some time.

Encouragement – This involves making conversation with yourself in a supportive and positive manner to get through a tough moment.

The IMPROVE skill helps clients tolerate frustration or distress without making it worse, and in ideal conditions, aims to improve it. It is particularly for people who feel stuck in situations which are hopeless and out of their control. Such people are unable to do anything about these critical situations and hence, feel hopeless, hurt, and depressed. For many people, such a situation may feel like a constant crisis, so the use of the IMPROVE skill helps them get through this situation and regain confidence.

Focusing on Pros and Cons

With this particular skill, you are usually asked to make a list of all the pros of tolerating a stressful event and compare it with the cons not tolerating it (i.e. coping with it through self-destructive behaviors). The main idea of this is to help them remember how avoiding confrontation in a difficult situation in the past affected them in a negative way and to make them realize how it will feel to be able to tolerate the current stress without acquiring negative behaviors. This helps patients reduce impulsive reactions.

Summary

The distress tolerance skills taught as a part of DBT mainly focus on dealing with the suffering and pain that is inevitable to the human condition. The distress tolerance module provides the clients with beneficial tools to help them maintain their sense of balance in critical conditions. It teaches them to accept distress and manage it in healthier ways instead of acquiring negative behaviors. Following it supports the clients to learn how to authentically connect with other people, be open to your emotions, and respond flexibly to the ups and downs of life.

By practicing how to distract themselves, improve their current moments, self-soothe their mind and body, and balance the pros and cons of a particular situation, the clients are able to weather any distressing moment and reduce the destructive impulses and painful feelings. It will help them take a break and return to life in a calmer, rejuvenated, and more focused state, like a full gas tank which can now go on for miles.

DBT Interpersonal Effectiveness and Emotion Regulation Skills

We all go through millions of emotions on a daily basis. These emotions not only affect our own state of mind but also govern our interpersonal relationships which, in turn, define our personal and social lives. Dialectical Behavior Therapy acknowledges the importance of emotional regulation and interpersonal relationships and comprises two separate modules to address the problems related to these aspects.

DBT EMOTION REGULATION SKILLS

Emotion regulation forms an important module of Dialectical Behavior Therapy, with the purpose of teaching clients the necessary skills to get a hold of themselves in negative situations and focus on increasing positive experiences. Emotional regulation refers to a complex combination of ways through which a person can relate to and act on his/her emotional experiences. This generally includes understanding and accepting emotional experiences, the ability to rely on healthy strategies to manage uncomfortable emotions whenever necessary, and the skill of observing appropriate behaviors in a stressful state of mind.

“Control your emotions or be controlled by them.”

It is common for clients with high emotional sensitivity to get stuck in a vicious cycle of negativity, often initiated by negative circumstances. These thoughts prompt an individual to respond by developing adverse or heightened emotions, eventually leading to harsh choices and self-destructive behaviors. More negative emotions, such as self-loathing or shame, may follow this detrimental behavior. For such clients, emotion regulation in DBT may be of significant help.

People who have good control of their emotion regulation are better able to control the urges to engage in impulsive behaviors like self-harm, physical aggression, or recklessness during times of emotional stress.

The DBT emotion regulation module comprises 3 goals:

1. To develop a better understanding of your emotions
2. To decrease emotional vulnerability

3. To reduce emotional suffering

A significant feature of DBT emotion regulation is making yourself understand that it is not bad to suffer from negative emotions. They are not something that you must struggle to avoid at all costs. You must make yourself realize that negative emotions are part of your normal life and will occur, no matter how hard you try to avoid them. At the same time, there are different ways of accepting these emotions and allowing yourself to better manage them so that you do not remain under their control.

1. Understanding Emotions and Naming Them

This skill involves recognizing emotions and labeling them. Clients are familiarized with the concept of descriptive labeling. They are then taught to use labels such as “anxious” or “frustrated” instead of general terms like “feeling bad.” This is because vaguely defined emotions are much harder to manage. Another important aim of this skill is to teach the client the difference between primary and secondary emotions.

A primary emotion refers to your first response to any moment or triggers in the environment surrounding you. On the other hand, a secondary emotion refers to a response directed towards your own thoughts, for example, feeling sad about letting your anger out. These emotions are usually destructive and increase your likelihood of developing destructive behaviors. So, it is important to not only label your primary and secondary emotions but also to accept your primary emotion without judging yourself for having to deal with it in the first place.

In a normal DBT skill session, group leaders tend to discuss the myths relating to emotions that have plagued our society, for example, the common misinterpretation that there are certain “right” or “wrong” ways to feel in particular situations. An additional topic is to explain the primary purpose of emotions – which is to alert you that something around you is either problematic or beneficial. These emotional responses get stored in your memory and help you prepare yourself to encounter similar situations in the future. In addition to this, your emotions help communicate messages to others via words, body language, and facial expressions.

2. Decreasing Emotional Vulnerability

To practice this skill, a suitable acronym is PLEASE MASTER.

PL – indicates taking good care of your physical health and treating any illness or pain.

E – represents eating a nutritious and balanced diet and shunning foods with excessive caffeine, fat, and sugar.

A – indicates avoiding drugs and alcohol, which aggravate emotional instability and are not good for your mental health.

S – signifies getting adequate sleep on a daily basis.

E – involves exercising every single day.

MASTER – involves performing any task that builds competence and confidence every day.

This component of emotion regulation focuses on decreasing the emotional vulnerability by building positive experiences and balancing negative feelings. For this purpose, clients are asked to plan more experiences that bring them happiness and provide them with positivity. This may include participation in a sport or hobby, going out for coffee with a childhood friend, reading a good book, or doing any activity that provides them with individual contentment.

While doing these activities, clients are asked to remain mindful, focusing on what they are currently doing. If a client is finding it difficult to focus their attention on the current activity, they have a choice to try out another activity. Planning the future and establishing goals brings positive experiences for most clients. So, it is a part of this activity to plan ahead for the future, for example, choosing a different career or moving to a different city.

3. Reducing Emotional Suffering

Reduction of emotional suffering is the last part of DBT emotion regulation, which encompasses the following skills:

Letting go

Taking the opposite action

Letting go means using mindfulness to have complete awareness of your current emotional state. It further involves labeling this emotional state and allowing it intentionally instead of avoiding it, fighting it, or dwelling on it. This may require you to take a deep breath and imagine yourself floating away from the problem. Compare your emotion with a wave of water that keeps on coming and going.

Taking the opposite action includes engaging in certain behaviors that are opposite to whatever a person is feeling in the moment. For instance, if a person is sad, they may try to be active, stand straight, and speak confidently, as a person would if they were happy. When an individual experiences anger, they may behave as if they are calm by adopting a soft tone or doing something good for someone. This skill does not aim to deny the current emotion; the client must still name the emotion and be able to let it go. However, acting the opposite is likely to lessen the duration and intensity of the negative feelings.

DBT leaders try to make the clients learn these skills in group therapies. Sometimes, clients are asked to get involved in

role plays to help them use these newly learned skills in their everyday lives. Ultimately, these skills help empower people to regulate their emotions instead of being regulated by them.

DBT INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS SKILLS

Interpersonal effectiveness means the ability to interact with other people. It encompasses all the skills you use to:

Attend to your relationships

Maintain a balance between priorities and demands

Balance out your “wants” and “shoulds”

Develop a sense of self-respect and mastery

The Importance of Interpersonal Effectiveness Skills

DBT considers interpersonal skills as important parts of the treatment because they teach us methods of communicating with other people. The way we communicate with others determines the quality of our social life which has a major influence on our overall well-being, self-confidence, and self-esteem. For this reason, interpersonal effectiveness is the main focus of DBT. In fact, it is taught as the second core skill module in DBT sessions, with lots of resources and materials dedicated to improving the interpersonal skills of the clients.

To enable the clients to establish communication with others, they are taught certain skills that help them get involved in everyday chats more thoughtfully and in a deliberate manner instead of speaking impulsively due to sheer stress or a distressing emotion. While there are a lot of skills associated with communication and interactions, DBT focuses on two components:

1. The skill of asking for things that you need or want
2. The skill to deny requests when suitable

DBT founder, Dr. Marsha Linehan, has identified three different forms of effectiveness that need to be addressed in this module:

Objective effectiveness

Relationship effectiveness

Self-respect effectiveness

Under any circumstances, all the above-mentioned types must be taken into account. It is also important to prioritize them according to need, as this satisfies a person with their interactions as well as the outcomes.

‘Objective effectiveness’ refers to the goal or main motive behind a certain interaction that is directly linked to a tangible result. A typical example is a woman who wishes her husband would call her to inform her whenever he is working late. ‘Relationship effectiveness’ indicates the ultimate goal of a conflict-free relationship. In the previous example, the wife may rank harmony and emotional closeness as her first and highest priority. ‘Self-respect effectiveness’ can also be considered a priority in the case of this woman, if she starts feeling that her husband is being disrespectful by not calling her according to her wishes.

Dialectical Behavior Therapy utilizes different acronyms to help clients learn the skills tied to each type of effectiveness. In the case of objective effectiveness, DEAR MAN is the acronym of choice.

Describe: Describing the situation in solid terms, while avoiding any judgment.

Express: Expressing feelings and communicating them to the other party to let them know how the situation is making you feel.

Assert: Asserting your wishes and clearly stating what you want or do not want.

Reinforce: Reinforcing why you desire a particular outcome and rewarding people who respond positively to your request.

Mindful: Being mindful and investing your attention in the current moment, focusing on the task at hand.

Appear: Appearing confident, acquiring a confident tone and posture, and maintaining eye contact during conversations.

Negotiate: Being ready to get into negotiations, believing in “give and get,” and acknowledging that everyone involved in the negotiations possesses valid feelings and needs.

For relationship effectiveness, the acronym used in DBT is GIVE:

Gentle: Approaching the other person in a non-threatening and gentle manner, avoiding judgmental comments and attacks.

Interested: Acting interested by giving others a chance to speak and listening to them wholeheartedly, and avoiding interrupting them just to give your own opinions or judgments.

Validate: Validating and acknowledging the wishes, opinions, and feelings of other people.

Easy: Assuming an easy manner by adopting a light-hearted tone and always having a smile on your face.

Lastly, the acronym used for self-respect effectiveness in DBT interpersonal effectiveness module is FAST:

Fair: Being fair to yourself and others to avoid the development of resentful emotions on both sides.

Apologize: Apologizing less and taking responsibility only when it is appropriate.

Stick: Sticking to your core values and not compromising your veracity in order to achieve a certain outcome.

Truthful: Being truthful while avoiding exaggeration or the portrayal of helplessness to manipulate others.

CHAPTER 5

LEARN NOT TO BE OVERWHELMED

BY PAINFUL SITUATIONS

MANAGING STRESS USING DBT

The Distress Tolerance Skills taught as part of DBT can enable you to survive stressful situations without harming yourself. They may not provide you with strategies to help you in the long run but can help you learn skills to manage yourself successfully when times get tough. Strategies you can apply to get through intense stress include:

Distraction

Stress can cause you to get stuck in rumination and worry. Indulging your mind and body in a task that diverts your attention and prevents you from thinking about whatever is stressing you, at least for some time, can provide you with enough time to think about the stressor and ponder over how to get through it. Call a friend, work out, read your favorite book, or watch a funny movie to distract your mind from the stress.

Self-Soothe

Remember to be gentle and kind to yourself. It is common to be hard on yourself, especially during times of stress. You judge your abilities and feel like you are unable to handle your problems. Incorporating soothing activities in your everyday life can help you handle times of stress and tension. Listen to soothing music, bake cookies, watch a beautiful sunset, or eat your favorite food to soothe your body.

Try Relaxing

Following the distress tolerance module requires you to practice relaxation, for both the mind and the body. Try all the activities that will calm you. Take part in relaxation exercises or have a hot shower. Avoid performing multiple tasks at the same time, and try focusing on the current activity only. Form a soothing image in your mind.

Ponder the Pros and Cons

Take a paper and pen and make two lists stating the advantages as well as the disadvantages of a stressful situation. Pen down how stress can damage you if you do not care about it. Think of all the ways in which stress will help you evolve and grow as a person. Once you are done, go through the lists once again to motivate yourself.

Breathe

Observe your breathing pattern a little more closely. Try deep breathing or count your breaths to increase the focus of your mind. This can help you calm down and be more attentive.

Summary

These days, it is quite easy to fall into a rabbit hole and lose sight of the most important things in your life, all thanks to consistent stress. Keep in mind that in any moment of distress, you have control, even if this means letting go of things over which you have no influence. It may not be possible for you to solve every single problem in your life, but with DBT distress tolerance skills, you can definitely manage your frustrations much more confidently.

Do not let stress get the best of you!

MANAGING WORRY USING DBT

There is no overnight solution to managing worry, but there is one that actually works: DBT. The troubling thoughts might linger for a very long time, but you can easily develop a Teflon mind. It only requires a bit of effort.

Look for the Canaries in the Coal Mine

Recognize that the thoughts that are worrying you are nothing but thoughts. It may take time to develop this skill, but it is possible to adopt it relatively quickly. It is the negative emotions that are trickier to handle. These two may gang up on you; thoughts that are negative leading to emotions that are negative and vice versa; trapping you in an awful loop.

When you lose yourself in worrying thoughts, you have a tendency to forget your body. Try to recognize the physical sensations that follow your emotions such as sweating, shallow breaths and muscle tightening.

Get a paper and a pen and start making a list. Recall every little thought that crosses your mind when you are worried. Note down any physical manifestation that comes by during a stressful event. This is what you call finding the canaries in the coal mine. Notice what actions you take when you are worried (such as procrastination, drinking alcohol, etc.). Familiarize yourself with these actions, so that the next time worry strikes, you know what you are dealing with.

Avoid Avoiding

Why should you avoid avoiding? Because you should prove your worries wrong. If you keep avoiding triggers, it is just going to keep the anxieties alive in you. Worrying and then realizing that your concern was silly produces a phenomenon called “extinction,” and the worry eventually stops.

On the other hand, persistently avoiding what you feel makes you believe these things are real and that fearing them is the right thing to do. This is what you call “reinforcement” and it only strengthens the worry.

Whenever your mind signals you to avoid a certain situation, recall that this is wrong. Allow yourself to appreciate the moment by considering it a chance to fight your fear and get away from your worries. Move your focus from the disturbing thoughts to the real world.

Now you know about the most important thing to avoid, let’s move on to the one that you should be doing.

Identify

Do you at times look back at a moment of worry and think, “wow that really freaked me out?”

This is because you failed to realize this at the moment it occurred. Worries tend to sneak up on a person, and as you undergo cognitive fusion, the worries overtake you. This urges you to go and make bad decisions. The best way to bypass this problem and all the fuss it creates is by identifying the increasing anxiety before it is too late.

By now, you will have made your own canaries list. Great. Now what you should do is begin identifying these things as soon as they happen. The sooner you identify these thoughts, the action impulses, and the accompanying physical manifestations, the quicker you will be able to quell them.

It is easy to identify your problem once you understand what you are looking for. This enables you to control it or handle it, at least.

Engage

Have you ever found yourself swamped by troubling thoughts about a certain problem and a bigger trouble strikes you? This newly emerged problem forces you to forget about your past tensions and use whatever energy you have left in worrying about it. Notice how you are able to shift your attention. Doing it on purpose is, however, the tricky part.

The aim of this skill is to help you develop a connection with your feelings and experiences. It will help you learn how to remain in the current moment and establish a better connection with your life instead of wasting your energy on troubling thoughts. So, whenever you get stuck in a stressful or worrying situation, remember to focus only on the problem at hand while avoiding any worrying thoughts which may distract you.

Channel all your attention to living the current experience. If the worry is making you distracted, remember this point, and think only about the actual problem and make efforts to deal with it only.

Tend to Your Emotions

The first thing to do to tend to your emotions is to learn how to identify worry. Once you have recognized that you are stuck in troubling circumstances, observe your body closely. Look for any signs related to your heightened emotions. You may notice your heart pounding, your muscles tensing up, or your stomach sinking. Whatever you feel, pay close attention to it.

It is possible for your mind to divert its attention to any other topic. You may also feel like drowning in the pool of worries, which diverts your attention far from the actual problem. As soon as you find yourself in this situation, get yourself together. Try diverting all of your attention back to the body and focusing on the actual problem. Do not get involved in thoughts which are troublesome. You only need to notice them and keep returning your mind back to the body over and over again. Label your emotions, whether they are fear, anxiety, irritation, sadness, or shame. Remind yourself it is normal to feel how you are feeling right now, and your emotions are not going to kill you.

In short, examine, admit, and mark. The worrisome feelings will eventually dissipate. It is a skill, and it takes some time. But it definitely works. When you get good at it, it will be your superpower against worry.

Use Opposite Action

This may seem like advanced Kung Fu, so take it slow. In the end, this skill is what's going to take you from being a chronically worried individual to being a person who seldom worries. It is a mild form of "exposure therapy" and revolves around the concept of "facing your fears."

Opposite action helps your brain figure out which people and places are not dangerous, hence, do not need to be avoided. Once your brain is able to establish this connection, your fears start diminishing. You stop avoiding people or things and gain the freedom in life to do whatever you want and go wherever you like.

Take a moment to answer the following questions:

Do you worry about things that do not pose a real or immediate threat?

Do you worry so much that it becomes difficult to enjoy things?

Are you more likely to be unhappy than happy?

Are you unwilling to take reasonable risks?

Does worry interfere with your day-to-day activities?

If you answer no to the questions above, you are likely a healthy person. So, keep doing whatever you are doing because you are only sensitive to real threats. You will take every reasonable step to live a happy life.

However, if the answer to most of the above questions is no, you are suffering from worry. It is necessary to take the steps mentioned above to take the unnecessary burden off your shoulders and start living.

Unfortunately, there is no magic pill that is going to relieve you or your worries overnight. Following DBT in a stepwise approach, as mentioned above can, however, significantly impact your life and make it easier for you.

DEALING WITH POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS SYMPTOMS USING DBT

DBT is a powerful method of thought control, which teaches you the necessary skills to deal with unpleasant thoughts and situations that lead to suffering. Through acceptance and change strategies, people suffering from PTSD can learn how to:

Keep themselves aware of the triggers that cause negative reactivity

Practice self-soothing activities to calm their body and soul

Learn intolerance skills to deal with uncomfortable feelings, situations, and thoughts

The DBT distress tolerance acronym ACCEPTS can help you manage PTSD. This skill stands for Activities, Contributing, Comparisons, Emotions, Push away, Thoughts, and Sensations. These techniques have been specially designed to manage your emotions and get over your past.

Activities

Engage in an activity. This can be any activity as long as it is healthy. Read a book, go for a walk, make some jam, or do the dishes. Anything that keeps you busy and your mind off the negative emotions associated with the past will help. When you are done, pick up a new activity. In this way, you can have a highly productive day without bringing back any haunting memories of the past.

Contributing

Do something kind for another person. Offering help can relieve you of your emotional stress in a lot of ways. An act of service is also a type of activity which will keep you distracted and take your mind off the problem. In addition to this, contributing will help you feel good about yourself. You are not always required to do something big. Help someone cook dinner, bake cookies for a relative, or offer to mow your neighbor's lawn. Each of these activities will keep you from remembering your misery.

Comparisons

It is time to put your life in perspective. Was there ever a time when you faced more difficult challenges than you are facing now? Maybe not. Maybe this is actually the most intense situation and emotion that you have ever experienced. In this case, compare yourself to another person. Has that person suffered more than you? Are you at home, comfortably lying in your bed after having a delicious dinner while in another part of the world someone is searching for leftover food in the trash and a place to sleep after suffering a natural disaster?

The purpose of this exercise is not to increase distress or the emotional pain of your current condition. Instead, use it to add a new perspective to what you are currently experiencing.

Emotions

You have the ability to invoke the opposite emotion of what you are feeling right now. Meditating for 15 minutes can help your anxiousness too. If a past trauma is making you depressed, watch a comedy movie. Adding a bit of the opposite emotion can help reduce the intensity of PTSD.

Push Away

If you feel like you are unable to deal with your past just yet, it is okay to push it away. Throw the problem out of your mind for a short duration. But how is this possible? By distracting yourself with other thoughts, activities, or mindfulness. You can set a time to come back and address your problems. Assure yourself that it will be addressed and stay calm in the interim.

Thoughts

Replace your anxious, negative thoughts with activities that occupy most of your mind, for example, reciting the alphabet backward or enjoying a Sudoku puzzle. These distractions will help prevent self-destructive behaviors and reliving the traumatic events until you achieve emotional stability.

Sensations

Make use of your five senses to soothe yourself during times of stress. A self-soothing activity can be anything such as taking a warm bath with relaxing music and a lavender bath bomb, eating your favorite food, or tuning in to a good TV show. Anything appealing to your senses can help you cope with PTSD for the time being.

These Dialectical Behavior Therapy skills can help you tolerate PTSD until you are able to resolve the problem once and for all. They can control the symptoms of PTSD and allow you to focus more on the present with no fragments of your traumatic past. While the ACCEPTS skills will enable you to focus on your current life, other modules of DBT, such as group therapy and interpersonal effectiveness, will motivate you to enjoy life at a basic level.

CHAPTER 6

EMOTIONAL CONTROL



Using Mastery

Using the mastery skills in this section will help you achieve Wise Mind. If you practice Wise Mind when the seas of life are calm, it will be easier to bring to mind those skills during times of turbulence.

Doing something that makes you feel a little better every day helps relieve stress and inspire confidence. Attaining confidence helps reduce stress in stressful situations as well as in everyday situations.

Taking care of yourself helps you stay grounded so that when difficulties arise, and they will, you can keep your cool and maintain a consistent level of emotions.

Build Positive Experiences

Building positive experiences is necessary for emotion regulation in that we need a well of positives to draw from when we're running on empty. Many experiences are wonderful at the time, and then we later may not be friends with the people

we had the experience with. Do not let that mar the memory. Remember who they were when you had the experience together. There are two important categories in which to build positive experiences: the short term and the long term.

Short Term

Short-term memories include talking to a good friend, taking a walk, noticing a beautiful area, going to the dog park, reading a good book, watching a show or movie you love, dining out, having a picnic, and laughing on a break with a coworker. Most of us already do something to create short-term positive experiences daily without thinking about it.

This exercise asks you to create more short-term positive experiences and do it deliberately. Call up an old friend. Stay off social media after work for a few days. Make a concerted effort to tell ridiculous, silly stories with your kids. Send your nieces and nephews presents from the clearance aisle. Do something that will create positive experiences deliberately.

When you deliberately practice making and noticing positive experiences, you'll begin to make and notice more as part of your daily life. When positivity is a part of your daily life, you feel better emotionally and physically.

Do at least one of these things, or choose something else that makes you happy, every day for a week. Go out of your way to do it for a week. After that, try to make it IN your way. Do something you've never tried before. There are probably a few things you've never thought of trying:

- reading a good book
- writing a good story
- going out for drinks midweek
- going to a movie midweek
- sex
- eating a good meal
- going out just for dessert
- going to a poetry jam
- going to a karaoke bar
- joining pub trivia with friends
- learning to make sushi or another exotic dish
- trying a new exotic dish
- jogging
- kickboxing
- swimming
- watching a children's movie in the theater and focusing on the laughter
- stopping on the dog's walking route to smell the flowers
- doing something nice for a stranger
- doing something nice for a friend
- playing a carnival game
- getting the expensive, full inside and out car wash
- completing your to-do list
- writing a ridiculously easy to-do list so you can complete it
- taking pictures with a real camera
- going down a waterslide
- playing board games with friends
- playing interactive games, like "How to Host a Murder"
- going to a movie or concert in the park
- going to a new hobby class like painting or writing or learning to skate
- organizing your bookshelf or closet
- buying a new article of clothing, jewelry or book for yourself
- visiting a nursing home to sing or play bingo with the residents
- letting your kids teach you how to play their favorite video game
- getting a massage
- going to the chiropractor
- going to a play or the opera
- going to a high school play
- going to a college football game

driving to a different city for dinner with a friend
going sightseeing
joining Toastmasters
volunteering at a homeless shelter during the months they really need it: January-October
carrying “homeless packs” in your cars: gallon Ziploc bags with personal hygiene materials, feminine hygiene products, smokes, granola bars, bottles of water, socks, candy bars, stuffed animals, cash, gift cards to McDonald’s, etc. Put them with blankets, coats, and clothes you would’ve given away. Drive around the areas where there are homeless people and give these out.

gardening
planning a party
getting your hair done
talking in a different accent for an evening
dedicating a song on the radio to someone
writing in your journal
spending some time alone without the television, radio, or internet; just you and a cup of the beverage of your choice
going out to lunch with a friend
playing volleyball
playing hide and seek with your coworkers (and trying not to go home when their eyes are closed)
singing in the car
driving to the mountains
roasting marshmallows
going to the sauna
sitting in a hot tub
sitting in a cold tub
making a fort in the elevator at work with a sign that says, ‘No bosses allowed!’
silently challenging the driver in the car next to you at a stoplight to a dance-off in your cars
keeping a box of fruit snacks in your desk for anyone having a bad day
having a song fight with your spouse
convincing a stranger you think you’re a vampire
calling a radio station and telling them a funny story
doing a jigsaw puzzle
riding a unicycle
going to a museum or aquarium
going to a psychic, just for giggles
getting a Reiki session done
taking a stuffed animal for a walk, pretending to cry when anyone points out it’s not real
calling a radio station and pretending to be psychic. Google the DJ while you’re talking and tell them all about themselves so they’ll believe you.
going to a belly dancing class

Long Term

Long-term positive experiences are more goal-oriented, creating a life worth living. What are some goals that you would like to achieve? Write down a few specific goals. Break them down into subcategories.

Money

Many people have goals that are money-oriented. Write down how much you’d like to save each month or put towards your debt. If you put it in a place you’ll forget or an IRA (Individual Retirement Account) you can’t touch, you’re less likely to spend it.

Learn how to budget. Keep track of how much you spend versus how much you make. Keep track of all your expenses. See where you can cut back. Itemize your spending as you go – keep it on your phone until you put it into a spreadsheet. When tax time comes, you will already know how much you have spent on medical supplies or work-related expenses. Use your debit card instead of your credit card. Then you’re only spending what you have, and if you don’t keep your receipts, everything is on your bank statement anyway.

Get out of debt as much as possible. You may always have debt for education, health, and home, but you can pay off your

credit cards and chip away at the others.

Save as much as possible. Save by packing your own lunch instead of eating out. Put that in a jar. Use those coins when your kid needs shoelaces or something. After a while of paying with change, you forget you ever had any dignity; it's cool.

If your job offers a 401(k), take it. Immediately. The 401(k) follows the person, not the job. If your job offers overtime, do it. Pick up shifts. Show up in your uniform and ask who wants to go home. When a couple complains that they don't know where their waitress is, promise to take care of them yourself because she clearly doesn't value her customers. Then pocket that \$20 tip. Find little tricks to make your job, and your screw-ups work FOR you.

Relationships

1. Repair a relationship.

If you have a relationship in your life that you feel must be repaired in order for you to move on with your life, you may have to take the initiative. You may have to make the first move, offer the first apology. Not a fake "I'm sorry you feel that way" apology, but a sincere "I'm sorry I treated you that way" apology. Not even a half-sincere apology – "I'm sorry I treated you that way, but you deserved it and here's why..." Let that second half come about if they accept your apology and you can open a discussion.

1. End a relationship.

Not all relationships can be saved, and not all should be. If you have offered a sincere apology and have been rebuffed, it may be time to cut your losses and move on. It may be sad for both of you, but some relationships over time become toxic for one or both parties. If this is the case, you might try one last-ditch effort, and then you should actually ditch it. If they come back, you can see how you feel at that time, and whether it's something you want to renew. Some relationships are better off dead. Reviving those is the true zombie apocalypse.

1. Create new relationships.

The older we get, the harder it is to create new relationships. We have to actually go out of our comfort zone to meet new people. Talk to people at your bowling league. Start a bowling league. Talk to new people at functions you attend regularly, like church or kayaking or suing people. Or even family reunions.

Go to weekly things. Join Toastmasters. You'll migrate towards the same people each week, but how much do you really talk to them? Get to know someone, more than at just surface level. Ask probing questions like, "If you invented a superpower, what would it be?" None of this already-invented superpower business. That's boring. "You can travel to the past, before a huge disaster, with the ability to warn people, but you might get stoned or burned as a witch, or you can travel twenty seconds into the future every day. Which do you choose?"

1. Work on current relationships.

Work on maintaining the relationships you have. Develop deeper bonds with people. Do you really know their hopes and fears, wishes, and dreams?

Go out of your way to stay in touch. Most friendships are built on convenience – when it's convenient for both or all parties to talk or hang out. Texting is a great way to let them know you're thinking about them, and they'll respond when they can. It's also a great way to miscommunicate, but that can be done in any medium.

Positive Mindfulness

1. Be mindful of positive experiences.

Practicing mindfulness while you're doing something you enjoy helps to savor the moment. Stay focused on the positive experience and refocus your mind as often as necessary. This will get you in the habit of mindfulness and focusing on the positive aspects of the day or the moment. The more we focus on something, the more we notice it. That's just how our brains work. That's not to say it is actually more prevalent, but it is certainly more prevalent in our minds, which is where we have to live, so we may as well learn to enjoy the company.

1. Be unmindful of worries.

Distract yourself from thinking you don't deserve this happiness, or wondering when the positive experience will end or thinking about what chores need to be done elsewhere. Distract yourself from thinking about what awaits you at the end of the positive experience, or worrying about how much money you're spending on it. If you're at the circus, for example, instead

of thinking, 'I don't deserve to be enjoying this,' focus on your surroundings – children laughing, cotton candy, the rides, the clowns, unless you have a deep fear of clowns. You might not want to focus on them then. Damn you, Stephen King!

1. Practice.

There is a lot of material in this section, and no one expects you to conquer it overnight. You shouldn't either. Like any habit, it needs to be practiced before it becomes an actual habit. And then it still needs to be practiced.

Be Mindful of Positive Emotions

Get in the habit of noticing your emotions and recognizing whether they're negative or positive. When they're negative, get in the habit of not dwelling on them. When they're positive, get in the habit of being mindful of the actual emotion. "I'm happy right now. It feels warm. It feels calm." Describe how the emotion feels, instead of getting caught up in why you're happy or peaceful, or what have you.

Using the Opposite to Emotion Action

What actions do you do with negative emotions? They're probably the go-to actions, preprogrammed by your psyche. It takes time, but you can reprogram your psyche by using the opposite actions you normally use. When you're afraid, your brain kicks in to fight, flight, or freeze mode. In some instances, this is still a vital response mechanism developed for our own safety. In other instances, the response mode has been passed down from our hunter/gatherer ancestors and serves no real purpose today. For example, test anxiety. It's real.

A test doesn't present the need for a fight/flight/freeze response that imminent death, beating, rape, a car accident, or a full-grown saber-toothed tiger would pose. However, the reaction is still the same, and we don't get to choose our subconscious reactions. But we do choose our conscious actions. In the test anxiety example, try giving yourself many practice tests to lose your anxiety.

Perhaps your fear is roller coasters. Go more often, with someone you feel safe with to desensitize you. Try to desensitize yourself to the fear. If your fear is clowns, go to McDonald's more. No need to hang around real clowns. Those freaks will eat you in your sleep.

If your reaction to anger is to yell and throw things, step away from the situation that makes you angry and work on breathing exercises. Unless you're driving. Then just work on breathing exercises.

If a particular person or politician makes you angry, try to find the small amount of truth they may have said to gain sympathy or empathy, or at the very least, not hatred. Scratch that. Turn off the television. Work on that with a real person in your life rather than a politician.

If your go-to reaction to sadness is self-isolation, take the opposite approach. Get out in the community and volunteer. Go out with your friends. Go to an ice cream store by yourself, just to get out of the house. And have some ice cream.

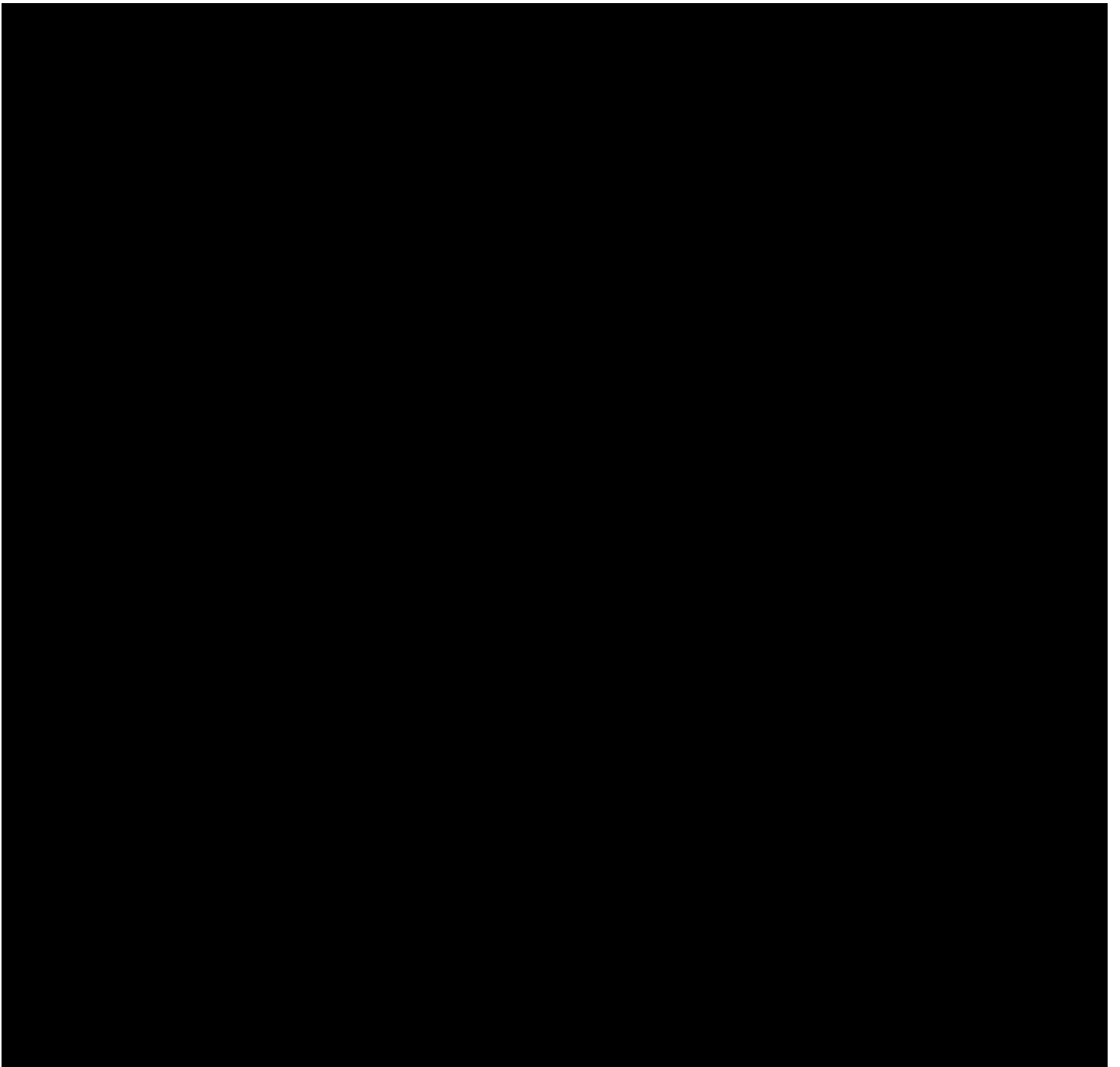
If you're feeling shameful, the first question to ask yourself is, "Why am I feeling like this?" Is it because you did something you're ashamed of? Admit it to yourself and your haters, then move on. The longer you deny it, the longer it draws out the feeling and adds further negative emotions to it, like anger. If you've done nothing wrong, but are being dragged through the mud for pointing out something someone else did, welcome to the patriarchy. Even males can be oppressed by it. Just hold your head high and live your life. People will soon see who you really are. And those who don't see it often filter out. Let them.

Guilt works in many ways, as does shame. If you need to offer a sincere apology, do so. Your refusal to do so, whether it's accepted or not, whether they've offered one or not, whether they actually deserved whatever action you need to apologize for or not – that's all irrelevant. Your refusal to do so only drives the wedge in further.

The opposite reaction works best when the emotion does not fit the scenario. If you should be angry at something, it's still best to breathe deeply and assess the situation calmly. However, the other person is allowed to know you're angry. If your anger motivates you toward positive change, so much the better.

CHAPTER 7

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS



Using Objectiveness Effectiveness (D.E.A.R. M.A.N.)

D – Describe

Describe the event using facts only. Do not use emotions. Let it speak like a police report if you do use emotions. “Patient seemed upset.” It works better to sound like a police report if you talk in third person. However, don’t take this habit into the real world. That’s just confusing. Don’t make a request or “dry beg.” Dry begging is saying obnoxiously passive-aggressive things like, “I really need thirty bucks,” or, “Wow, that cake looks good. I wish I had some.” The best response to dry beggars is: “Yep. You do.” Or it could be, “Yep. It is.” If they really want it, they’ll get around to asking like an adult. It might go like this – say you’re from a religious family, and your teenager decides not to go to church. You might reply, “I’ve noticed you don’t like church. Let’s discuss the options of staying home.”

This is important so that the other party understands clearly what the situation is before you ask anything, entreat, or make an executive decision.

E – Express

Express yourself with “I feel” or other “I” statements. These types of statements help the speaker take accountability and prevent the listener from immediately going into defense mode. Let’s go back to the teenager staying home from church example. Now, you might say something like, “I feel like you should believe what I believe, but I know that you’re your own person, separate from me, and I can’t force my beliefs on you. I would like you to come to church with us because my worry is you won’t be productive at home.”

This is important so that the other party understands where you’re coming from when you express how you feel about the situation you’ve just described.

A – Assert

Assert your position by either directly asking for what you need or stating your position clearly. Don’t beat around the bush, don’t use euphemisms, and don’t hesitate to the point of losing the other party’s interest. To continue with the example, let’s assert our decision for our hypothetical teenager. “I understand that you don’t want to come to church with us, and you are old enough to stay home alone. So, if you choose to stay home instead of attending church, you will prepare dinner and set the table and have everything prepared for us to be able to eat when we return, and you will make enough in case we invite people over unexpectedly. If you are unable to complete this chore, and thus, be productive for the whole family while we are at church, you will come back with us, even if you don’t believe it.”

This is important because ambiguity creates miscommunication in relationships, and that is the biggest source of contention. Be unambiguous. Set boundaries now. If you’re making a request, it must also be unambiguous, maybe even a little lawyerly.

For example, you might say, “Can I please borrow your car from Sunday to Tuesday? I’ll return it by 7:00 pm with a full tank of gas and a wash.”

The other party might have other caveats. Such as, “Yeah, but it overheats, so don’t go over 55 mph, or over 55 miles away. And my tags are expired, so avoid cops. Or renew it for me.”

In which case, you might say, “You know what? I can take the bus. Thanks, though.”

R – Reinforce

Make sure the other party knows why they should grant your request, or acquiesce to your conditions without a fight. “Because I said so” is not a valid reason. Most people reciprocate naturally.

You might say something like, “You get to stay home from church on the condition that you are productive at home. Since you don’t like church and I don’t like cooking after church, it’s a win for both of us.”

Or in the example with the car, it might sound like this, “I actually need to drive to a different city for a few days, but I can’t

rent a car because of (XYZ), so I'll get your car diagnosed for you, and if I can afford to fix the overheating problem, I will. If not, I'll see if anyone else can part with their car for a few days, or find another solution."

In both examples, the other party can clearly see that they have nothing to lose by accepting your request, and everything to gain.

This is important because relationships are built on reciprocity. When one party feels slighted occasionally, it's not a big deal. But if one party feels slighted more often than not, they will most likely end the relationship.

M – Mindful (stay)

Stay focused on the conversation. If you're answering a text, they have no reason to listen to you. If they're answering a text, that's out of your control, but you can keep your mind on the conversation instead of what they're doing. If they become defensive, notice what you may have said wrong, and apologize if necessary, even if it's just to get them back on track.

This is important because it's too easy to go off track and lose focus, especially in an uncomfortable situation, where the other party might be looking to pick a fight. If you go off on tangents, whether they be to sing and dance because someone said a song lyric, or to fight, or because one of you saw a squirrel, you have less of a chance of getting what you want. Especially if you're the one singing and dancing or chasing squirrels.

Your teen may interrupt you to tell you they've been cutting church every week with their friends from Sunday School anyway, so there's no point in going. You may have to repeat yourself a few times, especially if you're letting them stay home as long as they're productive, as they may not believe their ears.

Again, repeat yourself as often as necessary, and if you have a real kid, you've done that a few times already this morning. And bring the conversation back to the topic. Detour...focus. If we're using the example of asking an adult friend for something, you don't have the clout you do as a parent. You still may have to repeat yourself, but the interruptions might just be singing and dancing.

You might say something like, "I understand you don't like church, and you cut Sunday School anyway. But you will get something out of it every week if you continue going, and I would like that." Or, "If you're going to stay home, you'll need to cook for us, and I'll take the added precaution of changing the Wi-Fi password every Saturday to make sure you'll be productive. If you can prove that you are, that you don't have friends over, that you cook and clean as you go, I'll stop doing that."

A – Appear Confident

Appear confident no matter how you actually feel. If you have this look about you all the time, little old ladies will ask you for a napkin at a restaurant when you're on a date, and it might not even occur to you to tell them you don't work there, so you walk into the kitchen and get the napkins.

Your nonverbal cues indicate confidence more than your verbal cues. Sit with your back straight, and your head held high. Make eye contact. Orient your feet towards the other person. Where your feet are oriented is where your mind subconsciously goes. Appear confident and stand your ground.

This is important because confidence signifies that your request isn't too difficult to grant and that you're harder to turn down. There's no need to be overbearing. If they do refuse you, in an adult-to-adult conversation, you might just ask if they're sure, then thank them for their time and let it go.

If your teenager refuses you, this might be a good time to tell them what the other option is. "Okay, you don't have to learn to cook. And if you can read, you can cook, by the way. You can keep coming to church with us, and thank you for letting me know about cutting Sunday School. I'll be sure to tell your friends' parents you all do that because they'll want to know too. I'll let them know you told me. Thank you for caring about the salvation of your friends, who also should go back to church." This will most likely ensure you an excellent meal every Sunday.

N – Negotiate

Negotiate. Remember, "give to get," as selfish as that sounds. Everyone wonders, What's in it for me? You aren't demanding something. You're asking for something or setting down a rule. Even in setting down rules, you aren't demanding. If you think you can demand something of someone, even a child, expect defensiveness and confrontation. Give options.

You may need to alter your request to make it more pleasing. In the borrowing the car example, you offered to get the car diagnosed (AutoZone does it for free) and fix it if you could – and if you couldn't, you'd find another solution to your problem.

This is important because building relationships may or may not be the most important reason we spend a few decades on this planet, but it certainly takes up most of our time. Whether we spend that time in actual relationships with other human beings or wondering why we drive other human beings away, we spend an inordinate amount of time either with other people or thinking about them, whether we know them personally or not.

So, if we spend our energy browbeating others and expecting them to kowtow to us, that only works if you have money, and even then, not everyone likes you, even if you somehow win elections. Mere mortals, without insane amounts of money,

can't behave like that. We have to negotiate and play nice.

Going back to the example of the teenager, this is pretty much already a negotiation. They still refuse to go to church or cook, and they tell you they don't care if you call their friends' parents. They really do. This is when you pull out your phone and look up the numbers of the kids' parents, who you probably know, at least by name already. Google White Pages are great. Some rules are not to be negotiated. If, however, you start the conversation with trying to force them to go to church, this idea is a perfect negotiation, and now it seems (to them) that you've given in some.

But for example's sake, you do try to negotiate. You might say, "Okay, if you don't come to church with us on Sunday, you still need to be productive at home. Would you rather have a list of chores to do? What is your suggestion for being productive, other than homework, because I don't want you deliberately putting it off until Sunday?"

This approach helps your child feel like they have a say – like their voice is heard and not invalidated. If you start off demanding they go, then negotiate to this, you can offer it as a suggestion, and ask which of your suggestions they like best.

You can both leave the conversation feeling like you've accomplished something, like you've got a win, like you're helping the other person out, with no ill will.

INTERPERSONAL EFFECTIVENESS EXERCISES

Step 1 - Choose an area in your life that you want to work on.

This may include community, romance, education, career, personal growth, environment, family, parenting, health, finances, and many more.

Step 2 - Establish goals that are SMART - Specific, Meaningful, Adaptive, Realistic, and Time-Bound.

Specific - Try to be as specific as possible as to what actions you want to take. Be sure that you are aware of the involved steps in taking the necessary action. A specific goal is easier to achieve compared to a general goal. For example, just setting up the goal of spending more time with your child may not allow you to know if you have already achieved it. A more specific goal is to have at least a one-hour playtime every day. Being specific with your goal will allow you to assess whether you have already accomplished the goal or not and monitor your progress.

Meaningful - Assess if your goal is genuinely based on your values in comparison with a strict rule or a sense of what you must do. If you think that your goals don't have a deeper sense of purpose or meaning, try to assess if the goal is really influenced by the values you hold dear. Take note that your core values should be based on things that provide meaning to your life.

Adaptive - Make sure your goal will help you follow a direction that you think will greatly improve your life. Assess if your goal will move you closer or is steering you away from the real purpose of your life.

Realistic - There's a big chance that you will only feel disappointment, frustration, or failure if you set goals that are not really attainable. Try to find a balance between setting goals that are quite easy versus goals that are impossible to achieve. Be realistic and practical so you can really push yourself to achieve your goals.

Time-Bound - You can specify your goals even more by adding a time and date by which you want to accomplish them. If this is not possible, or not realistic, try setting up a time frame and doing everything you can to make certain that you work within this limit.

Step 3 - Define the Urgency of Your Goals

The last step is to define the urgency with which your goal should be accomplished. Your goals could be:

Long-term - Create a plan of the necessary actions you need to take so you can be closer to your goals over the span of six months to one year.

Medium-term - Think about the necessary actions you need to take so you can move towards your goals within two to three months.

Short-term - Make a list of the things you need to do so you can achieve your goals within a month.

Immediate - What are the goals that you need to achieve within a week or even within the day?

Starting to live in accordance with your personal core values will fan the flames of your committed action.

Our best plan and values will not be meaningful if they are not supported by action. Equipped with the knowledge of the core values you really want to pursue, you can start moving forward towards living a valuable life.

TIPS FOR A BETTER LIFE

What to avoid when trying to improve your self-esteem:

Putting other people down. Sometimes, when a person doesn't feel so great about themselves, they may have to resist the urge to tear someone else down. A great way of being masterful at this is to avoid comparing yourself to others. When you feel a sense of inferiority, then you may try to pull others down so you feel better about yourself. However, if you are not in

competition with others then it's less likely that you'll feel inferior to them. When you put other people down, the positive feeling only lasts temporarily, and you don't get a positive response from others; in fact, it often just makes things worse. Focus on your own uniqueness, and not comparing yourself with others.

Thinking you're better than others. You are not better than anyone else, and no one else is better than you. This is a universal truth that all should embrace. When you start to tell yourself that you're better than other people, then you're essentially trying to replace your feelings of unworthiness with the unhelpful belief that other people are not as good as you. This tendency will ultimately make your relationships worse. Again, you should focus on your inherent value and uniqueness instead of trying to make yourself believe that you are above other people. Truly masterful people are so convinced of their own self-worth that they actually want to encourage others to have a masterful life too.

People pleasing. Often, people who are chronic people-pleasers also have a chronic and deeply-felt dislike of themselves, to the point that they feel like they have to win the approval of others. Often this dislike is subconscious, so you may not be aware of it. However, you do not have to be desperate for others to like you and approve of you. Whether they do or not does not change your own inherent value and self-worth.

Refusing constructive criticism. Everyone, without exception, has some areas that could benefit from some improvements. This is part of what makes you human. The consistent development of a person is a part of their ultimate destiny. No one ever totally arrives at it, as self-actualization is in the process. When you refuse constructive criticism, it signals that you believe critique means that you're inadequate. Change your beliefs to include the more helpful alternate belief that everyone needs healthy constructive criticism to become unstuck and continue to evolve as a person. Don't be ashamed of your shortcomings or try to use perfectionism to cover up weaknesses. Instead try to recognize them, receive constructive criticism, and grow in the process.

Avoiding failure or rejection. If you're constantly living life in a manner that you think will help you avoid failure or rejection, then you will probably benefit from revising your thoughts and creating some healthier alternatives. Temporary failure is inevitable at times and rejection may rear its ugly head periodically. However, you must learn how to tolerate the distress and keep moving forward or else you'll end up being stagnant out of fear of failure and rejection.

Avoiding emotions. Trying to block emotions is not healthy, nor is it something that is sustainable long-term. Having a wide range of emotions is a part of the human experience, and being strong doesn't mean avoiding them. Allow yourself to fully experience negative emotions and then use strategies to change the situation or change your thoughts about the situation.

Trying to control others. That is not your job. You do not have to prove your significance by trying to make other people conform to what you want. Instead, focus on your own self-improvement.

Over-defending your self-worth. No one is saying you have to be a doormat for others to stomp all over, but if you find you are compelled to always defend yourself, then that's an indicator that you're struggling with self-confidence. If you are okay with your own inherent self-worth, you won't feel the need to constantly defend yourself. Don't allow yourself to become outraged every time a person says something about you that you don't like or offers an opinion that differs from your own. Instead agree to disagree, tolerate any negative emotion, change how you think about your own inherent self-worth and keep moving forward with your goals. Remember, you can show yourself respect even if other people don't respect you in the same way.

Blaming other people for your problems. Of course, you have had your share of difficulties. In fact, more than half the American population has had some traumatic experience, so you are in good company. What separates people who accomplish their goals from people who don't are their attitudes and behaviors. Do not blame nature or other people for your problems. Don't blame your past, genetics, hormones, or anything else for what you're currently experiencing. Focus on accomplishing your goals and don't get sidetracked by playing the blame game.

Don't take yourself or life so seriously

Understand that you will make mistakes. You are human, which means that without question, you will make mistakes at some point in your life. During some stages of your life, you will make more mistakes than others. The key is to course-correct by changing your thinking and behavioral patterns. Expect that sometimes you will make mistakes and that they are important, because the lessons you learn are key for your own personal development.

Try new things. Don't be so afraid to try something different. The more you try new things, the more things you'll find that you're good at. Also, you'll become more confident as you see that trying new things can actually turn into positive experiences. If you "fail," surely you will have learned something in the process.

Be silly on purpose. This is a great way to avoid being ashamed when you mess up. Purposely engage in a silly activity in public. For instance, wear a big crazy hat on the train or walk through the mall wearing a loud, colorful, mismatched outfit. Practice self-acceptance skills while you're doing these silly things and you'll discover that you're not as easily shamed anymore.

Laugh at yourself. It really is that simple. When you feel the urge to be overly critical, or you start to feel shame creep up, begin to laugh at yourself. Stop taking yourself so seriously. Things happen. Learn to laugh about it instead of ruminating

about it.

When in social situations, focus on things other than your own performance. Take the focus off of yourself and move your attention to a more external focus. What are your friends doing and saying? What does the atmosphere look like? What are the smells you're experiencing? Try to identify them. Enjoy the flavors of any meal you're enjoying. Try to be mindful of your environment instead of focusing on internal thoughts and impulses. This is a great distraction technique. Be intentional about not having a requirement to feel absolutely safe in your environment and learn to enjoy yourself.

Creativity. Tap into your creative side. If you have natural creative talents, express them. Take some time to participate in activities that you truly enjoy. The more masterful you become with your creative endeavors, the better and more confident you will feel overall.

Be adventurous. Stop trying to avoid unpredictable outcomes. The chances of you being able to accurately predict the outcome of every situation are slim, and your tendency to be overly cautious only makes life more chaotic for you.

CHAPTER 8

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How are CBT and DBT different?

DBT has its roots in CBT, but it uses a more dialectical approach than traditional CBT therapies. Although most people are able to get significant results from CBT, it was found that there was a specific group of patients who were not getting the results that the average person was receiving. Instead, this group got frustrated with the process and quickly dropped out because they did not feel validated. So, a revised CBT process that combines emotional validation with behavioral change was developed. This is known as DBT.

Are CBT and DBT more effective than other therapies?

These therapies have been scientifically proven to be very effective, and most clients make lasting changes quickly. All therapies have their positive points however, cognitive-based therapies are often favorites among clinicians because they are action-oriented, thus obtaining quicker results. The results that most people get in a year of talk therapy can be easily obtained in 3-4 sessions of CBT or DBT.

How does the therapy work?

The amount of therapy you need varies based upon your own individual needs, however most people do well with one individual session per week. DBT also includes one additional skill-building group session per week. Your commitment to the therapy process really is the best determining factor as to how the therapy will work. Some people do more than one individual session per week, while others are comfortable with the one session. That is something that you should discuss with your therapist to determine a specific treatment regimen.

How long does it take to see progress?

Progress varies depending on the person, but most people start seeing results very early, typically within 3-4 sessions. Of course, this depends largely on how much effort you put into the program. Doing the homework consistently and attending the group skill-building sessions every week is critical to your success in DBT. This book provides many of the techniques that you will learn during treatment.

What if I'm skeptical?

Give it a try. You won't know whether it works or not until you try it. Just like almost anything else in life, you won't know how effective it really is until you try it. Commit to doing your first behavioral experiment and see how it goes. If it works, great, keep going. If it doesn't, you can always stop.

Can I discontinue medication?

Although both CBT and DBT have both been found to be quite effective treatment approaches, even without medication, the decision to discontinue your medication should be taken very seriously and supervised by a medical professional. You should discuss that decision with your psychiatrist or another physician.

How does DBT prioritize treatment goals?

Target 1: Life-threatening behavior and behavior that interferes with treatment

Target 2: Decrease emotional suffering

Target 3: Daily living management

Target 4: Sense of wholeness and connectedness

This is the priority of the goals for DBT treatment. Of course, life-threatening goals take priority and moving through suicidal ideation or self-harm behavior is addressed first. Also, behavior that interferes with treatment is high-priority as well because no progress can be made unless there is commitment to the therapy process. The ultimate goal is to get you to a place of complete wholeness. You are one out of a whole universe, and you are universally connected with every other person in the universe. Whatever your religious or spiritual beliefs are, the ultimate goal of DBT is to help you embrace yourself, your life, and other people so that you can fully experience and enjoy life.

Is Eastern philosophy an underpinning of DBT?

DBT's core mindfulness component emphasizes staying in the present, and it does have its foundation in Eastern traditions. The goal is to help you stay in the present with your thoughts and emotions because most disturbances result from things that have happened in the past or thoughts about the future. The tradition of concentrating on the here and now has been practiced in the Eastern world for centuries and the Western world has more recently adopted the mindfulness theory. It has been very helpful for people who truly want to get unstuck so that they are no longer overwhelmed by their emotions.

CONCLUSION

Dialectical Behavior Therapy has offered much in the realm of therapies. Dr. Linehan has saved thousands of lives with her innovative work. Borderline Personality Disorder is not being “crazy” or “unhinged.” It’s simply mental illness. It includes many other mental illnesses as facets of it. Because of that, it only makes sense that an effective therapy for this condition would include many types of therapy and self-reflection.

Mindfulness is probably the most important aspect of DBT because we have been trained not to be mindful. We’re like ants, scurrying around – hurry, hurry, hurry, but going nowhere.

Mindfulness forces you to focus on the present. Ask yourself, “Am I treading water? Am I at the bottom of a ladder I want to be on or the middle of one I don’t?” When you choose mindfulness, you look at your life for a moment.

Your questions aren’t all going to be answered in one moment of mindfulness. It’s something that must be practiced every day. DBT is an excellent medium for learning the skills of mindfulness and interpersonal relationships. When therapy is complete, you’ve acquired an outstanding toolkit of skills to reach for in any situation.

Our entire lives are our memories and our interpersonal relationships. Because DBT focuses on mindfulness and interpersonal relationships, it is one of the most effective types of therapies. When we’re mindful, we’re creating memories. We’re technically creating memories when we’re not mindful as well – but not memories of what’s actually happening.

In summary, by practicing the skills of DBT, we create memories and interpersonal relationships. And having good memories and relationships is what makes life worth living.

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

How to Get Out Of the 'Worry Trap' Using ACT. A Simple
Guide To Relieve Stress And Overcome Fear. Start
Living an Easy, Carefree Life

DAVID LAWSON PHD

INTRODUCTION

I want to thank you and congratulate you for downloading this book , *"How to Get Out Of the 'Worry Trap' Using ACT. A Simple Guide To Relieve Stress And Overcome Fear. Start Living an Easy, Carefree Life"*

It is normal for people to suffer. However, suffering is not just about physical or psychological pain. People also suffer from difficult self-assessments, uncomfortable feelings, and painful memories. Because we dread or worry about suffering, we do everything to avoid it. We want to minimize our suffering. Many of us place importance on feeling better. But a good life is about a lot more than just the absence of suffering. We want to live a good life and we want to make the best of our short stay on this planet.

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is focused on the problem of human suffering, but it also goes beyond that. It is also about understanding human suffering as an important factor in realizing a good life. This new form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is focused on important questions such as "What is my real purpose in life?"

But before we delve deeper into ACT as a specific CBT technique, let us first understand human suffering.

Understanding Human Suffering in the Context of Psychotherapy

For pets, perhaps a cat or a dog, happiness is easier to achieve. If their basic needs are provided – food, water, shelter, warmth, and fun – they will be happy. With the absence of human intervention, pets usually miss some of these fundamental needs. They live their lives as mere animals. In comparison, humans may also miss fundamental needs. It can be easy to understand how miserable a person can get when these needs aren't met.

However, many of us have all the things that some people would be happy to have, but we are still not happy. With our modern wonders – technology, supermarkets, real estate – we are entertained, well fed, and protected from cold or heat. But many of us are still miserable.

We still hear stories about billionaires in their prime committing suicide. There are celebrities who have already achieved wealth and fame, but still sulk in the corner then drink alcohol or take drugs. It seems that our lives naturally come with suffering.

Physical pain has distinct psychological (mind) and physiological (body) components. The biological aspect of pain refers to the signal that is transmitted to our brain so we are aware that something is wrong.

On the other hand, the psychological aspect of pain dwells on the meaning or interpretation we provide to that message – our self-dialogue that involves our personal beliefs which then trigger our emotional responses. Human suffering results from emotional and mental responses to pain. The psychological and biological facets of chronic pain work together to function like a radar that helps us keep track of our psychological well-being.

The resolve to recover from chronic pain is distinct between the actual pain and suffering. It is also then focused on achieving comfort. While we cannot avoid pain, we can surely do something about our response to suffering, in the same way we can choose how to respond to anger.

In the psychological context, pain is a function that alerts us of the imbalance in our physical, mental, and spiritual dimensions. Anything that affects the body or mind can also affect the other dimensions of the self. Recovery from human suffering can be progressive, gradual, or a continuous process of restoring balance in these dimensions.

Human suffering is regarded as both a cause and effect of distressing emotions and the catastrophic thoughts associated with pain. These may include helplessness, hopelessness, loneliness, shame, guilt, frustration, depression, fear, anger, irritability, and anxiety.

The bad habit of negative thinking can also make our situations seem worse than it actually is. Most people, especially those who are not suffering from chronic pain, tend to magnify the negative aspects of the situation through overthinking. Our minds are capable of making us miserable, and negative thinking can become a self-defeating and self-fulfilling prediction.

For those who are suffering from chronic pain, there is a direct link between the level of pain and negative thinking. It can be a dangerous cycle in which pain can result in negative thinking and self-doubt that translates to emotions that coincide with human suffering. This experience can increase stress and muscle tension that in turn amplifies the pain signals that trigger more pain.

The progression of human suffering can be like this:

- Pain results in negative thinking or self-doubt.
- Negative thinking or self-doubt results in negative feelings such as sadness or depression.
- Sadness or depression can lead to stress or muscle tension.
- Stress or muscle tension leads to more pain.
- Pain results in more negative thinking and self-doubt.

As you can see, it's a vicious cycle, and the longer this cycle continues, the more out of balance we become.

We can do something about human suffering when we become more aware of the cycle and learn how to respond differently to our pain. The recovery process for pain includes significantly modifying the negative progression beginning with the cognitive and emotional balance through mindfulness and acceptance strategies.

By restoring balance, you can counteract the dynamics of deviation. Once you become aware of your negative thoughts you can harness yourself to accept the situation and detach from it. This will then lead to decreased negative emotions that will result in less muscle tension and stress.

Again, this is not supposed to be easy. But it is completely possible if you work on it. By adjusting our thoughts, and the way we think we can effectively reshape our emotional responses, including the extent to which we suffer.

Thanks for downloading this book. It's my firm belief that it will provide you with all the answers to your questions.

CHAPTER 1

UNDERSTANDING ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, or ACT, is a form of therapy that draws from mindfulness practice and cognitive behavioral psychotherapy. It is also known as a contextual psychotherapy because it encourages patients to exhibit values-based positive behaviors even if they are experiencing negative sensations, emotions, or thoughts. In other words, it helps patients increase their psychological flexibility.

As a third wave Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), ACT (said as one word) is strongly connected to the power of behavioral change. However, ACT differs from CBT. It can change the relationship you have with your thoughts rather than change them directly. ACT promotes the notion that you don't have to do anything with your thoughts to push change in your behavior.

ACT focuses on mindfulness, diffusion of challenging thoughts, and acceptance of unpleasant emotions. With ACT, your efforts are concentrated on moving you towards a momentous life by helping you learn to separate yourself from your thoughts. Your efforts are based on your committed action towards establishing your values.

ACT mindfulness skills have 3 categories:

- Acceptance: enables patients to make room for sensations, urges, and painful feelings, and allowing them to easily come and go
- Defusion: enables patients to let go of and distance from unhelpful thoughts, memories, and beliefs
- Contact with the present moment: enables patients to fully engage, with an attitude of curiosity and openness, with their here-and-now experience

ACT can be delivered in many different ways:

- Ultra-brief ACT – ACT can be highly effective even in one or two twenty to thirty-minute sessions. A good example is treatment by Kirk Strosahl, co-founder of ACT, in primary care medical settings.
- Brief ACT – ACT is done with only four sessions of 1-hour each. A good example is treatment by Patty Bach, assistant professor of psychology at the Illinois Institute of Technology, used on patients with schizophrenia.
- Medium-term ACT – ACT is completed for a total of eight hours. An example is a protocol for chronic pain by professor of psychology at Uppsala University in Sweden, JoAnne Dahl.
- Long-term ACT – ACT takes forty sessions of 2-hours each. This is very effective in treating patients with Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD). One of the only few known users of long-term ACT is Spectrum, the Personality Disorder

Note: Therapy Affects the Brain

According to a study published in the *American Journal of Psychology* in 1998, several decades of research has revealed that all mental processes derive from brain mechanisms.

This means that any change in our psychological processes is reflected by changes in the functions or structures of the brain.

It doesn't come as a surprise then that the outcome and effects of these therapies that brings about change in an individual have been studied on both social and psychological levels. Changes in social functioning, personality, psychological abilities, and symptoms were carefully measured. These changes are in a way, brain mechanisms.

One of several strands of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) is a unique way of treating a wide range of symptoms. This approach looks for non-physical causes of mental disorders, understanding that experiences such as depression, addictions, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia arise out of multiple complex factors. It considers genetic, epigenetic (not inherited through DNA), psychological, and cultural conditions. As a syndrome strategy, it identifies sets of symptoms as syndromes related to sets of conditions (Hayes and Lillis 2012, 5).

Conceived by Steven Hayes in 1980, ACT was developed into a fully-fledged therapy model by his students and colleagues, especially Kirk Strohmal and Kelly Wilson in 1999 (ibid, xv). These researchers were concerned with finding a more successful way to ease human suffering and help people address problems within relationships and daily living. They were puzzled as to why people often suffer even in conditions of affluence. They see human suffering as common despite the high-level accomplishments that any individual may make. Hayes and his students and colleagues thought it best to examine the root causes more than the symptoms. Considering the context of each case, this approach is inductive and process-oriented for comprehending human misery and failure (ibid, 6).

Very few therapists practiced ACT until the new millennium (ibid, 15). That may be because Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) was in vogue until the end of the 20th century. As CBT declined, ACT carried on and grew.

History

As behavioral therapy based on empiricism rose throughout the 1960s, there was little research on psychological intervention methods. Empirical results were easily measured, and theoretical foundations tended to be weak, according to Hayes and Lillis (2012, 16), based on humanism and psychoanalysis. Misdiagnosis frequently occurred, they say, citing some of Freud's cases where analytical symbolism, revolving around things like defecation and sex, went too far.

Perhaps in a backlash to analytical psychology, reliance spread on clearly measurable empirical evidence observed in controlled conditions. Behavioral principles were rigidly set, and the application of technologies rigidly tested. ACT arose out of behavioral therapy but made concessions to psychoanalytical and humanist approaches. It, thus, began as a less conventional approach which demanded direct and overt modifications to the behavior of the treated person (ibid, 18). Acceptance and commitment therapists want to see behavioral changes, but they also want to explore the underlying human issues to problem behavior. They view social conditions as deep, rich and complex (ibid.).

Behaviorism set great stimulus-response training and behavior choices. But it is inadequate because it does not take into consideration language and higher-level cognitive processes – meaning, conceptualization, and symbolism (ibid.). In laboratory experiments, only the external factors that the scientist can manipulate can be altered. Cognition, the internal processes of the mind, were harder to decipher. Cognition psychology was likewise insufficient. Models sprouted up, but the evidence for them was lacking. Achieving practical results from cognitive therapy seemed too difficult. By holding conversations with patients, however, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy began to develop, teaching clients to acknowledge and self-direct themselves to correct "behavioral errors" (ibid, 20) while tending to abandon evidence-based treatments in the beginning. Alternative approaches started to be put forward.

ACT – Experienced-Based Psychotherapy

ACT is a new form of CBT that has gained a lot of attention in recent years. It emphasizes values, acceptance, mindfulness and processes to help people overcome life's hurdles.

The concept of human suffering as a natural and unavoidable aspect of humanity is a fundamental assumption of ACT. It also revolves around the attempt of people to take control of or avoid their own experiences that could lead to human suffering and other areas that are not working in our lives. ACT can help people learn effective ways of managing pain, practicing mindfulness, obtaining clarity on what is really important, and seeking a life with more meaning. The objective of ACT is not to get rid of pain, but instead to learn how to experience life without too much struggle.

ACT is regarded as an empirical psychotherapy because its researchers and practitioners are committed to the progress of science and the empirical assessment of its causes and effects.

As of 2014, ACT has been scrutinized in more than 80 randomized clinical trials for different concerns in studies with more than 5,000 subjects. This form of CBT has also been used to build a non-therapeutic version of the same processes known as Acceptance and Commitment Training, which is focused on the development of values skills, acceptance, and mindfulness.

Relational Frame Theory

The Relational Frame Theory (RFT) frames the fundamental concept of ACT. RFT aims to explore the link between behavior and human language.

Understanding language is crucial in psychotherapy. Many of us use language in private when we think or in public when we speak with the people around us. We use language to think about, read about, write about, talk about, evaluate, relate, categorize, and describe everything around us.

Language is a useful tool in our existence as human beings, and without it we may never have had the chance to build our civilizations. For example, without language, we could not develop laws and societal rules to regulate our behavior.

While human language offers a lot of benefits, it can also have negative aspects. It's like the yin and yang – it has a powerful dark side and a powerful bright side. And based on RFT, language plays a critical role in human suffering. Language is a tool we use to form prejudiced and hateful assumptions about people around us, construct negative thoughts, obsess over things, and revisit events that caused us trauma in the past. Too much use of language and thinking can also make it hard to keep in touch with the present moment. We can spend so much time thinking about our past and worrying about our future that we end up being unable to enjoy the present.

Through a deeper understanding of human language and its mechanism, we can better harness its bright side to minimize the effects of the dark side. This form of understanding is what RFT is trying to provide through ACT.

Psychotherapists who are studying how human language affects our behavior usually concentrate on two remarkable aspects of language: generativity and symbolism.

It is easy to understand symbolism as language is used to refer to an object or an idea. For example, the word "tree" refers to a type of plant with a trunk that supports branches, leaves, and may or may not bear flowers or fruits. Language is used to symbolize things. When you gain a better understanding of a specific word, then you can understand its meaning.

Meanwhile, generativity refers to our ability to create and understand an endless number of sentences with meaning. It is also known as productivity. Every language has a specific number of basic letters, sounds, and words. However, each one of us can produce an endless number of totally unique sentences with these words, letters, and sounds.

Various theories have been developed to explore these features and usually describe the important properties or concentrate on various concerns. For instance, linguists believe that the novelty and complexity and generativity of language are mainly due to genetic factors. However, cognitive psychologists believe that our brain is responsible for how we process and store information, including symbols.

In spite of the differences in focus, most language studies are based on the similar idea that language is used to express information that is developed by our brains. Basically, language is a system of symbols that will allow us to express our ideas

that can be understood by other people. These theories often concentrate on what are deemed to be the important processes of language.

Researchers and practitioners of RFT take a different method of exploring language and cognition. Instead of explaining language as a means of communicating ideas from one person to another, RFT focuses on how humans obtain language through interaction with people and their environment. This is framed to provide a useful and practical language analysis and cognition and not just a description of a concept.

ACT is considered as the applied technology of RFT as it tries to help people use language as a way to resolve specific psychological issues. This can be done through the psychological flexibility model that is distinct in ACT.

The Psychological Flexibility Model

The main objective when undergoing ACT is to enhance our psychological flexibility, which refers to our capacity to keep in touch with the present as a fully aware human being, and depending on what the circumstances call for, persisting or changing in behavior to serve preferred values.

To put this simply, this means taking our own emotions and thoughts a bit more lightly, and behaving on long-term values instead of momentary feelings and thoughts, and impulses.

Emotions and thoughts tend to be shaky indicators for long-term values. It's not easy to control them, and they have the tendency to go to extremes. When we allow our emotions and thoughts to influence our behavior, we might overlook the more significant, emerging trends of action and fail to grasp genuine meaning in our lives, or experience life's richness.

At present, psychological flexibility is measured through the Acceptance and Action Questionnaire, which is used by psychotherapists and ACT specialists to predict the following psychological concerns:

- Depression
- Poor work performance
- Substance abuse
- Anxiety sensitivity
- Long-term disability
- Higher anxiety
- General pathology
- Alexithymia
- Worry

There are six fundamental ACT processes that establish psychological flexibility, and these will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. Take note that each process is considered as a positive psychological skill and not a special technique to resolve psychological concerns.

Getting Through with ACT

The journey that is life, just like your ACT odyssey, is filled with starts and stops, ups and downs, progress and setbacks. Here are four pitfalls that people sometimes encounter while living the ACT life. Understanding them will help keep you from becoming discouraged.

Impatience

If you've ever watched a preschooler learning to tie their shoes, then you know what impatience looks like. In Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, too, people sometimes get frustrated and feel that they're not achieving "the outcome" quickly enough. Remember, though, that ACT is an odyssey, not a quick fix for your problems. It's a process, just like learning to tie your shoes. Being patient with yourself will go a long way toward helping you develop a values-driven life over the long term.

Speeding

Beginning your odyssey of creating and living a high-quality life is exciting. But sometimes people try to go too fast, and they set goals that are not achievable in the short term. If you take the time you need to learn about the ACT concepts and how to work with them, and if you complete all the exercises in this book, you'll be able to take more and more effective action as your journey unfolds. You don't want to be like the kid who quickly wads their shoelaces into a loose lump and then takes off running, only to trip and fall when the laces come undone.

Hesitation

Just as you don't want to create goals and attempt actions that are too big for this stage of your journey, you don't want your goals and actions to be so small that you don't experience any progress. But it can be difficult and scary to make changes, even when you know you're ready for a different kind of life. What if you don't like the results? What if you fail? Those are uncomfortable questions, and people sometimes try to avoid them by setting goals that are too easy or too small to create any forward movement. But remember when you were a child and knew that you needed to learn how to tie your shoes? What would have happened if you'd just left them in your closet and thought about learning to tie them someday? To sidestep the pitfall of hesitation, never set a goal without asking yourself how its achievement will help you move ahead.

CHAPTER 2

FUNDAMENTAL PROCESSES OF ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

Basically, ACT is focused on the six core processes that revolve around psychological flexibility. This largely defines the expansive way to frame our thoughts. It is important to take note that all these processes work with each other and not as individual techniques for psychotherapy.

The six processes of ACT are acceptance, being present, cognitive defusion, committed action, self as context, and values.

• Acceptance

Acceptance is considered an alternative approach for experiential avoidance. It also involves the conscious and active acceptance of personal history without trying to change its form or frequency, especially if doing so will result in damage to the person's psychological health.

For instance, people who suffer from anxiety are encouraged to feel anxiety as an emotion that is natural for people to feel. Meanwhile, people who suffer from chronic pain are encouraged to undergo specific treatments that will allow them to cope. Take note that this process is not an end in itself. Instead, it is developed as a way to increase actions that are based on values.

Most people who suffer from anxiety usually find it odd when they are advised by their ACT specialists to accept something that has been causing them suffering. This may not make sense initially. Some people ask "Why would we want to accept anxiety? Doesn't that mean that we have to live with this harmful emotion?"

But that's the ACT way. The process requires acceptance, after which you will have to go. It may sound contradictory, because how can you let go of something you have already accepted?

Keep in mind that language is used to represent something, and that there are instances when it also represents what is beyond the literal meaning. In the most literal sense, acceptance refers to the action of receiving something.

Old school mental health practitioners promoted the idea of acceptance as learning how to live with something; in this example, anxiety. However, this notion could be detrimental as it may build an internal conflict that can cause confusion and make the anxiety worse.

From an ACT perspective, acceptance and letting go means turning something into another object that can help you live a more meaningful life. This kind of thinking will not only empower you but will also undermine the power of anxiety. Much like anger, anxiety gets its strength from the way we respond to it. In the ACT context, acceptance means suspending all our judgment and becoming more conscious as if we are observing ourselves from the outside.

Letting go of anxiety can automatically happen when we stop judging and being afraid. If we are not aware of negative thoughts, we will end up fortifying our attachment to the things that could hurt us. It might seem that we are protecting ourselves by avoiding negative feelings, but sometimes, trying hard to eliminate something can result in an even stronger attachment.

• Being Present

ACT encourages the persistent non-judgmental link between environmental and psychological events as they happen. The objective is for us to feel a more straightforward experience so that we increase the flexibility of our behavior and so our actions are more aligned with the values that are important to us. We can achieve this by permitting our behavior to be influenced by our workability, and also through language, to take note and describe events and not to merely judge or predict them.

A study conducted by Harvard University reveals that humans spend 50% of their time daydreaming. This is a surprising fact considering the limited time we have. Humans have the ability to detach from the present and think over the past or the future. This is considered as a gift because we can revisit our past and learn from it to improve ourselves. This will allow us to grow as individuals and as a society as we can collectively look after our well-being.

It also allows us to plan for our future. It is a good thing if we can anticipate what could happen in the next few years. Our ability to place ourselves in the possible situation will allow us to think about how we might deal with different circumstances when they happen.

However, if our daydreaming results in emotional disturbance, it could significantly affect our mental health and steal our happiness. It becomes a burden – a hurdle that we need to overcome.

Too much thinking about the past can lead us down the path of regrets or the inability to accept and let things go. It should not be altogether eliminated because it allows us to plan for the future. However, thinking too much of the future can be a bad thing because it could mean that we are not living our lives to the fullest and that we are wasting our time and energy preparing for scenarios that aren't even likely to happen.

Daniel Gilbert, a renowned psychologist from Harvard University, explores the psychological immune system that activates during stressful events allowing us to cope. More often than not, these things are not as bad as we had expected them to be. Overthinking something is proven to be just a waste of time and resources.

Another study conducted by Harvard psychologist Dr. Matt Killingsworth reveals that humans are far less happy when they are daydreaming. Focusing on worries about the future can easily rob you of the gift of the present. It can prevent you from actually doing something to improve your situation. Time is important, and while daydreaming is not always a bad thing, spending too much time on it is not a good idea. That time could be spent with family or friends. Spending too much time away from the present is not a good way to experience life.

It will take time and effort to teach our minds not to daydream too much, but it is doable. Here are some pointers you can follow:

- **Practice Mindfulness**

You don't need to be a monk who is adept at meditation to practice the art of mindfulness.

You can practice the simple joy of being conscious and aware by making the effort to eat your breakfast without any form of distraction. Feel the warmth of coffee in your mouth, savor the bittersweet taste and smell the aroma of the wonderful drink. Try to use your five senses and focus on what you can gain from the present. Try to do this as regularly as you can, but begin with a simple activity that you regularly do every day.

- **Regain Focus on the Simplicity of Life**

As soon as you notice that your mind is wandering off again, immediately regain your focus. Get your attention back to something that is simple and monotonous right at the moment. It could be a piece of paper, a paper bill, a cup of coffee, a notebook, or even just your hand.

Try to focus on things that will not trigger any emotion. The goal is to concentrate all your attention on the item that will bring your awareness back to the present. You can do this each time you find yourself daydreaming until you are ready to naturally move on to what it is you are actually doing.

- **Do New Things Every Day**

Have you realized that when we were kids, the day seems to slowly pass by? This is partly because when we were kids, we were experiencing life for the first time, and processing it all requires our complete attention. It is ideal to focus our attention when we try new things and notice how much of the attention we manage to win over. We have to focus so we can learn how to do something. We generally have to steer ourselves to the present as we learn to do new things.

It can be fairly easy to give in to the habit of always looking forward. We usually do so in order to avoid a frustrating result – we want to be prepared for the worst-case scenario, or stay on top of things. That's why we sometimes spend too much time with our minds wandering instead of enjoying the present. As a result, we sometimes fail to truly experience the precious moments of our life. It is great to have a plan, but it could be detrimental if we spend our time thinking about the thousands of possible scenarios that probably aren't going to ever happen.

- **Cognitive Defusion**

ACT encourages us to defuse or detach ourselves from harmful thinking patterns through a core process known as

cognitive defusion. The idea is that we all have the tendency to become too attached to our thoughts, and we tend to blow things out of proportion. Once we become too fused – too much attached – to our thoughts, they become stronger.

We need to accept the reality that thoughts are only thoughts. This statement is not designed to diminish the emotional effects of thoughts or deny the reality that thoughts can help us be more aware of what is happening around us. These ideas are valid, but the point is that our thoughts are no stronger than we allow them to become. There are words and images that float through our mind, but we are the ones responsible for giving meaning to them.

It is not necessary to always respond to our ideas. When we think about something that is strong or frightening, there is usually a sense of urgency linked to them that drives us to act immediately. If thoughts pop into your mind or if you have thoughts that you just can't shake off, it is best to apply the principles of acceptance and mindfulness before you take action.

Cognitive defusion is the practice of observing thoughts instead of becoming attached to the thought, looking *at* thoughts instead of looking *from* thoughts, and allowing thoughts to come and go instead of becoming attached to them.

Through cognitive defusion, we can observe the essence of our thoughts – that they are mere words or images that our mind conjures because of the emotions we feel. It will also help us respond to our thoughts by taking a workable action that is based on what actually works.

This is where mindfulness also comes in handy. We need to be able to recognize when we are too attached to thoughts. They should not always dictate our behavior.

Cognitive defusion is also effective if we need to change the thoughts that serve as obstacles in trying to live a life that is based on values.

Try assessing how you respond to your thoughts. But keep in mind that using cognitive defusion doesn't mean thoughts are naturally harmful. Our capacity as humans to think and make sense of our thoughts allows us to live a more dynamic life.

Thinking patterns can become detrimental if they cause considerable tension or stress. You may choose to start becoming more aware of your thoughts instead of becoming more attached with them. Their strength is only amplified by our illusion that these thoughts are stronger than us.

• Self as Context

Because of relational frames such as Here vs. There, Now vs. Then, and I vs. You, the human language is directed to the context of self, and builds a spiritual, transcendent side our humanity.

This concept is one of the core tenets of RFT and ACT, and there is now progressive evidence of its essence to the functions of language such as sense of self, theory of mind, and empathy.

Self as context is also crucial in ACT because it allows someone to be aware of his own flow of experience without forming any form of attachment. Self as context is developed in ACT through experiential processes, metaphors, and mindfulness exercises.

Mindfulness is the seed of this core process, as this will allow you to get in touch with your senses. This will harness your skill in observing yourself. For example, through this core process, you can take a closer look at your own human development and where you are in life. You will be aware of the influence of your upbringing and how it can affect your future.

Mindfulness is a critical aspect of ACT. That's why we have devoted a full chapter to it.

• Values

In the context of cognitive behavior, values refer to specific qualities that warrant purposeful action.

In ACT, your specialist will encourage you to perform exercises that will help you select your direction in life in different areas such as career, family, and spirituality. This will also help you undermine the verbal processes that can lead to decisions based on attachment, social compliance, or avoidance.

For example, parents generally value honesty. A good person values integrity. A good leader values justice.

Remember, in the core processes of being present, defusion, and acceptance are not individual psychotherapy techniques but rather, they serve as guideposts for a more vital life that is consistent with the values that are important to you.

How to Discover Your Personal Core Values

Discovering your personal values will allow you to find the specific traits that reflect your needs, wants, and what you really care about life. By exploring your inner self to look for your core values, you can find great forces that will guide you in your decisions. This will also help you figure out what to seek and what to avoid. Through this core ACT process, you can start harnessing your own moral compass. Personal core values can serve as your guide posts to highlight what you really cherish, and when you are in a difficult situation, you can choose to behave based on the standards you have set for yourself.

• Be Conscious of Your Emerging Values

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in discovering your values. To do this, you should first find a quiet place where no one can disturb you. Exploring your inner self to find your personal values requires your own space and time. Turn off your phone, listen to calming music, or anything that can help you focus and relax. Some people use aromatherapy. Lavender oil is

especially calming.

- Remember Happy and Sad Moments in Your Life

Begin the process of discovering your personal values by writing down the moments in which you experienced great happiness or sadness. Try to remember the peaks and valleys of your experiences and take note of the details that surround every memory. Focus on the memories that had the most significant influence on your life, instead of those in which you earned recognition or praise.

For example, you might have experienced great joy when your family visited a beach for the first time. This may not have been the best moment for your success, but this could be the root memory for your personality and how you bond with your loved ones.

Explore the common themes that run through your strongest memories, which could be influenced by your religious beliefs or political affiliation. There's a good chance that you will find specific things that trigger strong emotions of anger, sadness, injustice, or a combination of these things. Take note of the things that are missing and then try to look for value during your most joyous moments.

Examine Human Needs in General

We all have our basic needs based on the composition of our bodies and our common needs within the society we belong to. Our personal values generally stem from our needs. Hence, we feel strong passion and commitment towards our values. By exploring human needs, we can gain a powerful boost to define our personal values. Basically, the universal needs of humans include:

- Physical requirements (food, water, shelter, clothes)
- Peace (hope, acceptance, ease of mind)
- Connection (consideration, respect, warmth)
- Autonomy (self-expression, dignity, choice)
- Play (joy, humor, adventure)
- Meaning (understanding, participation, celebration)

Create a Draft of Your Personal Core Values

Make a temporary list of the personal core values you believe you cannot live without. In this step, you have to connect your personal experiences with the values that are important in your culture (and to you) on top of the fundamental needs of humans based on our biological composition.

Write the values using wording that holds true for yourself. For example, if you value truth, you may want to write this as "I value the courage of honesty and integrity."

Try to start with at least seven core values, but take note that this could be trimmed down to at least three core values later on in the process.

Write About How You Usually Practice These Values

Personal values could be different from the strategies you use to define them. More often than not, these strategies are based on the values of your family. By understanding how you practice your personal values, you can gain better insight into the values that influence you to do things that you can be proud of.

For example, you may choose service as one of your personal core values. Will you practice this value by running for an elected position or by volunteering in a charitable organization? If you value peace, do you discourage noise in your home, or are you more active in seeking reconciliation between people who disagree with each other? It is crucial to make these strong connections between your values and the things you do every day.

Look at the Results of Your Decisions

You can do this step in either imagined or real situations that require decisions. How would you decide if you value love of family, and you have to pick between staying with your loved ones and pursuing a career overseas? If you value independence, and you are given a choice to move in with your special someone, would you do it?

In these scenarios, your personal values can really help you make creative decisions that mirror how you care for yourself and the people around you. You should understand that you can see the value in action when you need to make a real-life decision. There are times that we are so attached to a certain core value that we always think it will result in the best decision.

Make the Final List of Your Personal Core Values

By doing the first six steps, you should be able to make the final lists of values that you really care about. Remember, these values must be based on your initial inclination on what is essential for you. Moreover, you should integrate what you learned about writing down your values and testing them out in different scenarios. Try to trim down to three to four primary values.

These values are effective tools. Personal core values can reshape your brain to help you live the life you really want.

CHAPTER 3

SETTING UP GOALS WITH THE ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY PROCESS

ACT encourages setting up of goals that are based on values. It specifies three major steps:

1. Choose an area in your life that you want to work on.

This may include community, romance, education, career, personal growth, environment, family, parenting, health, finances, and many more.

2. Establish goals that are SMART – Specific, Meaningful, Adaptive, Realistic, and Time-Bound.

Specific - Try to be specific as possible as to what actions you want to take. Be sure that you are aware of the steps involved in taking the necessary action. A specific goal is easier to achieve than a general goal. For example, just setting up the goal of spending more time with your child may not allow you to know if you have already achieved it. A more specific goal is to spend at least one hour playing every day. Being specific with your goal will allow you to assess whether or not you have already accomplished the goal and monitor your progress accordingly.

Meaningful - Assess whether your goal is genuinely based on your values in comparison with a strict rule or a sense of what you must do. If you think that your goals don't have a deeper sense of purpose or meaning, try to assess whether the goal is really influenced by the values you hold dear. Take note that your core values should be based on things that provide meaning to your life.

Adaptive - Make sure your goal will help you follow a direction that you think will greatly improve your life. Assess whether your goal will move you closer to or is steering you away from the real purpose of your life.

Realistic - There's a big chance that you will only feel disappointment, frustration, or failure if you set goals that are not really attainable. Try to find a balance between setting goals that are quite easy versus goals that are impossible to achieve. Be realistic and practical.

Time-Bound - Specify your goals even more by adding a time and date by which you want to accomplish them. If this is not possible, or not realistic, try setting up a time frame and do everything you can to make certain that you work within this bond.

3. Define the Urgency of Your Goals

The last step is to define the urgency with which your goal should be accomplished. Your goals could be:

- Long-term - Create a plan of the actions you need to take so you can be closer to your goals over the span of six months to one year.
- Medium-term - Think about the actions you need to take so you can move towards your goals within two to three months.
- Short-term - Make a list of the things you need to do so you can achieve your goals within a month.
- Immediate - What are the goals that you need to achieve within a week or even within the day?

Starting to live in accordance with your personal core values will fan the flames of your committed action.

Our best plans and values will not be meaningful if they are not supported by action. Equipped with the knowledge of the core values you really want to pursue, you can start moving forward towards living a valuable life.

CHAPTER 4

OVERCOMING POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER WITH ACT

If you have lived through or witnessed a shocking, scary or dangerous event, you might develop a condition known as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. These traumatic events can range from losing a house to fire, losing a loved one, or surviving a road accident. The more an event excites horror, helplessness, serious injury or death, the more potent the PTSD.

Main Symptoms of PTSD

Re-experiencing symptoms: This is where a person relives the terrible experience in their minds. If the traumatic event they went through was the loss of their house in a fire that even claimed one of their loved ones, the affected person might start having flashbacks of the event. Traumatic events tend to make a person feel helpless, and when they come back to haunt them in the form of flashbacks or intrusive thoughts, the affected person feels drained of energy. They lose their capacity to move on with the rest of the day after re-experiencing the traumatic event through their mind's eye.

Avoidance symptoms: Sufferers of PTSD tend to avoid events or situations that might lead them to think back to their traumatic event. For instance, if someone lost their loved one in a water accident, whereby their boat capsized, the sufferer may actively avoid ever getting into a boat again. This is because if they entered the boat, they would have no peace at all; a mixture of fearing that whatever happened to their loved one might happen to them, and getting to relive the horrific event in their mind.

Hyper arousal symptom: If you have lived through a traumatic event, it can modify your nervous system in such a way that you become too sensitive. For instance, you could become anxious at a loud noise, or bright light. These are merely your survival instincts kicking into gear. Additionally, you could have trouble falling asleep or concentrating. Such problems can cause you to become bitter, can eliminate happiness, and potentially ruin your life.

Cognition and mood symptoms : Another obvious sign of PTSD is an inability to remember the exact details of the traumatic event. The rush of adrenaline you experienced back then might be responsible for blocking out some of the details. Then you might experience guilt or blame someone for what happened. If you think that you had a chance of mitigating the trauma, but failed to do so, you may experience an immense amount of guilt. Additionally, PTSD can make you lose interest in activities that you once enjoyed.

There are a number of ways of treating Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, but one of the most effective ways involves the use of ACT. Actually, it is believed to be the most effective form of treatment, with people living with PTSD getting rid of their symptoms in as few as twelve sessions.

The following are some of the methods used in treating PTSD:

Prolonged Exposure

If someone has lived through a traumatic event, it is only natural to want to stay away from the thought patterns that call back those traumatic memories. However, this treatment method seeks to do just that: expose the person to memories of the trauma for an extended amount of time. The logic behind this treatment method is that once the person with PTSD confronts their fears, they will eventually stop being bothered by them. However, if they keep running away, then the traumatic memories will hold a lot of power over the individual. In numerous scientific studies, this treatment method has received

praise for being effective in eliminating recurring symptoms, anxiety arousal, and avoidance of PTSD-arousing stimuli. Positive results can be achieved by the third session.

Cognitive Processing Therapy

When a traumatic event takes place, the affected person might develop various maladaptive assumptions that will increase the potency of their trauma. Cognitive processing therapy is used in detecting and restructuring the maladaptive patterns in their thoughts. This method helps people with PTSD find meaning in the trauma, and it also helps decrease their anxiety and boost their self-esteem. Cognitive processing therapy has been shown to have a high success rate of curing PTSD symptoms. To a large extent, the success of this treatment model is down to the sufferer, i.e., they must be cooperative.

Seeking Safety

When you live through a traumatic event, your emotional makeup might become twisted. For instance, if you survive a road accident, you will become an extremely sensitive person. Something as ordinary as experiencing a bump while riding a car will suddenly make you fearful, cause a flood of emotions, and it will take a long time to return to normal. Seeking safety helps people overcome their emotional dysregulation and cope with their extreme fears. One of the ways of curing emotional dysregulation is through practicing mindfulness. When your mind is focused on savoring the present moment, it is less likely to jump back to the traumatic past.

Eye Movement Desensitization Reprocessing

EMDR is much like prolonged exposure, except that it utilizes eye movement exercises. This treatment was popular a few years back but seems to have fallen out of favor with therapists since evidence came out that the eye movement exercises achieved nothing. However, some therapists still employ this method of treatment. In keeping with the tradition of prolonged exposure, the sufferer is made to relive their trauma through their minds, and then the therapist guides them in performing various eye exercises.

Studies have shown that PTSD subjects' efforts at thought suppression are futile. Such strategies even increase the frequency of unwanted thoughts, memories, and emotions. This effect is demonstrated to be strongest among female PTSD sufferers who have been raped. There have also been studies on self-reported coping strategies that provide evidence of avoidance.

Research has further revealed that dissociation, which would likely have occurred at the original event of trauma, and delayed reactions worsen the symptoms of PTSD.

ACT can be applied to a full range of diagnoses, comorbid states, and difficulties in managing daily life. Also, it addresses a range of responses, not just fear-based responses in PTSD. Furthermore, ACT explicitly addresses quality of life. Through self-examination and acknowledgment, a client can commit to behavior changes, and thereby raise their quality of life.

ACT's protocol consists of three components:

Generation of values narratives – Sometimes done as a homework assignment, the client describes his or her values and priorities in seven common areas of life, including family, intimate relationships, employment, health, and spirituality. These descriptions are reviewed and refined with the therapist.

Rating of values narratives –The client rates them in absolute terms first. Then he or she rates how successfully they think they have lived up to those values. Finally, they rank all those values.

Identification of goals, actions, and barriers – The client names the things he or she wants to achieve. Actions required to meet these goals are drawn up. The client then names the obstacles that might get in the way of these goals. The therapist and client then discuss how certain barriers might be overcome. Finally, the therapist persists in working on motivating the client to try despite any barriers that may arise.

CHAPTER 5

HOW TO DEAL WITH DEPRESSION

USING ACCEPTANCE AND

COMMITMENT THERAPY

From the perspective of ACT, depression is understood as avoidance behavior and psychological inflexibility. Depression is a set of behaviors, ideas, and emotions connected to a way of functioning. Behaviors associated with depression are part of a strategy to avoid personal experiences.

Managing depression is an extremely important skill and, unfortunately, it's one that many people with Borderline Personality Disorder and related mood/emotional disorders seem to lack. This doesn't mean that all is lost, however. Much of your reactions to things come from a combination of learned behaviors and the environment around you. By re-learning your methodology for processing and handling emotions, you can actually start to rebuild your ability to tolerate distress.

ACT places a rather large emphasis on the ability of the person to handle distress, such as trauma, circumstance, and generally worrying events. In some cases, they may utterly lack the ability to rationalize in a healthy way why certain things are happening to them, as well as why they are the way that they are. Other therapy methods tend to place an emphasis on things such as asserting the problems or how one can have a proactive effect on them.

The reason that ACT places an emphasis on accepting things rather than making a proactive change is because people who would be helped by ACT are often the type to overcompensate when they try to assert problems in their life. They might have an emotional overreaction or any number of other issues in response to a given stimulus. This is in contrast to the normal response to overwhelming stimuli, which is to become confused and potentially stay stagnant until a clear course is given to them.

Because of this, a lot of focus is placed in ACT on not allowing stressful stimuli to place an emotional burden on you. In other words, allowing it to not unsettle your waters too much.

The ability to deal with stressful conditions is paramount in the development of a happy and healthy way of life. You can't expect to be happy if you don't have a regular, efficient, and healthy way of dealing with emotional trauma and general distress. There's a relatively decent chance that the reason you're pursuing this course in the first place is because you have a hard time dealing with your emotions as they come.

The thing you need to realize is that no matter how much you want it to, blocking out or trying to change a situation which is out of your hands often won't do anything to really change it. Sometimes, things happen. Accepting this isn't a quitter mentality; trying to reject it is a quitter mentality, because it means that you aren't up to the challenge that's in front of you.

Often, people develop this mentality of self-rejection as a response to other stimuli. To have that response of trying to change or reject a situation means that you don't think that you are cut out to stand up to the situation. Part of Dialectical Behavior Therapy consists of thinking about what causes you to feel this way and how you can avoid those triggers.

ACT has a number of methods by which you can start to practice different methods which are useful in the development of

skills for depression. You need to practice these as much as you can in your day-to-day life so that you can start to intuitively use them when the need arises.

Review these daily when you're in the depression block so that you can firmly cement them into your mind. Also try to carry them with you in one way or another so you can remember what steps to take when you need any of the given sets of actions.

The first set of actions that have been developed are methods of distraction. These are used so that when a distasteful emotion or situation comes up, you can start to distract yourself and divert your attention away from it in a productive manner. This will aid you in dealing with emotional response. This also goes hand in hand with your mindfulness practice because the focusing ability that you develop when working with mindfulness will allow you to quickly draw your attention elsewhere and handle the things that are happening inside your head.

Those ideas outline the basis of the accepts distraction strategy. A bright idea would be to put them all on note cards and summarize them, then refresh yourself every morning when you wake up and every night before you go to bed when you're doing your depression block. These will help you in developing tolerance skills for distasteful or stressful situations.

Another thing you need to focus on is finding a way to soothe yourself. This is a concept known as self-soothing, and it's especially important in Dialectical Behavior Therapy. Essentially, this is all about finding ways that you can be kind and comforting to yourself.

We aren't supposed to run all the time without having an opportunity to get rid of the stress. You are supposed to have periods of leisure time and simplicity. These are intended to help you with decompressing and unloading. Allowing yourself time to do this is important because it lets your mind reset to a bit of a blank slate.

Many people who have extant emotional problems are often exacerbated by being in high stress environments and not allowing themselves the opportunity to really decompress and relax. While this won't solve all of your emotional problems at once, it can definitely help you in processing them when you're out and about. Remembering that you have the opportunity to destress at a later point in the day can also make it easier to take on the various stresses of any given day. Don't be afraid to set time aside for yourself.

What exactly should you be doing in this time? This is one of those things where the choice truly is yours. There is no right or wrong thing to be doing. Much like the final rule of meditation, the real goal here is just to be effective: do what works for you!

There are many different things that you may find soothes you. For example, give yourself time to take a bath at night, to read literature of your favorite genre, or to work on some sort of hobby or project. In effect, just be kind to yourself. Allow yourself the opportunity to relax. Know that there's nothing wrong with taking time to yourself. This is an important part of the depression block, so be sure to incorporate it into your day.

I'm going to digress for a moment, to be real and truthful with you. The fact is that most people who practice ACT do so because they have Borderline Personality Disorder. When people have Borderline Personality Disorder, their prognosis isn't exactly great. While it's largely treatable with adequate therapy and possibly supplemental medication to aid with depression, ten percent of people with Borderline Personality Disorder will end up killing themselves. This is a tragic and terrifying number.

If you are reading this because you have Borderline Personality Disorder, or you have read about it and think that you may fit the bill, I'd like to refer you to seeking the help of a medical professional who can be there in person with you and talk you through the various different options. Depression is real, it is heavy, and Borderline Personality Disorder is constantly comorbid with it. While everybody can benefit from the skills that are developed through Dialectical Behavior Therapy, if you're here because you fear that you might have Borderline Personality Disorder, seek genuine help and get into a program with a personal therapist so that you can be sure you're getting the best and most personalized experience possible.

The reason that this is relevant and not a total digression is that sometimes, the ability to encourage yourself is going to be very, very difficult to maintain. In fact, if you do have depression comorbid with your mood or personality disorder, the chances are good that when I say you need to cheer yourself on, you have no idea what I'm even talking about. While it's easy to say from a certain perspective that you ideally should tell yourself that you can do anything, it's not the reality of the situation that just because you do it, you're going to believe it.

At first, when you tell yourself that you can do it, you're likely not even going to have an emotional kickback reaction; you're going to ask yourself, "What if I can't? Why would I be able to do it?" and this is a tragic starting point. But even if you don't believe it, you need to fake it until you make it.

There are a lot of reasons that this is helpful. Your brain ultimately accepts what it's given, and if you say that you can do something, it's going to over time believe that it can. What you say and do is a very powerful emotional input, and recent psychological studies have shown that faking it until you make it is a very real phenomenon in terms of your brain structure.

More than that, the very act of telling yourself that you can do it, and accept whatever is happening, and cope with it properly, is extremely powerful. It's a psychological sword, if you will. If you do this, you can build the skill to accept what is coming your way and really work your way through it all, no matter what it may be. Telling yourself that you can do it is

impactful.

Beyond all of that, over time you're going to develop the ability to believe in yourself, because of the simple fact that you are going to make it through everything that you're trying to do. While you may not believe it, you will always be able to ultimately cope with whatever you're trying to do. Think of it this way: all of life follows the same pattern. They are either moving forward, or they are at rock bottom, and rock bottom implicates dying. If you aren't dying, then you're progressing still. Find security in that fact. Your mind is designed to deal with various things, though it may not be designed to deal with them immediately. Your mind has an especially difficult time with this, because for one reason or another it has become wired to deal with things in an unhealthy manner.

However, that doesn't mean you can't undo this, and more importantly, the point of all of this is that hard things are, well, hard. You're going to have to work to get through them, and unfortunately that's just the nature of the beast. However, if you bear that in mind and ultimately work on accepting that fact, then you'll start to realize with time that when you tell yourself you can deal with something, you ultimately do. This will reinforce the statement.

The statement also serves to make you more resilient to whatever may happen to you. For example, if you tell yourself you can deal with things constantly, if things do get worse or if another bad thing does happen, you'll remember that you're able to deal with them whenever they do come up. Ultimately, you'll remember that the power absolutely lies within you to make what needs to happen, happen. This is your most powerful tool – your ability to encourage yourself and remember that whatever it takes, you can do it.

That brings an end to the specific improve set. As I said earlier, try to find a way to work these into your daily routine while you're doing the depression block so that you can remember them better when the time comes. Also consider setting them up in such a way that you can see them whenever you most find yourself needing them. This can be something as simple as writing them down in a notes app on your phone and summarizing them so that they're within easy reach, or even taking a screenshot of the pages that they're written on if you're reading this on something like a Kindle or Books app.

The next big part of depression is the ability to evaluate the pros and cons of something. Think about your given situation and think about what positives and negatives can come from it if you decide not to tolerate the situation. Is there any real and proactive change that you can initiate?

A lot of the time, when you're trying actively not to do something, there will be a kickback response in your mind that will manifest until you respond to it. (Unless you have OCD, in which case this is most likely a compulsion and you should avoid meditating on it.) Until you satisfy the answer of what would happen if you did respond to a situation – and analyze such in a realistic manner – you aren't going to feel comfortable with not responding to the situation. This shouldn't happen all the time, as it's a bad habit to ingrain, but when you do have the kickback response it's not a bad thing to think objectively about what would and wouldn't happen if you did decide to respond to the given stimulus.

Another thing you need to practice is the concept of total acceptance. The truth is that a lot of the time, you're trying to actively fight against the reality of a situation. Sometimes, this is because you feel like you can't handle it. Other times, it's because you don't want to lose control of the situation. In these sorts of situations, what you ultimately need to do is allow yourself to completely and total accept whatever is happening to you.

The fact is that you aren't going to change a reality that you can't change, no matter how much you try. Focusing on your inability to change it will only prove frustrating. There are some things that you only have so much of a hand in. In these cases, you can only do as much as you are able to do, and no amount of action will change it.

Consider, for example, an illness in the family. What could you really do to change this stressful situation? Can you take away their illness? Can you fight against this tide? No, unfortunately. The sad truth is that you cannot. And while it's painful, the only thing you can do which is healthy is to accept whatever might happen as something that you aren't able to change.

This should be practiced in tandem with your mindfulness strategies and your willpower so that you're able to practice the next skill: turning your mind around. The objective of this skill is working on your ability to make yourself accept what is happening instead of rejecting it. One of the major problems in issues like Borderline Personality Disorder is that you develop a personality which has a very difficult time accepting whatever is happening. Your knee-jerk reaction is to reject whatever is happening because it means losing control of the situation or becoming powerless.

You need to work on honing that skill so that you can start to accept whatever may happen. You need to practice your ability to make yourself accept things. Acceptance is a habit, and while you shouldn't accept everything which passes, you must learn to accept those things which you have no hand in. Any other reaction is irrational, as there was little that you could have done to change it. While you can fight with yourself over what this phrase really means and whether or not you can do anything to change something, the simplest answer is the correct one: often, you can't.

Building the habit of acceptance will shift you toward a generally healthier state of mind that will let you start to work with things and concepts in a far better way than you are right now. You'll be able to process your emotions in a better way.

All of these skills culminate in the last skill of depression which is to learn the difference between being willing to do something and being excessively willful. Willingness is the will to do that which can actually have an effect. For example, if you

don't like how much you make and you can financially afford to go and get another degree, you should be willing to do so. Don't accept a bad lot in life just because you develop an acceptance stance. Willfulness is the will to do something which won't have an effect; in essence, willfulness is being excessively willful to the point that you want to change things that you cannot. In these cases, your willfulness is breaking from your ability to be accepting of the things you cannot change, which causes unnecessary inner tension. You have to release that tension and allow yourself to accept that which you cannot change. In that, you will find your place in life becoming happier and your way of looking at life becoming healthier. You will no longer obsess over changing things you cannot, but you will find yourself being more willing to do those things which are effective.

That brings the chapter on depression to the end. All of these skills should be practiced during your depression block.

The important thing to note about your blocks, if you haven't already, is that you need to be carrying these skills into your day-to-day life even outside of their designated block; the designated block is merely intended to give you a time for extended focus on a given subject so that you can train those methods and start working on retaining them.

If you're reading through this book and thinking that you should try to implement all of these things at once, I'd like to warn you not to; your therapy will be more ineffective. Your brain isn't set up to deal with that much change at once. Remember that this is a marathon and not a sprint, just like I said earlier; your success with these methods is highly dependent upon your ability to retain these things and use them actionably. Carry them with you, but don't load them all on yourself at once.

Some studies indicate that ACT can be more successful in one-on-one therapy sessions as opposed to group sessions (ibid.). Studies also reveal that ACT may be superior in treating some conditions including depression, especially with respect to reducing self-harm behaviors of depressed subjects.

CHAPTER 6

THE BEST WAYS TO BEAT ANXIETY

WITH ACCEPTANCE AND

COMMITMENT THERAPY

People battling anxiety have to struggle with unwanted thoughts popping into their mind. Sometimes, your intrusive thoughts may be informed by the nature of your anxiety. For instance, people with generalized anxiety have a tendency to receive intrusive thoughts involving one of their loved ones, whereas people with social phobias tend to receive intrusive thoughts that remind them of a moment they embarrassed themselves. Forms of anxiety include:

- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Social anxiety disorder
- Agoraphobia
- Selective mutism
- Separation anxiety
- Panic disorder
- Specific phobias

Around 12 percent of the population may have an anxiety disorder in any given year. Between five and 30 percent report having one sometime during their lifetime. It usually occurs between the ages of 15 and 35. The most common variety of anxiety disorder is a phobia.

The causes of anxiety disorders may be genetic and environmental. A history of trauma, such as child abuse or hardship (i.e. poverty) can lead to it. The experience of anxiety disorder can coincide with other mental health disorders, such as forms of depression and personality disorders. The physical wear of an anxiety disorder or the combination of multiple disorders can tax the body to the point of heart disease, substance abuse, or hyperthyroidism.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and pharmaceutical therapies are frequently the treatments for anxiety disorders. Mindfulness exercises work, and many OCD patients opt for self-help sources.

What Makes You Anxious?

Anxiety is merely a persistent fear, and it extends to your future. Having an anxiety disorder will surely harm your quality of life. You get into the mindset of seeing problems where there are none. Anxiety puts a quality of extremity to your life so that you're either withdrawn and isolated, or aggressive. Both extremes tend to stifle social cohesion.

How Does Fear Manifest?

When you are frightened or anxious, both your body and mind operate too quickly. The following are some of the things that may happen thanks to fear and anxiety:

- Increased heartbeat
- Increased rate of breathing
- Weak muscles
- Profuse sweating
- Stomach pains
- Lack of concentration
- Lightheadedness
- A feeling of getting frozen
- Loss of appetite
- Hot and cold sweats
- Tense muscles
- Dry mouth

The physical symptoms of fear can be very frustrating, especially if you have no idea about the cause of your fear or anxiety. There are various triggers for fear and sometimes the brain keeps sending these messages even unnecessarily. You can only improve your capacity to understand your relationship with fear by raising your self-awareness.

Panic Attacks

This is the condition of being overwhelmed by the mental and physical feelings of fear. Sufferers of heart attacks report difficulty breathing, increased heartbeat, and a crazy sensation of losing it.

Worry

This is the magnification of issues so that a person tends to believe that the future is bleak. A worrying individual has a loss of hope, and they expect terrible things to happen at a later time.

The following are some of the techniques for getting rid of your fear, worry, anxiety, depression, and pretty much any other mental disorder:

Face Your Fears

It might sound counterintuitive, but it is the way to go. You gain more power by exposing yourself to your fears rather than running away from them. When you expose yourself to your fears, you gain something valuable: knowledge. Thus, you banish ignorance and realize effective ways of overcoming your anxiety.

Know Yourself

To deliver yourself wholesomely from your fears, you have to spend some time understanding the person that you really are. What are the origins of your fears? What was your childhood like? Knowing that most of our attitudes and fears were formed from early childhood, as well as our experiences, it is incredibly important to unravel as much as you can about yourself.

Exercise

Performing a workout requires your full attention. Thus, your mind is taken away from its fears and focuses upon the task at hand. This is a great technique for getting rid of your fears and anxiety. Additionally, exercises improve heart health, leading to great blood circulation, strong immunity, and effectively decreasing bad emotions.

Relax

When you make your body and mind relax, fears will be pushed away. This state of relaxation may be achieved through deep breathing. This involves assuming a meditation position and breathing in and out while clearing the noise from your mind. It helps in restoring the body to a state of balance.

Healthy Eating

Having a clean diet is critical in ensuring that you stay in perfect mental and emotional health. A clean diet focuses on key nutrients and eliminates junk. You want to keep a healthy blood sugar level. When your blood sugar goes down, you are susceptible to panic attacks and anxiety.

Drink Alcohol in Moderation or Avoid It Altogether

If you are nervous, it can be tempting to down a few bottles. However, understand that the ensuing state of bliss is short-lived. You cannot drink your way to calmness. Instead, learn to face your fears and anxieties while sober. This is more fruitful.

Faith

If you believe in a supernatural entity that oversees the universe and the people in it, then it is helpful to trust upon them for deliverance. The more faith you have that this supernatural entity will reach out to you, the better your chances of actually getting rid of your fears and anxieties.

Medication

Medications appeal to people who have time constraints. They may not be the best treatment model, but when combined with other models, the use of medication becomes incredibly helpful.

Support Groups

There are many people battling fears and anxieties just like you. Thanks to the internet, you don't even have to stress out finding these people. They have forums, Facebook groups, websites, and so on. However, before you request to join a support group, make a point of understanding their principles, so that you can weigh up whether you would fit in.

CHAPTER 7

USING ACT TO MANAGE AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Physical aggression most often manifests as grabbing, pushing, and slapping, but more serious aggression is less common (including forcible restraint and punching). Although males commit more severely aggressive acts, particularly to dominate women, research shows that both men and women engage in the more common forms of aggressive behavior.

Extensive research has led to better understanding of aggression and its causes, but treatment for it is lacking. Most treatments tend to be outdated and not well supported by empirical evidence. The information on risk factors was taken and employed in contextual behavioral science to construct a model. In that model, psychological and physical aggression are seen as ways to escape from or avoid undesirable personal experiences. The unique model comprises connected techniques and components of treatment, examining the processes that affect treatment.

Physical aggression is often closely connected to depression, anxiety, substance use, and physical health issues, as well as relationship distress, separation, and divorce. Overall, aggression exacerbates problem conditions such as depression and relationship management. It drags down occupational and cognitive functioning.

A thesis by Zarling compartmentalizes the risk factors for aggression in this way (2013, 6-9):

1. Family – Partner aggression in family situations featuring severe discipline, low cohesion and acute conflict in relation to relationships among non-aggressive adults are reviewed.
2. Relationship – Aggression precedes relationship dissolution and distress, complicated by interpersonal skill deficits that increase the potential for conflict within the couple.
3. Personality and psychopathy – Personality and psychopathy are the most predominant predictors, and are likely rooted in childhood or adolescent antisocial behavior, childhood trauma or abuse, depression, and comorbidity issues. Axis II pathologies (e.g., Antisocial Personality Disorder and Borderline Personality Disorder) are correlated with partner aggression, sometimes complicated by depression and maladaptive attachment patterns linked with anxiety, and an unstable sense of self and impulsivity.
4. Cognitive and affective factors – Anger being the most researched factor, the problem may lie in how individuals respond to anger. Fear, shame, and jealousy may also be associated, as are symptoms reported by patients with panic attacks. There is weak research based on self-reporting by aggressive people that cognitive biases and irrational beliefs may be in play, as may be blame toward the victims.
5. Other factors – Substance abuse, stress, and the characteristics of relationships are reviewed, though how these factors bear on aggression is hazy. Arguments and verbal aggression often accompany psychological and physical

aggression, suggesting that such verbal exchanges may set the stage for other aggression.

Arising out of social learning theory, CBT treatments have resulted in modest improvements compared to other forms of treatment. They prefer motivational techniques over confrontational techniques (Zarling, 2013, 18). They aim to change problem behavior, ideas, beliefs, and emotions to prevent violence. Motivation to end the violence is encouraged, crisis and anger-management strategies are learned, and communication skills are instilled.

Zarling cites some shortcomings of social learning theory and CBT as well as feminist approaches in treating partner aggression. Techniques are adjusted for partner aggression, but CBT cannot account for perpetrators of aggression who have no history of learned aggression. Also, social learning theory, feminist theory, and CBT can explain the onset of aggression but not the maintenance of aggressive behavior. Additionally, research has not proven that substantive modifications to aggression cognitions and personality traits result from treatment. Consequences to emotional functioning through this treatment are unknown. Finally, the frequency of anger may not be reduced.

So far, claims Zarling, no one treatment set has been shown to be superior in the treatment of aggression (2013, 20). She discusses the limitations of CBT and other kinds of treatments and a paucity of research that would identify the best techniques.

A better form of treatment would single out the change processes underlying treatment, asserts Zarling (2013, 25). An understanding of them is necessary for more successful therapy. Therapeutic techniques ought to be finely linked to change processes. The assumptions behind social learning, feminist and other theories in therapy should be critically examined, including the assumptions underlying partner aggression. Models are too "mechanistic." Information on how internal events and overt behaviors work together is required.

Therefore, ACT is (probably) well suited for the treatment of partner aggression, Zarling concludes (*ibid.*), as it is from the stance of functional contextualism. Functions of emotions and cognitions should be discovered to proceed with improved treatment. Personal historical events are contacted with the present situational context. ACT can lead to "the prediction and influence of behavior," known as "workability truth criterion" (Zarling, 2013, 27). It can lead to specific criteria for change. Causes are only explored for their impact on changing behavior. This is a practical approach.

ACT looks for variables that the patient can manipulate in order to bring about change. One set is values, and another a range of consciously altered meanings and language that can overtake the problem cognitive system. For example, the person becomes aware of the personal experience of anger and its relationship to outbursts of aggression. ACT can, thus, work with clients to "enhance the development and selection of more effective and efficient behavior modification techniques." (Zarling, 2013, 28)

Zarling recommends a model of therapy that aims to change the contexts that are causally attached to the content of thoughts or feelings (*ibid.*). A principle of a more successful model would be avoidance. The role of fear is discussed. ACT sees experiential avoidance as commonly connected to a range of anxiety and other negative states. A person strives to avoid internal experiences they do not want in an effort to control or modify those internal experiences. They fight their feelings and thoughts. This is fine for short-term coping but not as a longer-term strategy for getting through the challenges of daily life and relationships, for problems are bound to arise. Prolonged thought suppression and thought control are examples (Zarling, 2013, 30).

Substance use is another problematic pattern of behavior that interferes with normal functioning. Problematic behavior blocks more effective adaptive behavior from developing. Acceptance and redirected values can be implemented to face the troublesome inner experiences and set behavior on value-based action. These two processes have been clinically tested and shown to be effective.

Zarling came up with a functional perspective of partner aggression to provide a framework so that processes in partner aggression can be pinpointed and joined with therapeutic change processes (2013, 36). This offers practical outcomes.

Her model contrasts with feminist perspectives that understand aggression as an effort to overpower women, and it contrasts with CBT approaches that understand aggression as a direct result of anger (Zarling, 2013, 37). Instead, ACT perceives aggression as an especially efficient strategy for avoiding unwanted emotions. Zarling's model sees aggression being triggered by an emotional response and ideas due to an "evocative interpersonal conflict" and a learning history (*ibid.*).

The aggressor retains fear or sensitivity to the inner experience urging him or her to avoid the inner experience. This arousal may be more intense on the part of individuals who commit partner aggression, and such individuals may have less tolerance and skill with social interactions (Zarling 2013, 41 and 42). This is the context for engaging in aggression, which can momentarily distract him or her or reduce the psychological process. Success, albeit brief, in averting the unwanted inner experience reinforces the desire to be aggressive.

Zarling depicts this process that produces partner aggression in this fashion (2013, 38):

STIMULUS (interpersonal conflict) >> INTERNAL EXPERIENCE >> AGGRESSION >> RELIEF

ACT's objective is to undermine the emotional response (Zarling 2013, 46). By decreasing the need to control the innermost experiences, aggressive behavior can be reduced (*ibid.*). The subject comes to see and verbalize the effects of the strategy of

aggression, recognizing his or her own avoidance and control tactics. The therapist teaches more adaptive responses, so that the person unlearns the rigid rules of avoidance of that former strategy. The therapist redirects his or her behavior towards value-oriented goals. The person discusses and explores his or her priority values to construct a new direction. Work on values is paramount in the population of perpetrators of partner aggression.

Regarding mindfulness, several CBT approaches employ it as a therapeutic intervention. Hershfield defines it as a range of “specific techniques for challenging distorted thought processes” which lead to compulsions (The OCD Stories, 2016). It is used as an enhancement tool to cognitively reframe their experiences in a healthy way. It can also help one to be in the presence of an uncomfortable thought. In Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), mindfulness is coupled with exposure for response prevention.

CHAPTER 8

HOW TO STOP INTRUSIVE AND OBSESSIVE THOUGHTS

Every sufferer of Obsessive Compulsive Disorder battles a severe form of intrusive thoughts. It leads to the sufferer having a negative evaluation of thoughts. This is basically a person thinking that something is wrong with them for having such intrusive thoughts. People with OCD get extremely distressed about intrusive thoughts, and in their bid to get rid of these thoughts, they fall into an even worse state.

The most recommended treatments for Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) are Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT), and ACT is one of them. According to *Medline Plus Medical Dictionary*, the main symptoms of OCD are unwanted compulsive thoughts, sensations, emotions, concepts, and behaviors. Sensations are obsessions for individuals experiencing OCD.

It's perfectly normal to check that your door is locked occasionally. However, if you suffer from an obsessive personality, you will tirelessly keep checking to see that the door is really shut. Obsessive thoughts and compulsive actions tend to overwhelm a person to the point that they alter their normal living patterns. The person becomes helpless against these thoughts.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is characterized by uncontrollable thoughts and ritualized, recurring behaviors that you are forced to perform. A sufferer of OCD considers their thoughts and behaviors irrational, but still, they are not in a position to resist these repetitive patterns.

The following are the categories of sufferers of OCD:

- *Washers*: they are afraid of contaminating germs. They have a cleaning compulsion.
- *Checkers*: they recurrently check things related to danger or harm.
- *Doubters and sinners* : they are afraid that if everything isn't carried out in a perfect manner, then something terrible will go down.
- *Counters and arrangers*: they have obsessions centered on order and symmetry.
- *Hoarders*: they are scared of throwing anything in their possession away for fear of something terrible happening.

No matter how compulsive the symptoms of your disorder appear, there are numerous techniques of overcoming your condition. The first step is to get rid of the behaviors that arouse your obsessions.

Don't Shun Your Fears

Shunning your fears might seem like a smart move, but the more you run away from your fears, the more you will boost the recurrence of your obsessive patterns and deepen your fears. If you want to get rid of your triggers, learn to endure them for as long as you possibly can. Expose yourself to your OCD triggers and then suppress your urge to perform a ritual. This can be quite challenging if you're not mentally prepared, but you can adjust the intensity of your ritual. The more you expose yourself to your OCD triggers, the lesser your anxiety will become, and ultimately, you will be in a position to take control of your thoughts.

Anticipate OCD Urges

Become aware of situations that trigger your OCD, and take care of them. For instance, if you have an obsession with

checking whether the doors are locked, the next time you are locking the door, don't do it just casually and walk away. Carefully lock the door and check to see that it is indeed locked. Don't be in a hurry. When you walk off, you are less likely to battle a compulsion to check the door because you know too well that you ascertained that the door was locked. With your power of imagination, create a vivid image in your mind, depicting the locked door or the shut drapes, and label the image, "The door is locked." Every time you acquire a compulsion to check on the door or the drapes, you can simply flash the image through your mind, and rightly tag that thought as merely "an obsessive thought."

Refocus Your Attention

Every time you experience an OCD compulsion, don't dwell on it but focus on something else instead. You could work out, go for a jog, read a book, watch a movie, catch up with a friend or listen to music. The idea is to eliminate your OCD compulsion by introducing a new line of thought. When you refocus your attention for at least fifteen minutes, you effectively delay your response to the compulsive thought. When you're done refocusing your thoughts to something else, check up on the original thought, and you will find that the urge will either be feeble or entirely absent.

Write Down Your Compulsive Thoughts

Every person experiences troubling thoughts from time to time. However, people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder are stuck in a vortex of compulsion-inducing thoughts. These thoughts keep playing through their mind over and over again, up until they indulge in the ritual. Write down these thoughts as they happen. Using a pen and paper or your favorite gadget, write down any obsessive thought that passes through your mind.

Create an OCD Worry Time

Instead of fighting away your compulsions and thoughts, just reschedule them. During the day, you can have two sessions dedicated to worrying. But you want to have these sessions at a time when you're not vulnerable to anxiety. When you experience compulsive thoughts outside of worrying time, just write the thoughts down, so that you can think about them during the worrying session.

Create a Recording of Your OCD Obsessions

Record your obsessive thoughts. Focus on a specific obsession and tape it into your gadget. Ensure that you capture their nature extremely well. Then watch or listen over and over to yourself explaining these obsessive thoughts. When you continuously confront your worries and obsessions, you become less affected by them.

Avoid Alcohol and Nicotine

Though alcohol reduces anxiety and worry, the effects last for only a short moment. As the alcohol wears off, anxiety becomes much more pronounced. Cigarettes also tend to increase anxiety. When you indulge in these vices, you will be throwing yourself into a bottomless pit of negative thought cycles. It is better to face your OCD with a sober mind.

Hang Out with Your Friends and Family More

Obsessive thoughts can plague your life to the point of isolation. But don't let this happen. When you are isolated, the effects of OCD get full blown. Focus on spending time with your loved ones to be more grounded.

Join a Support Group

One of the advantages of living in the modern era is the fact that people who share a common problem are empowered to come together so that they might help one another. Support groups are critical because through sharing and learning from others, you become more empowered to overcome your obsessive compulsions.

CHAPTER 9

THE ROOT CAUSE OF ADDICTION AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE

ACT is especially relevant for treating addiction because it addresses both the underlying issues and the behaviors related to addiction.

Although people with addictions may be acutely aware of their urges and sensations in the present, they may be unaware of the consequences in interpersonal interactions and the potential for punishment and threats of violence that go along with addiction behaviors. By connecting with the present, one's flexibility of attention is enhanced.

Should a client with addiction be over-identifying with their role as an addict and unable to perceive behavioral options contradicting that role, then self-as-content may be operational. The therapist's focus is on psychological inflexibility. In addition, if the client continues their awareness of thoughts, feelings, cravings, etc., the self-as-process could be an appropriate aspect of the treatment. The therapist would then implement mindfulness techniques. Finally, a self-as-context would be applied to clients who are overly channeling their energy inward. The therapy shifts the process to the act of observing oneself so that he or she is better able to see things from the perspective of other people. This therapeutic process also helps to move through looking to the past, the present, and future so that the client might remember what life was like before addiction.

ACT also addresses experiential avoidance. As an abundance of clinical research proves, substance use is an "extremely effective" tactic of experiential avoidance. Someone might start out using recreationally or socially, to have usage become habitual for the purpose of avoidance. Part of the reward is the temporary relief from painful or worrisome inner experience. Patients learn to acknowledge and accept their innermost experiences through ACT.

From the perspective of ACT, fusion to problematic ideas results in rigid belief in the content of these thoughts, even though these thoughts may propel unwanted or problem behaviors. As for an addict, such a belief might be that drugs are necessary, for example. ACT tries to have the client defuse those thoughts. The person comes to separate from those thoughts and change his or her connection to them.

The ACT client also retunes and reorganizes his or her own values. Bad feelings and thoughts may prevent the substance abuser from living up to their sense of family values. They might seek to avoid family in order to avoid guilt or shame, etc. As another example, a mother might self-identify as a bad parent, and this thought restricts her interaction with her children. With ACT, however, people choose and adjust their set of values and learn to live up to them.

The sixth process of ACT is committed action. An addict might make abstinence part of their plan. The therapist would coach him or her to scrutinize how sobriety is connected to his or her chosen values. The therapist would assist the person in defining value-based actions to strengthen the commitment to abstain.

CHAPTER 10

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU STOP SMOKING?

In 2015, *BP Magazine* wrote about how ACT can work to get individuals to stop smoking (tobacco). It referred to a new study that examined the effects of ACT for treating Bipolar Disorder customers to get them to quit smoking. The article provided some background data: Persons with Bipolar Disorder are two or three times more likely to smoke, yet half as likely to leave as persons in the universal population.

The scheme registered persons with slight bipolar signs who smoked. One collection of these persons sported nicotine coverings while getting ten ACT sessions over the phone during a 30-day period. Another group had face-to-face meetings. By the close of the month, 30 percent of members who had experienced therapy in person testified they had not smoked for seven days. Only 17 percent of those who had completed therapy via phone calls were no longer smoking. In addition, the receivers of the phone call therapy meetings did not follow to the nicotine patch treatment at all. In contrast, 62 percent of the group who went through in-person meetings kept using the patch. Fifty-five percent of both groups said they had started tolerating their cigarette cravings.

E. Gifford et al. showed a pilot development applying a “hypothetically resultant model of acceptance-based treatment procedure to smoking end” and compared it with a medical necessity model of pharmaceutical treatment (2004). They detected 76 members with a nicotine addiction. They exposed half to a Nicotine Replacement Treatment (NRT) and the other half to a “smoking absorbed version of ACT.” (2004, 689) Females totaled 59 percent of these subjects and males 41 percent. The subjects were of diverse cultural backgrounds. Over half had post-secondary education, and 39 percent had incomes beyond \$29,999. All the members smoked an average of 21.4 cigarettes a day and said they had struggled to leave for at least one whole day four times in the past two years.

Consequences were superlative for the last group, as understood at the one-year follow-up study.

Conduct therapy to treat smoking was used during the 1960s and 70s, during which time numerous technologies aiming at helping people quit smoking end sprung up (Gifford et al. 2004, 690). The growth of behavioral therapy tapered off, and a wide variety of methods was practiced going onward. They have not been so operative, write Gifford and company, because success would need the understanding of the procedure’s primary for the indications. Missing is the hypothesis of the bond between evasion and maladaptive policies for managing.

This Gifford et al. study is founded on a contextual reasoning and behavior philosophy. This model undertakes that smokers are skilled in replying contrarily in the existence of problematic inside experience. It struggles to improve acceptance skills, alleviate evasion, and enlarge mental and behavior flexibility.

With the objective of nurturing self-control, Gifford and company draft out the four mechanisms of the healing model used for this learning:

1. A relational setting
2. Intellectual, emotional and physical self-discrimination skills to get the customer to point out experience features that have brought about bad conduct
3. Directed contact to the undesirable individual experience with deterrence of undesired answers
4. Productive behavior initiation challenging unwelcome individual experiences

The learning likened this method with Nicotine Replacement Treatment (NRT), which offers another method of beating nicotine addiction that hypothetically dismisses withdrawal indications normally understood when persons try to quit smoking nicotine (ibid., 690). The practical procedure model, on the other hand, is proposed to address the customer's worries of extraction and other incentives that trigger evasion behavior. By lessening practical evasion, liveness is amplified to let the customer to select a diverse pathway.

The NRT group received consideration from a specialized therapist and a psychotherapy occupant, with the former on call 24-hours a day during the treatment period. All these members got nicotine patches and were told not to smoke while wearing the patch, and they joined a 1.5-hour informative meeting, which comprised a 30-minute Q & A period. Everyone went to the clinic once a week to substitute used patches with new ones.

The ACT group saw a counsellor seven times for individual meetings lasting 50 minutes each and seven group meetings of 90 minutes each for seven weeks. They had an exhaustive experimental training program to help the patients notice their inner prompts and agree to take what they could not alter, but still modify other actions, opinions, and feelings. They practiced some helpful activities.

The ACT etiquette highlighted the following:

- i. Inner versus outside causes
- ii. Problems with control energies
- iii. Standards, goals, and blocks
- iv. Acceptance and preparedness
- v. Mindfulness skills
- vi. Advanced contact – Subjects experienced progressively severe withdrawal symptoms and hostile internal experiences.
- vii. Planned smoking – Time intervals grew between the smoking-inducing stimuli and the smoking replies; the late reply permitted the individual to try identifying and replying in a novel way to remove internal prompts after the treatment meetings.
- viii. Dispersion skills
- ix. Behavior initiation and obligation

CHAPTER 11

CHRONIC PAIN RELIEF

Aching is a communication from the body to the intellectual cortex, a signal to get the brain to find liberation. This indication becomes worthless if the hurting never gets fixed (Tolman, n.d.). Enduring pain is pain continuously felt for more than three months. It is a disorder suffered by seven percent of Americans in 2010 and investigated at length (ibid.).

The basis of the pain is frequently bodily. Occasionally, however, the pain rises out of emotive, biochemical, nervous, or ecological aspects that the intellectual cortex misjudges. Such mistakes may lead to miserable and disheartening long-lasting pain, which leads to a mysterious longer-term pain experience (Tolman, n.d., 1).

Tolman states that Acceptance and Commitment therapists employ cerebral dispersion methods to get a viewpoint on the supposed pain (ibid.). ACT understands the patients' fight against such opinions, which can get worse in the experience of pain. Hard work to sidestep negative thoughts can intensify the bad experience. ACT encourages acceptance of the bothersome thoughts and leads a person to take value-oriented deeds to regain fulfillment and efficiency in everyday life. He or she comes to agree to take the thought of pain but re-evaluates it so that it turns out to be less of an interruption, disbursing more consideration to standards and goals. By opening up to the disturbing or irritating thought, emotional elasticity is learned, so the individual can change his or her conduct and feelings relative to that thought.

Tolman describes acceptance as the "capacity to become an impartial onlooker of thoughts with the aptitude to admit, but not control, thoughts" (ibid.). The concentration is transferred, though thoughts such as "It hurts too much to move today," remain in the background.

Pain investigators have recognized the probability for ACT to dismiss long-lasting agony because of its method that does not intend to hit or eliminate the indicators. Long-lasting pain patients describe that the more they attempt to challenge the thought of pain, the worse the experience of pain turns out to be. Through ACT, the influence of a bad (pain-related) thought is debilitated, and the person functions better because of a new emphasis on standards and goals to help them get on with life.

In ACT, values calculation is done to discover out what the individual values more in life. Tolman (ibid.,1) offers the case of a subject who is incapacitated by long-lasting pain but is ready to try to devote additional time with grandchildren. Positioning his concentration to the goal of being with the children more and highlighting the worth of sighting them, the customer can decrease the effect of the thought of tenacious pain.

Tolman reports that cross-sectional training discloses the connection between acceptance and the understanding of long-lasting pain. Low acceptance leads to superior pain, while more acceptance decreases the feeling of pain. In some studies, the analysis of a patient's diary discloses this reality. Also, studies show that helpful thought activities can expand the mood and boldness of patients.

Such studies found that experimental evasion is extremely connected to pain evasion. Treatment intended to change a person's pain management approach, and helping them take up a values-based policy, can work.

Learning the connotation between sleeplessness and long-lasting pain, some scholars revealed that less insomnia was suffered by patients with advanced mental suppleness (ibid.) However, other studies specified a struggle to acceptance if there is the possibility of additional disastrous the penalties, specifically in cases of mental disorders associated to long-lasting pain. All the same, a 2012 study of some Iranian women established they found liberation from continuing headaches after ACT. Likewise, study of groups of youths and elders have revealed that ACT can improve the experience of long-lasting pain (ibid.).

L. M. McCracken uses ACT in treatments for long-lasting pain. He uses the scheme of leading the customer to perceive (be aware of) the disturbing thought, conduct or sensation, comprehend its message, take it as correct, and connect to it in the present-day (n.d., slide 16). He sketches the mental series of suffering and distress, rigidity, avoidance, and poor operation with continuous pain (slide 17).

McCracken and Vowles (2008, cited in McCracken, n.d., slide 21) measured the optimistic effects of acceptance that was

values-based in treating continuing pain. More than 75 percent of their study group confirmed positive results.

They directed a three-year follow-up study in Bath, calculating information that comprised of medical visits, illness effect outlines, and a pain nervousness signs scale (ibid., slide 24). Twenty-eight persons partook in ten separate meetings each. The 14 student psychotherapists positioned in this study project each treated two patients, using CBT with one and ACT with the other (ibid., slide 25). That is to say that 14 of the 28 members received ACT and 14 received CBT. Each student therapist had the same exercise in ACT and CBT before opening the project's treatment sessions. This study found that acceptance "seemed to be the most vital procedure to result in both groups" (ibid., slide 30).

Methods for mental treatment for long-lasting pain comprise of mental liveness and acceptance of sorrow more frequently (ibid., slide 38). These methods teach patients to face their uneasiness and act with consciousness and flexibility. Psychotherapists aim to be thoughtful to persons undergoing pain.

CHAPTER 12

SIMPLE MINDFULNESS EXERCISES

IN EVERYDAY LIFE

Mindfulness Techniques in Therapy Sessions

Mindfulness is a key element of ACT. Mindfulness methods must be started early in the therapy program, and which methods work best in each circumstance must be determined by both the client and the therapist, say Hayes and Lillis (2012, 97). Just having a customer close his or her eyes is not sufficient. Exercises to be tried at home can be allocated, too.

Using mindfulness exercises to start each meeting could be helpful (Hayes and Lillis, 98). Get the customer to notice how it feels to be sitting there in that room. Say, "Close your eyes, plant your feet on the floor and see" (ibid.). Starting a meeting this way may bring about a more attentive 50-minute session of therapy.

Walking for mindfulness can be helpful, say Hayes and Lillis (ibid.). The therapist could walk with the customer or ask the customer to go for mindfulness walks. Emphasize on one part of the environment for one or two minutes at a time.

As the mindfulness exercises are going on, the therapist might suggest that the customer envisages putting thoughts, feelings, and sensations into boxes (ibid.).

Without more advanced mindfulness, remark Luoma, Hayes, and Walser (2017, 137), patients find it more difficult to connect to the self without self-assessment (for example, using evaluative language such as "I'm lonely" or "I'm short). One's internal language can weed out "the distinction between self as knower and self as known" (ibid.). Connecting with the current moment can help the individual see himself or herself as a self-in-process that is growing and ever-flowing.

Organized mindfulness exercises allow an individual to comprehend their self-as-process in a healthier way. One closed-eyes exercise is Floating Leaves on a Moving Stream (ibid.,). Subjects see themselves in a bending position at the edge of a stream and notice the leaves floating along it. The patient is supposed to visualize putting each thought on each floating leaf. If they experiences one of the thoughts dragging them away, he or she forces themselves to return to the chore of putting thoughts on leaves. The therapist asks if the customer's mind appears to be wandering along the stream. This exercise can be done using other images, such as cars on a road driving past.

An alternative to such an exercise is imaging the clouds detached in the sky (Luoma, Hayes and Walser, 2012, 138). The patient envisions they are lying on a green field watching to the atmosphere. They visualizes that his or her experience is devoted to one of the clouds as a word or image. Next, the therapist appeals that the patient imagines assigning each thought to a cloud. If the mind drifts, the customer should jerk his or her devotion back to the clouds.

After each exercise, discussion of the experience can be helpful.

Meditation

Meditation can be helpful. Customers might do mindfulness meditation at home. There are satisfactory CDs, books, and network pages offering a number of different meditation styles.

Hershfield (*The OCD Stories* , 2016) defines meditation as directing devotion to some broadcaster and noticing when you drift, then readdressing your mind.

Mindfulness and meditation exercises should be cautiously standardized for each patient. For example, an individual with a difficult childhood might profit more from eyes-open exercises, since closing their eyes might lead to images of their past ordeals.

As the treatment improves mental flexibility, mediation becomes even more effective.

Hershfield writes that just ten minutes of meditation every day is all it takes to function well (ibid.). Make it part of your everyday routine. It is superlative when employed in tandem with other mindfulness methods. "Stop and see," see the road on

which you're traveling. Anticipate a song or the taste of food. You can do mindfulness actions anywhere, anytime. This way you can develop mastery of your own attention and life, remarks Hershfield (ibid.). You can control your actions and responses through mindfulness, particularly when it comes to anger management.

Numerous Western people who practice meditation may assign a faith or divine trust to it. In fact, complains Hayes (The OCD Stories), they may see it used only in that method. They may have scorn for those who are only involved in meditation as a life skill and maintain that it can only be used properly if it is part of a rule or routine rotating around spirituality or religious beliefs. However, Hayes believes is not necessary to take on a whole belief system in order to practice meditation for good health.

Used in healing, meditation is a nonspiritual life skill. It is not the method of meditation that is important, says Hayes. Meditation is applied to convey more better honesty, flexibility, and standards (*The OCD Stories* , n.d.). It can help the patient become who they wish to be.

Mindfulness Exercises for Anxiety Reduction and Quietness in Everyday Life

Pocket Mindfulness is a website that offers tips for practicing mindfulness. They printed six such guidelines in a website article (2017). Remaining mindful is particularly vital for those of us leading chaotic lives.

It may be tough to find time to rest and get in touch with our inner selves, but it is unconditionally essential. Our welfare needs it. We must stop and take the time to "nurture intellectual openness and attain an optimistic mind-body stability," according to *Pocket Mindfulness* . Here are the suggested mindfulness events to squeeze into your day:

1. Breathing

In six-second sequences, breathe in through the nose and out through the mouth, letting the air drift over the whole body. While breathing, let go of all opinions. Also, watch your breath and be completely conscious of it as the air feeds your body with life. Let your attention travel through the body and back out through the mouth and nose, becoming aware of the energy around you.

1. Observation

Connect with the beauty of the natural atmosphere by singling out one ordinary item in your immediate neighborhood and watch it for one to two minutes. Do nothing but notice it. Relax. Perceive as if you have never noticed it before and discover each part and feature. Connect with this item and its life energy.

1. Awareness

Contemplate a modest and apparently insignificant duty that you do every day, such as opening a door. Start this duty, observing all the minutiae of your movements and feelings. If opening a door, for example, touch the handle with your hand, noticing how you feel and where the entranceway will lead. Notice thoughts that arise while performing this modest deed.

Tag any undesirable thought and let go of it. You may also choose to reflect on your standards as you do repetitive happenings. For instance, appreciate food when you smell it. Contemplate the chance to share food with family and friends, too.

Whatever you do, counsels *Pocket Mindfulness* , select a "touch point" that is eloquent today instead of carrying on unconsciously, on autopilot. This determines consciousness and adds worth to your day-to-day activities.

1. Listening

It is the purpose of this exercise to pay attention to the present and alleviate the impacts of your previous experiences and presumptions. Focus on the present to lessen the interferences of negative memories and any related nervousness or pain.

Select a piece of music you have never listened to. Try to listen from a unbiased viewpoint. Using earphones, close your eyes. Do not just the genre, title, or artists' name. Instead of making judgements, just "climb inside the track and dance between the sound," suggests *Pocket Mindfulness*.

Pay attention to the changing aspects of the music, unravelling and examining each kind of sound. If there are lyrics, reflect on the timbre, array, and tones of each voice. Listen intentionally and intensely, merging your mind with the sound. Let judgement fall away and just listen.

1. Immersion

This is a serenity growth exercise. Release the power of the everyday errands and goals that tug at you. Be gratified in the moment. Select one action, such as doing housework, and focus on each detail of it. See it as a brand-new experience and perceive everything.

Become one with the action, sensation and gestures. See the newness in familiar tasks. Be aware of every movement to immerse yourself in the activity and align yourself with the repetitive – mentally, bodily, and psychologically.

6. Appreciation

Notice five things in your day that you frequently under-appreciate – objects or individuals. Give appreciation to the ordinary, the small yet significant things that make up our being. This might be others around you, or objects such as water taps and electrical cables, plants, pavements, and vans.

Descriptions are inherent to the therapist-client interactions during meetings. They help customers see and comprehend their own inner workings. Here are some:

1. The Sailing Boat Comparison

You are the pilot of a ship. Water flapping onto the deck irregularly wets your feet. There is a pail for discharging the undesired water from inside the boat. It is necessary for you to make good use of it and bail out the liquid.

On a day without clouds and storm, a large wave unexpectedly crashes onto the boat. It is time to begin bailing once again. It is a normal and routine action that is part of handling a boat while sailing. You do the work serenely and mindfully, but somehow stiffness builds, and you start to feel insecure. Your motions become panicky, your heart races and you feel anxious, fearing what may happen if the water is not emptied very soon.

You get so caught up in your suffering that you lose touch with the handling and course of your boat. What is it doing and where is it going now? How long has it been wandering? Perhaps you have been bailing, not navigating. You have lost control of the vessel.

Turn your attention to the bucket. You notice that it is really a filter, full of holes. What can you do now?

Normally, you would be in a place to correct the boat's pathway after the bailing is completed, yet your tool is unsuitable. It cannot do its job. You are stressed like a hamster on a wheel, whipping your arms around, slouching and intensifying your actions, again and again. All this energy could be better managed vanished if your tool was an actual bucket.

With this comparison, the key thing to ask yourself is this: Which condition do you prefer – being in a boat with little water that is travelling in the wrong direction? Or being water-logged but travelling in the direction you wish? By means of the right tools, you can both go in the right direction and manage the water as it arrives.

This symbolism can help envision what life activities may or not be working for a customer. Some problem-solving tools may be more beneficial than others, like the bucket and filter. Peoples may excitedly avoid a condition of uneasiness, such as having wet feet only to cause greater problems. By acquiring a different viewpoint, you may appreciate that having wet feet is not such a big deal after all.

1. The Mind Bully

The symbol of the Mind Bully is proposed for work with persons fighting annoyance, nervousness, or despair.

The Mind Bully, extremely large and influential, signifies a problem. You are holding a rope across a deep pit, with the Mind Bully holding the other end. The Mind Bully hopes to pull you into the gulf.

However, the Mind Bully can only hurt you if you believe what it says. Dragging on the rope, you listen and pay attention to the vocal sound of the monster. Paying attention to the monster means you trust in its influence. Giving them energy is really what is nourishing them.

Reflect on what would occur were you to abandon the duty and just let the rope drop. What would happen to the Mind Bully?

It would still be there in front of you. It would still be roaring horrifying things, being mean and aggressive to you. But unlike when you seized the rope, it would not be able to pull you near the pit any longer. If we do not feed the monster, the less magnificent and loud it appears.

We can disempower a matter, such as nervousness or despair if we can change our attention. We do have to notice and recognize it, but we can unfasten ourselves from it and trust in it less. Mindfulness exercises can help you rapidly alter your mind from opinions about despair or anxiety and keep you on track for what you want to achieve.

1. The Quicksand Metaphor

What is quicksand? A wet cover of moveable sand that is unable to carry much weight. You sink if you step into quicksand; you cannot get a secure foothold on the ground.

Fighting quicksand only drags you down farther and farther. The degree of the descent hastens when you struggle. When you try to climb out, it is useless, for your stepladders will only take you down more.

How do individuals extract themselves from quicksand? They are able to spread their body weight over a big patch. Lie down, tolerating the fix you are in as an alternative to rebelling against the condition. The quicksand is the only victor in a fight. It may appear irrational, but it is true.

The moral is that it is better to accept your condition and stop fighting its presence. That is the only method to set the stage for an escape.

Pain and grief can have the result of deceiving us, just as quicksand does. It is natural to fight against unfriendly internal

knowledge, but anybody who does so only struggles, taking themselves down further and further in life.

To agree to take sorrow is to prepare to stop sorrow. It allows us to put together a proper plan of action founded on that data. Understanding that agony is part of life is hard. But a person can experience sorrow and come through it tougher, more unbroken.

CHAPTER 13

THE MOST ACCURATE WAYS TO MEASURE YOUR WEIGHT LOSS PROGRESS

According to Lillis and Kendra (2014), outdated social weight loss treatments are not practical for weight loss upkeep or long-term weight loss. They propose that ACT may be more effective in the long term. ACT may be supplementary to or joined with other systems of treatment for weight loss. More investigations must take place to confirm this belief.

Numerous weight loss programs teach a schedule of fasting, exercise, and social therapy. Over six-month periods, such programs are proven to increase weight loss by an average of eight to ten percent (Lillis and Kendra, 2014, 1). However, the members of such programs usually regain weight after treatment, registering a one-third gain within the first year, and 100 percent plus in five years (*ibid.*). As much as 30 percent do not complete those programs. This low degree of achievement over the long term means that more effective treatment must be found.

Binge eating, mental distress, feeling insufficient, and a self-imposed idea of body image, as well as value of life, look as if to be the forecasters of weight loss program erosion (*ibid.*). Weight gain risk determinants are “psycho-social stressors, disinhibition, reaction or stress eating, despair and moods of food-related deficiency,” assert Lillis and Kendra.

Mindfulness and meditation methods may move treatments for weight loss forward. Such methods aim to change the individual's relationship to the invasive or painful internal experiences.

Lillis and Kendra oppose the standard method to talking about obesity: standard behavioral treatment (SBT), which is based on learning theory (*ibid.*). From the viewpoint of learning theory, altering the setting in which problem signs happen can challenge the maladaptive approaches. This technique depends on persons monitoring themselves and background and their own goals. Monitoring the factors that lead to weight gain, such as meal servings and accessibility of exercise action, also feature in SBT. As well, cognitive interventions intend to enable one to single out distinctive intellectual and emotive prompts from which overwhelming food and dormancy are evident. This way, the client is directed to test their maladaptive thoughts and favor their weight loss strategies and goals. Methods include thought-ending and anxiety decrease.

Lillis and Kendra liken SBT to ACT (*ibid.*). SBT is all about skills. Therapeutic teaching can be completed at home, or in group meetings. For instance, once a caloric goal is set in proportion to the subject's real weight, calorie consumption and calorie burning activities are deliberated. Thus, the skills to grow new methods of conduct, such as everyday weight monitoring at home, are imparted.

While ACT was born out of the social alteration movement, its expectations about learned deeds that play into obesity differ from those of SBT, etc. Rooted in Relational Frame Theory (RFT) that undertakes the role of ordinary and usual language in founding damaging conduct designs, ACT positions its work and viewpoint on the concept that dialectal licenses allow mental pain to happen. The ideas of an event of scorn, for instance, which signified in retention by words are causes of agony in themselves.

The awareness of mockery turns out to be as influential an intoxicant of pain as the actual occurrence of mockery. As language serves to understand all, an individual may implement it randomly and activate emotive pain in reply to everything. For instance, just treading on a weight scale can activate an unfriendly internal experience.

ACT also undertakes that persons generally try to evade pain. The moods and opinions about pain can develop into experiences to be dodged. For example, the view of swimming may cause nervousness, terror of being mediated, feeling ugly and opening oneself up to self-criticism. So, swimming is evaded in order to avoid that nervousness, terror, and negative self-imaging. Experimental evasion is key to numerous psychological and behavior wellbeing problems, as well as overweightness. A person's efforts to evade an undesirable inner experience may involve anxiety eating to alleviate the bad moods, which

causes more weight gain and more bad sensations. Disgrace around overeating can cultivate and develop a target of maladaptive individual approaches of evasion.

ACT uses six procedures to make the customer get their dislikes and bad spirits, actions, and thoughts into view, highlighting the importance of standards and values-based goals that lead to improved behavior. The objective of ACT is a more productive everyday life, rather than a focus on weight loss or weight gain stoppage. Healthy living is well-defined by standards, such as engaging in family life, passing a stage of education, getting and keeping a decent job, etc.

The client focus less on food and weight by concentrating more on things such as standards and goals. It also turns things around by helping to get the client to approve a new viewpoint. For example, the client is requested to contemplate what the consequences of not working out or not changing their diet would be, so that they are more conscious of the battle with their own standards and goals in life. Therefore, the connection with moods, thoughts, and deeds around eating emphasize alteration, not the bad eating ways or disregard of exercise.

Some studies of ACT have revealed that it can offer success with increases self-esteem as a treatment for weight loss and maintenance.

Success may also be reached by therapy, proposes Lillis and Kendra (2014). Such therapy could comprise of honesty, mindfulness exercises, and values work, adding to detailed activities such as dieting and exercise. For one item, the everyday caloric quota, which may seem impractical and even unbearable to numerous overweight clients, can be viewed in a diverse, more optimistic light. Likewise, the rewards that may come from altering conduct in line with standards, such as boosting self-respect, an improved self-image, and optimistic social collaboration, can inspire a client. Studies supporting the combining of approaches have been developing since the start of the new era, state Lillis and Kendra.

They describe a planned model merging SBT and ACT. However, one struggle with this is the incompatible all-embracing goals of each method. Similarly, shared weight loss activities, such as observing the scales each day, can strengthen bad individual experiences. Consequently, weight loss methods (eating and exercise regimes) must be a part of a joint program. The emphasis on altering food desires is an additional problem for a joint program. Nervousness positioned around monitoring past desires can replicate problematic actions, opinions, and moods. Even a regime of grocery shopping may be hard in the context of ACT and its expectations. Additionally, teaching and conversations would have to be retooled to fit into ACT approaches.

Lillis and Kendra recommend trying several programs and monitoring results to come up with the best treatment for losing weight.

CHAPTER 14

IMPROVE THE SELF-MANAGEMENT OF DIABETES

In a scientific paper, Laura Melton (2016, 211-213) defines the progression of ACT for diabetic individuals. Its principle is that diabetes patients require more than therapeutic treatment, for they have an emotional load to tolerate as well.

This paper outlines the following:

- i. Competence and supply administration
- ii. The program's group nature
- iii. Reduction of stigma and enlarged contribution.
- iv. Time commitment of members.

The beneficial model combined the six procedures of ACT. Since not all subjects were acquainted with ACT at the start of the treatment program, short outlines of each of these mechanisms were provided in the first meeting. The effort on each of the six procedures was dispersed over four workshops of this program.

Meeting one focused on morals and the current moment. The second on intellectual dispersion and reception, starting with an exercise of mindfulness. The third spoke of self-as-context and receipt. In each meeting, the preceding effort was studied, plus exercises and descriptions. Likewise, the submission of ACT to diabetes was clarified. Members finished the workshops by classifying their standards and doing a dedicated action exercise.

This investigational program verified that ACT might be beneficial, as long as members were present throughout the program. Very few were present at all the meetings.

Jennifer Gregg, Steven Hayes, and Glenn Callaghan wrote a guide for treating diabetes with ACT which was uploaded on the San Jose State University website. They clarify their aim for making the guide: Diabetes patients require more than schooling; they require approaches to existing with diabetes. They state the two resolutions:

- Treatment method. This uses moods, schooling and thought reception to distinguish between existing zones that are in an individual's control and the zones that aren't.
- Conveyance in a diversity of ways. This method and treatment will suit the requirements of a healthcare capacity.

There can be numerous undesirable moods, opinions, and actions associated with the existence of diabetes. To some customers, the news that they have this disease is devastating. Similarly, there are some characteristics of the involvement that lead to anxiety and worry, such as the essential routine deviations. Gregg, Hayes, and Callaghan list the distinctive routine variations that diabetes patients must tolerate:

- i. Watch the food eaten. They must eat low cholesterol, calories, sugar, protein, sodium, and carbohydrates.
- ii. Checking the levels of blood glucose every day to know the effects of everyday actions such as exercise.
- iii. Exercise regularly to successively arouse the aptitude of the body to conceal and use insulin.

The difficulties of obesity, sedentary habits, and choosing sweet food make it particularly hard for individuals with full, type 2 diabetes to manage.

Not only does the person have to stick to a medical command and fundamentally change their diet, but anticipating the

difficulty and the existence of diabetes is an additional problem. Obviously, evasion is a potential concern. Seeing that food is a remedy to painful moods and opinions, and that carbohydrate-laden food is observed as a relief, talking evasion is dynamic if an individual with diabetes is going to advance their operation in the existence of diabetes.

There is certainly going to be uneasiness and worries related with having diabetes. As per the ACT viewpoint, an all-inclusive therapeutic treatment was intended to attain improved self-management of patients with diabetes. The primary half of this program talks about education on existing with diabetes and the second aims to exact motivational and reception sections. Five units were prearranged:

Module I: Education and Information

Module II: Food, Diabetes, and Your Health

Module III: Exercise and Diabetes

Module IV: Coping and Stress Management

Module V: Acceptance and Action

Therapy is given in groups with clinicians as group leaders.

The guide offers numerous procedures and skill-building actions: registering and self-assessment forms, facts sheets, notes on mindfulness and other subjects, well-being management instructions such as foot care, values questionnaires, questionnaires to record opinions and emotions and unit plans. The last of the resources is a questionnaire for writing down goals.

CHAPTER 15

STRESS MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Mental stress is a type of emotional pain. Nevertheless, slight stress can be healthy and helpful in encouraging a person to get things done, solve problems, enhance motivation and be careful. It helps a person adapt and react to their social and physical environments. This is recognized as positive stress. Conversely, extreme stress can cause mental disorders, strokes, ulcers, heart attacks and other diseases.

Stress may be related to or caused by outside factors but can as well be triggered by internal insights which activate negative emotions and anxiety, ideas and behaviors. Things seem intimidating to people when they lack the confidence to cope and manage.

Disasters, conflicts and huge changes produce severe stress. Such situations include natural disasters, war, failing a crucial exam, witnessing or surviving a severe injury or accident, or ending a relationship. Important life changes such as graduating, moving, marriage, or beginning a new job may also bring about high stress levels.

Another factor on stress is time. When matters continue beyond weeks, months, or years, stress builds up and its effect on the body and the mind becomes apparent. To many people, decision making also brings about stress.

Stress also depends on insight. For example, Person A may enjoy speaking in public whereas Person B doesn't. One person can be able to handle daily bothers even when they are very annoying while someone else may be stressed over them regularly. There is also a variation in the internal procedures every person uses to avoid or reduce stress.

There are three ways of managing stress-producing conflicts. They are:

- *Approach-approach conflict*. This occurs when someone has to choose between two similarly wanted or valued options (like if you should go to a concert or watch a movie).
- *Avoidance-avoidance conflict*. A situation where one must pick one out of two options which are similarly unwanted choices. (Accepting another loan which has poor terms to be able to pay off the mortgage or the foreclosure of a house).
- *Approach-avoidance conflict*. When someone is obliged to choose a group or an activity which boasts unattractive and attractive features (For example, going to an expensive school, which may require you to borrow funds, but it offers extremely high-quality education and can lead to decent post-grad employment).

Adding to this, most people get stressed while traveling. Travelers can be stressed for unhappy reasons like loss of luggage, delays which lead to time wastage, or simply the stress of being outside one's comfort zone.

Stressors that are ambient are another group of causes. These may include circumstances like pollution, crowds, lighting, noise and someone may not realize that they are getting their stress from such conditions.

Overall mindfulness and acceptance methods can help reduce the negative effects of daily routine, travel stress and ambient stress. For serious stress manifestations, one can apply ACT to deal with them.

Six essential processes are applied in order to uncover stressors. This leads to a development of awareness. The customer views his or her internal processes in which stress awareness is involved.

Someone learns to open up to receive the thoughts that are negative which describe and feed their stress. Standards are worked on in order to achieve an improved outlook of the conflicts or the annoying factors.

Goals and values put as a priority in order for the thoughts that induce stress to diminish and lose power over the mind

and actions of the person. The person learns to function and adapt regardless of feeling stress sometimes. The frequency of stress reduces.

You will likely be aware of most methods of stress reducing. These may include the following:

- Reliable exercise – Putting in place a routine that has at least four or five sessions a week
- Putting in place a support network
- Establishing one's time into a structure, for example a timetable
- Relaxing and visualization images
- Muscle loosening
- Confidence training with good communication
- Expressing and reflecting on your true emotions and thoughts by maintaining a diary
- Programs at the workplace for stress management

Many methods can be applied, especially in regards to stress at the work place (Lockhart, 2018). In the process of facing change, we evaluate and prepare for the advantages of change making so it becomes less scary. Similarly, we may use resources for help if we are stressing because we have less trust in our ability to finish a job. If relationship effects troubles interfere with work, notify the manager of that personal thing and seek counselling.

Likewise, one should look into their physical health problems and take medicine to ease pain and enhance the health of the body and be better able to manage stress. It may be necessary to notify a manager of your conditions. Stress causes at work include poor communication and organizational difficulties.

You should study the situation and take note of potential stressors the workplace has, for example when you are expected to finish tasks without enough information. In this case, you can ask for assistance and clarification right away.

Techniques like these may be used to keep up energy, motivation and health management. They may also be merged in therapeutic programs.

In cases of student and workplace stress, ACT has been applied. Certain work settings encourage more stress than others. Working in situations of life and death like rescue operations, emergency care, seeing trauma or even making some decisions which influence people's lives will justifiably enhanced levels of stress. Examples of high-stress jobs include utility or industrial safety monitors, social workers, medical practitioners, firefighters and heavy machinery operators.

Below is a summary of an article on stress treatment between social workers with ACT by Brinkborg et al. (2011). They tried a controlled and randomized trial with members from the social work field who suffered from stress and were categorized according to a baseline by researchers. At the baseline, two-thirds of members were shown to have high levels of stress. This study revealed further that ACT was influential in helping reduce levels of stress and increase and burnout. Forty-two percent saw notable change. Results were different for the members who registered with low levels of stress. In conclusion, researchers say that ACT is beneficial for social workers as a short-term intervention.

Grace Bullock (2017) quoted two studies which encourage approaches that are mindfulness-based, aiming at reducing stress at work. Among all types of stress that humans know, job burnout and stress related to work are amongst the ones which mostly affect their physical and mental health. One study includes 30 executives of a huge firm of petroleum jelly who got mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR). Each was given three sessions four weeks apart. With the help of audio recordings, they were to do mindfulness exercises daily. They were also given a workbook by the researchers, and instructions for dealing with stress. Few of these executives put up a group for practice that would meet every day for 30 minutes. As a result of MBSR, the study proved that reducing levels of stress and the general improvement of self-efficacy, health and self-compassion advanced.

Results were determined through blood cortisol level testing, and readings of blood pressure and also reports from those who participated. Blood tests verified that levels of cortisol were lowered as well as diastolic and systolic blood pressure, and they also experienced less physical and mental stress by the time the program ended.

The second study Grace Bullock talks about put together members of staff from two universities in Australia and 15 faculties who for seven weeks received a revised MBSR program. For the first four weeks, this program gave sessions weekly of 60 to 90 minutes and before and after the program, those who has participated completed questionnaires. Two weeks after the end of the program, five of them were interviewed.

After the seven weeks, the employees informed that there had been enhancement in mindfulness skills including sharp awareness of the present moment and improved focus. They showed improved sleep quality, just like the first study. (Bullock, 2017, no page)

Nevertheless, after the therapy program, few signs of enhanced job satisfaction were realized. Irrespective, the researchers

noted that the people who participated reported that they were feeling more relaxed and calmer, had less stress and even the wellbeing at the workplace was much greater. Interviews were also revealing. Interviewees reported having more skills for keeping calm, staying in the given moment, and being able to regulate behavior, thoughts, sensations and feelings and even during situations that created more stress. Some participants also reported that there was enhancement in family relationships and being able to forget about work when the workday ended.

CHAPTER 16

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

VERSUS DIALECTICAL BEHAVIOR THERAPY

Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a type of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy that emphasizes collaboration, support of the patient, and the cultivation of skills required to handle charged emotional situations. This treatment was originally tailored for people who struggle with suicidal thoughts, but it came to encompass a broad range of other conditions that involve dysfunctional emotional regulation.

There are two broad categories of dialectical behavior therapy:

- Individual weekly therapy sessions
- Weekly group therapy sessions

The following are some of the essential DBT skills and techniques to master:

Objectiveness effectiveness skills

Describe: This explains your capacity to capture your internal feelings. The patient must find the right words that capture exactly how they feel. DBT awakens a patient to their true feelings. The more a patient can explain what ails them, the more they are likely to receive help.

Express: A patient should be in a position to express their needs and wants. If they have an idea about how to improve their situation, then, by all means, they should express their idea, and ensure that they make the best use of the resources handed down to them.

Assert: DBT therapy teaches patients to wield some power and not seem like victims. Their power can be seen in their assertiveness. Being an assertive person doesn't mean that one is aggressive or boastful; it is merely a way of expressing their needs and standing their ground.

Reinforce: No matter how great your ideas or plans might be, you will always need some form of reinforcement to actualize your plans. Knowing this, a patient should approach every challenge knowing that they will have to reinforce their ideas before they achieve whatever they set out to do.

Mindful: This skill restores a patient's focus to their present moment. Instead of letting their minds wander, pondering the various things they have been engaged in or disengaged from, a patient should learn to have laser focus. This is a very critical element in the struggle against emotional health problems.

Confidence: It is critical to have a high level of self-esteem. Being confident in yourself won't make you capable of moving mountains, but it will equip you with a positive mindset, which is a tremendous advantage. The more confident you are, the more likely you are to draw favorable circumstances to your life and make progress.

Negotiate: DBT empowers a patient to learn of their power. They can challenge the existing order or way of doing things. Thus, a patient should try to negotiate terms, seeking ways that are favorable to them. When they are successful at establishing new terms, while banking on their power of negotiating, it can give their self-esteem a boost.

Relationship Effectiveness Skills

Gentle: DBT teaches a patient to be gentle with their partner. Their partner would be more receptive to them if they took a gentle approach. However, if they are rough and pay no attention to how they handle their partner, then there are going to be

a whole lot of problems.

Interested: DBT emphasizes showing interest, and not merely hoping that your partner will understand how you value them. Partners are incredibly sensitive to the little things that are done or not done, and this can mean a huge difference between the success and failure of a relationship.

Validate: The idea that we don't need validation is kind of flawed. The truth is that we are in need of validation from the people we consider important. Our relationship partners are important enough, and their validation means a lot. But then, just as you seek validation from your spouse, you must return the favor, lest it becomes a toxic arrangement.

Self-Respect Effectiveness Skills

Fair: At all times, one must seek to practice fairness. This means you must be fair to others, but more importantly, you must be fair to yourself. Never let others have their way at your expense. If you don't care about yourself, no one else will. Being fair is a step in the right direction.

Apologies: You are going to have unpleasant encounters with people. If you're in the wrong, you must offer an apology, and if you're wronged, you should solicit an apology. A solicited apology is not the best, but it shows that the aggressor has goodwill.

Truthful: Telling the truth is the one thing that you owe yourself and the world alike. It is not a very common thing, but there's no harm to it. Furthermore, it simplifies your life.

When it comes to Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), the goal is to increase psychological flexibility and establish more focus on the present.

The following are some of the principles of ACT:

Acceptance

Each person struggles with their negative thoughts. Their instinctive reaction is to try to suppress these thoughts, but is it worth it? ACT teaches patients to accept their negative thoughts. They have to make room for unpleasant feelings, urges, and sensations. The apparent abundance mindset makes it easier to get rid of the negative things that you have always taken an interest in.

Cognitive Defusion

This entails perceiving thoughts, words, images, and other cognitive activities in a standalone sense. They are to mean the exact thing that they stand for and must not be pieced together to form a bigger idea. It is the opposite of what is known as cognitive fusion, which seeks to "fuse" various cognitions and form a large mental product. For instance, the mere words, "chocolate cake" are enough to have us drooling as they plant the image of the cake in our minds. Patients may use cognitive defusion to not pay great meaning to the images and languages that pop up in their minds.

CHAPTER 17

ACCEPTANCE AND COMMITMENT THERAPY

VERSUS COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY

All suggested therapies for OCD are kinds of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy or CBT (*Intrusive Thoughts*, n.d., no page). CBTs include Exposure and Response Prevention (ERP), ACT, Cognitive Therapy and Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). CBT concentrates on building plans to live well and function well with negative thinking, conduct, and feelings.

ERP and ACT are mainly applicable in treating OCD. The *Intrusive Thoughts* website distinguishes ACT from ERP and other CBTs:

Hershfield (*The OCD Stories*, 2016) uses mindfulness in CBT for patients with OCD. He reports that CBT tests a person's distorted thought processes which lead to coercions. ACT does not test the problem opinions. Rather, it gets a person to change their standards and the significance they allocate to the problem views so that they become less anxiety-ridden and less stimulating to the person.

In treating hostility, Zarling holds that CBT is too restraining mostly because it undertakes that hostility happens partly from skills shortages. Its theoretic foundation is "essentially faulty" as alteration processes are misinterpreted (Zarling, 2013, 21). CBT works on developing actions such as conflict resolution and pressure decrease. Zarling found many studies showings that skills growth did little to attain a decrease in hostile conduct (ibid., 21-22). The client may not have a skills deficit. Also, a skills deficit is perhaps too naïve an idea. Essential skills vary in different settings, after all. For example, someone may be able to adaptively connect but have problems cooperating when the dreaded emotional reply is increasing. CBT may increase the impetus to change conduct.

Also, CBT methods mainly focus on thought constructions that produce violent conduct (ibid., 23). So, they try to alter or remove the problem structures and content. This is an error, from the viewpoint of ACT. The remedy should not concentrate on emotional control. Rather, feelings should be experiential and re-envisioned, recognized but given less position. Lots of studies establish that interior skills activate actions that try to change the conduct. In other words, emotional control may be the cause of the hostility. Self-awareness and value-orientation is a better healing path for treatment of hostility.

Hayes and Lillis explain in detail how ACT stands out (2012, 3-8). They begin by pointing out that struggling with difficulties and sorrow is usual for humans. The field of thinking is inclined to see the mental syndromes (sets and series of symptoms) as reasons for grief. This is an error, assert Hayes and Lillis. Though they are structures of unhappiness, they are not essentially the reasons. There are fundamental causes that yield symptoms and conditions. The indications cannot clarify themselves.

Conditions may earn the label of "diseases." The indications are signs of a psychiatric disease, viewed as pathology in conservative thinking, Hayes and Lillis remind us. Though, it is infrequent that the disease is established to be the underlying cause. Treatment of the signs does not frequently determination the situation, in physical or psychiatric medicine.

Though ACT is an evidence-based therapy, claim Hayes and Lillis, it tests some parts of clinical thinking. ACT aims to target the main, problem-solving mode of the mind that literal language and reasoning appear to lead toward so easily. From an ACT viewpoint, this style of mind is not the only or the best way to address many human problems. That very fact is inconsistent: people come to rehabilitation because of their problems. Going to therapy itself is a problem-solving approach. And yet ACT is doubtful about the universal applicability of problem resolving. (ibid., 8)

ACT is "an inductive, process-oriented method to understanding human unhappiness and letdowns" (ibid., 6). It undertakes "that a small set of usual and essential emotional procedures can give increase to human sorrow or bounds to human

thriving.” (6). The human capacity to resolve difficulties and have many wonderful effects may have “properties that can lead to psychopathology and human restraint” (ibid.).

McCracken (n.d., slide 5) cites an article by Curran et al. (2008) that questions CBT’s emphasis on long-term observance to treatment in healing long-lasting pain. Their learning displayed that devotion only affected treatment consequences by three percent. CBT treatment approaches, such as stimulating assumed designs, bore slight results, according to this study. In fact, the patient’s sorrow may rise after CBT (slide 11). McCracken cites a paper by Shapiro et al. (2005) that commends a mindfulness and meditation method (ibid.).

Furthermore, claims McCracken (n.d., slide 10), CBT therapists have a habit of talking too much, and engaging too little. They want to be too nice or defensive of patients; they do not cause impulsive behavior in their clients (slide 10).

It is healthier to start from the principle that misery is usual (McCracken, n.d., slide 12). McCracken (slide 14) counsels therapists to address emotional rigidity by means of “a procedure founded in relations of language and understanding with straight involvements that produces an incapability to keep it up in or alter an action design in the facility of long-term goals or standards,” citing Hayes et al. (2006). In ACT, the client is led to perceive (be aware of) the troubling belief, conduct or sensation, comprehend its communication, take it as right and interact it in the current (McCracken, slide 16).

John T. Blackledge (2015) also provides a contrast. He claims that, though dispersion methods may be functional extensively, he underlines the elementary inconsistency of CBT.

Asmundson and other CBT supporters accept that the troublesome action is a consequence of problem opinions and sensations, so those opinions and moods must be removed.

Blackledge proposes uniting the methods. He writes that there are CBT therapists whose work is not founded on the main supposition behind reform methods.

However, as the reader may have understood, there is an inconsistency among dispersion and restructuring approaches. Dispersion methods aim to unglue the glued-in thoughts and moods on which a customer is wedged, waning the add-on to painful feelings and thoughts and the supplementary upsetting actions. In ACT, the inquiry is not in what way to rid the individual of those undesirable opinions and moods for conduct alteration, but rather to change the individual’s emphasis from them to favored moods and opinions constructed on an explanation of standards and goals.

CHAPTER 18

USEFUL RESOURCES

1. Autistic Community Training website, British Columbia

- Videos
- Online streaming podcasts

2. L'Institut de Psychologie Contextuelle (the Contextual Psychology Institute) in Montreal.

3. Portland Psychotherapy workshops by Dr. Jason Luoma

4. Association for Contextual Behavioral Science

- Self-study or community study.
- DVDs
- Training workshops as per their calendar

5. Positive Psychology Program

- Toolkit
- Books
- Videos
- Articles

6. Jack Hirose and Associates, Inc. – Workshops <http://www.jackhirose.com/workshop/act-forsyth-edmonton2018/>

7. Dr. Russ Harris, "ACT Mindfully"

- Online and in-person workshops
- Free textbooks.

8. The California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare.

- Depression Treatment
- Webinars

9. Praxis (training and continuing education) <https://www.praxiscet.com/events>

- ACT Bootcamps
- Mastering ACT
- Superhero Therapy

CONCLUSION

Psychological health matters. It is my hope that by trying some of these approaches, you can learn to reach deep within yourself. By doing this you will start to make major changes to your life. Psychological health inequities are incapacitating to everyday life. The vital issue here is that they are treatable.

When we think of an infection, we assume the treatment to be pharmaceutical or surgical. Infrequently do we stop and comprehend that the cure could be the control of our own attention. This is where some may accuse us of entering the dominions of divine practice. Yet, technical studies show that we can materially change the procedures in our body, by using our thoughts.

When exposed to danger, it is only normal that the brain warns the rest of our body to take essential action. But occasionally we see a hazard that isn't really there. When that occurs, the body starts the procedure of defense. By learning to identify the independent responses in your own body, you can learn how to control them. That is how easy it can be. Taking control of those maladaptive opinions will totally alter your hormonal production. This does not require skyrocket discipline, rather it is a medicinal truth of how the human body works.

ACT is not only successful in improving mental circumstances but medical ones too. It is proven to help manage pain. It is my confidence that you will apply what is labeled in this book in order to attain your goal with ACT.

