

# Dealing With an Unhealthy Parent

Dealing with an unhealthy parent can bring up a mix of emotions, from frustration and sadness to guilt and confusion. Whether you're managing overbearing control, emotional manipulation, or a lack of support, the relationship can take a toll on your mental and emotional well-being. It's common to feel stuck or unsure of how to move forward when faced with these challenges.

This workbook is designed to help you navigate the complexities of an unhealthy parent-child dynamic. Through guided reflection, practical exercises, and helpful strategies, you'll explore how to set boundaries, manage difficult emotions, and reclaim your sense of self. **The goal is not to fix the relationship but to empower you to create healthier responses, prioritize your well-being, and take control of your life.**

Here is a brief introduction to each worksheet included in this package:

## 1. Recognizing Toxic Behavior

This worksheet helps you identify patterns of toxic or overbearing behavior in your parents, allowing you to better understand how they affect your emotional and mental health. By gaining clarity, you can begin taking steps toward healthier relationships and protect your well-being.

## 2. Setting Healthy Boundaries

This worksheet guides you through the process of defining and communicating clear boundaries with your parents to maintain your emotional safety. Setting boundaries is essential for reducing the negative impact of overbearing behaviors and fostering mutual respect.

## 3. Practicing Self-Care

Focusing on self-care helps you manage stress and emotional burnout caused by challenging interactions with unhealthy parents. This worksheet encourages you to prioritize activities that restore your mental and emotional energy, promoting resilience.

## 4. Setting SMART Goals

This worksheet focuses on setting personal goals to reclaim your identity, especially in the face of controlling or overbearing parents. By defining clear, achievable goals for yourself, you can assert your autonomy and build a stronger sense of self outside of parental influence.

## 5. Personal Strengths Inventory

This worksheet encourages you to reflect on your strengths, helping to rebuild your self-confidence and resilience in the face of overbearing behaviors. Recognizing your own capabilities can empower you to stand firm in your boundaries and emotional needs.

## 6. Overcoming Shame

This worksheet helps you identify and challenge feelings of shame that may arise from difficult or critical parental relationships. By addressing shame, you can cultivate a healthier self-image and break free from negative self-beliefs that hold you back.

Toxic behaviors in a parent-child relationship can significantly affect your mental, emotional, and physical well-being. This worksheet is designed to help you identify toxic behaviors, understand how they affect you, and develop a plan to cope with them. **By becoming aware of these behaviors and their impact, you can take steps to protect your well-being and establish healthier boundaries.**

## PART 1: Identify Toxic Behaviors

Below is a list of common toxic behaviors. For each behavior, check how often you observe it in the person you are reflecting on.

	RARELY	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	ALWAYS
Frequently putting you down or finding fault in everything you do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Denying your reality or making you question your own memories or perceptions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refusing to take responsibility and always placing the blame on you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressing hostility indirectly through sarcasm, backhanded compliments, or avoidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring your actions or whereabouts, and demanding that things be done their way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using guilt, shame, or fear to control your actions or decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refusing to communicate, ignoring your concerns, or giving the silent treatment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becoming overly jealous or possessive, making you feel guilty for interacting with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dismissing your feelings, telling you you're being "too sensitive" or "overreacting."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using hurtful or degrading language during disagreements or arguments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricting access to money or controlling financial decisions without discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frequently hiding the truth, exaggerating, or lying about their actions or intentions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using threats or intimidation (verbal or physical) to maintain control or get their way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discouraging or preventing you from seeing friends, family, or doing things you enjoy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Scan to learn more about how to deal with toxic parents.

## PART 2: Assess the Severity of the Impact

Now assess how each toxic behavior affects different areas of your life. Consider how it impacts your mental health, emotional well-being, relationships, work, and overall quality of life.

	Not At All	Very Little	Somewhat	A Lot
Frequently putting you down or finding fault in everything you do.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Denying your reality or making you question your own memories or perceptions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refusing to take responsibility and always placing the blame on you.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expressing hostility indirectly through sarcasm, backhanded compliments, or avoidance.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monitoring your actions or whereabouts, and demanding that things be done their way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using guilt, shame, or fear to control your actions or decisions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Refusing to communicate, ignoring your concerns, or giving the silent treatment.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Becoming overly jealous or possessive, making you feel guilty for interacting with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Dismissing your feelings, telling you you're being "too sensitive" or "overreacting."	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using hurtful or degrading language during disagreements or arguments.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restricting access to money or controlling financial decisions without discussion.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Frequently hiding the truth, exaggerating, or lying about their actions or intentions.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Using threats or intimidation (verbal or physical) to maintain control or get their way.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discouraging or preventing you from seeing friends, family, or doing things you enjoy.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Assessing the impact of toxic behaviors is crucial because it helps you understand how these actions are affecting your emotional, mental, and physical well-being. By recognizing the severity of the impact, you can prioritize which behaviors need the most attention and develop appropriate coping strategies.



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## PART 3: Explore the Impact

Below are examples of the emotional, mental, physical, and behavioral impacts that toxic behaviors can have on your everyday life. For each toxic behavior that impacts you somewhat to a lot, describe in more detail how it affects you emotionally, mentally, and physically.

### Emotional Impact

- **Increased Anxiety:** Constant worry or nervousness.
- **Feelings of Insecurity:** Questioning your self-worth or doubting your abilities.
- **Sadness:** Persistent feelings of hopelessness, sadness, or isolation.
- **Anger:** Frustration that builds up.
- **Guilt or Shame:** Feeling guilty or responsible for the other person's behavior.
- **Emotional Numbness:** Disconnecting from your feelings.

### Mental Impact

- **Self-Doubt:** Continually questioning your decisions, feelings, or perceptions.
- **Difficulty Concentrating:** Trouble focusing or staying present.
- **Intrusive thoughts:** Replaying hurtful conversations or worrying about potential conflicts.
- **Mental Exhaustion:** Feeling mentally drained.
- **Low Self-Esteem:** Erosion of self-confidence.
- **Overthinking:** Constantly second-guessing your actions or being overly cautious.

### Physical Impact

- **Fatigue:** Feeling physically tired or drained.
- **Tension or Headaches:** Physical tightness or pain in the neck, shoulders, or back. Frequent headaches.
- **Changes in Appetite:** Overeating or loss of appetite.
- **Sleep Problems:** Difficulty falling or staying asleep.
- **Stomach Issues:** Digestive problems like nausea, stomach aches, or indigestion.

### Behavioral Impact

- **Withdrawal:** Avoiding friends, family, or social situations.
- **Avoidance:** Steering clear of places, situations, or conversations that might provoke toxic behaviors.
- **People-Pleasing:** Trying too hard to avoid conflict by constantly appeasing or accommodating.
- **Emotional Outbursts:** Becoming more reactive or irritable in situations unrelated to the toxic behavior.
- **Loss of Interest in Activities:** Disengaging from hobbies or interests that used to bring joy.

#### Behavior:

Ex: Constant Criticism

#### Emotional, Mental, Physical, & Behavioral Impact:

- I start to doubt myself and feel like nothing I do is ever good enough
- I overthink everything I say or do and I feel mentally exhausted
- I have tension in my neck and shoulders



# Recognizing Toxic Behaviors

<b>Behavior:</b>	<b>Emotional, Mental, Physical, &amp; Behavioral Impact:</b>

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Scan to learn more about how to deal with toxic parents.

## PART 4: Develop Coping Strategies

Now that you've identified the toxic behaviors and how they impact you, let's develop strategies to cope with them.

### Emotional Coping Strategies

- **Practice Self-Compassion:** Remind yourself that you deserve respect and care, especially after being exposed to hurtful behavior.
- **Acknowledge Your Feelings:** Allow yourself to fully experience emotions like anger, sadness, or frustration without judgment, validating your feelings as a natural response to toxic behavior.
- **Journal Your Feelings:** Write down your thoughts and emotions to process and release them, reducing the emotional weight you carry.
- **Engage in Positive Self-Talk:** Counteract negative effects by affirming your self-worth and challenging the internalized messages of toxic behaviors.
- **Allow Time for Emotional Recovery:** Give yourself space to recuperate emotionally after interactions with toxic individuals, whether that means alone time, rest, or talking with a friend.

### Mental Coping Strategies

- **Challenge Negative Thoughts:** Try to replace irrational thoughts caused by toxic behaviors with more balanced, realistic perspectives.
- **Mindfulness Practices:** Use mindfulness to stay grounded in the present moment, reducing overthinking or anxiety triggered by toxic situations.
- **Shift Focus:** Redirect your mental energy towards positive, constructive activities or relationships rather than dwelling on toxic interactions.
- **Mental Breaks:** Take mental breaks by engaging in light, enjoyable activities like puzzles, reading, or listening to music to prevent burnout from constant stress.
- **Reframe the Situation:** Shift your perspective by seeing the toxic behavior as a reflection of the other person's issues rather than your own inadequacy.

### Physical Coping Strategies

- **Engage in Physical Exercise:** Physical activity like walking, running, or yoga can reduce stress hormones and improve your mood.
- **Deep Breathing Techniques:** Practice deep breathing exercises to relieve physical stress symptoms like a racing heart or tight muscles.
- **Use Grounding Techniques:** Focus on physical sensations (like touching a textured object or feeling your feet on the ground) to bring yourself back to the present moment and manage anxiety.
- **Walk Away from Conflict:** Remove yourself from conflicts to avoid getting pulled into unnecessary drama or emotional harm.
- **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Gradually tense and relax different muscle groups to reduce the physical stress and tension.

### Relational Coping Strategies

- **Set Firm Boundaries:** Clearly communicate and enforce boundaries, letting them know what behavior you will not tolerate and what consequences will follow if they cross those boundaries.
- **Limit Exposure:** Reduce your time spent with toxic people when possible, especially in environments where their behavior is most damaging.
- **Prepare Responses:** Plan calm, assertive responses to common toxic behaviors, such as calmly stating, "I don't appreciate that comment," when criticized or disrespected.
- **Practice Assertiveness:** Stand up for yourself without being aggressive by clearly stating your needs and expectations in a calm, respectful manner.



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# Recognizing Toxic Behaviors

<b>Behavior:</b>	<b>Coping Strategies I Will Use:</b>
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<b>Behavior:</b>	<b>Coping Strategies I Will Use:</b>
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<b>Behavior:</b>	<b>Coping Strategies I Will Use:</b>
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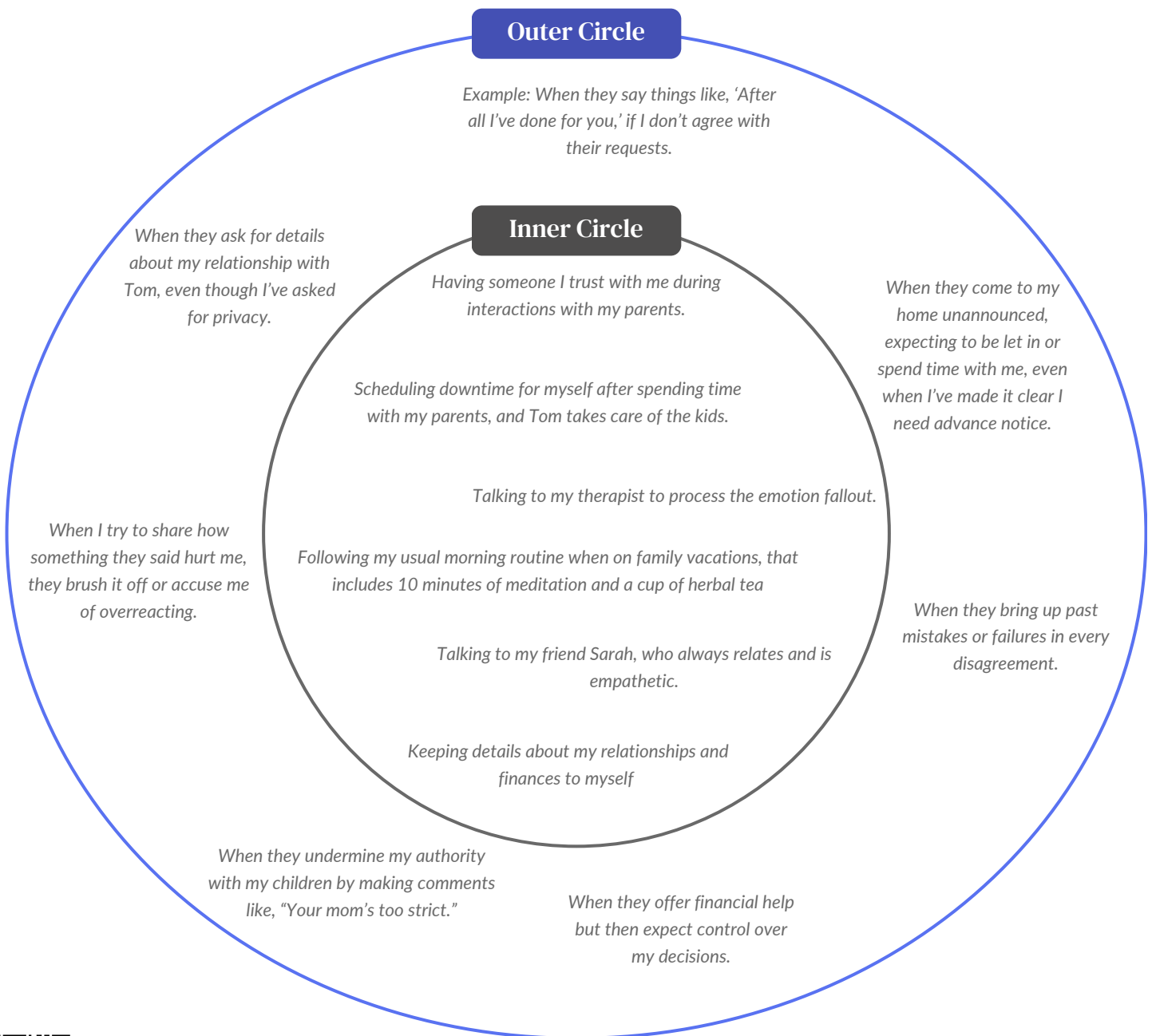


Scan to learn more about how to deal with toxic parents.

Setting boundaries with an unhealthy parent is essential for protecting your mental and emotional health. This worksheet is designed to help you identify where boundaries are needed, reflect on how these dynamics have impacted your life, and provide practical tools to communicate your needs assertively. Setting boundaries isn't about pushing your parent away—it's about defining what's acceptable in your life and ensuring that your emotional space is respected.

## PART 1: Visualize Your Boundaries

Inside the circle, write everything that makes you feel relaxed and safe. On the outside of the circle, write down anything or anyone that makes you feel stressed, uncomfortable, or unsafe. These are people or situations that are pushing your boundaries and need further attention.

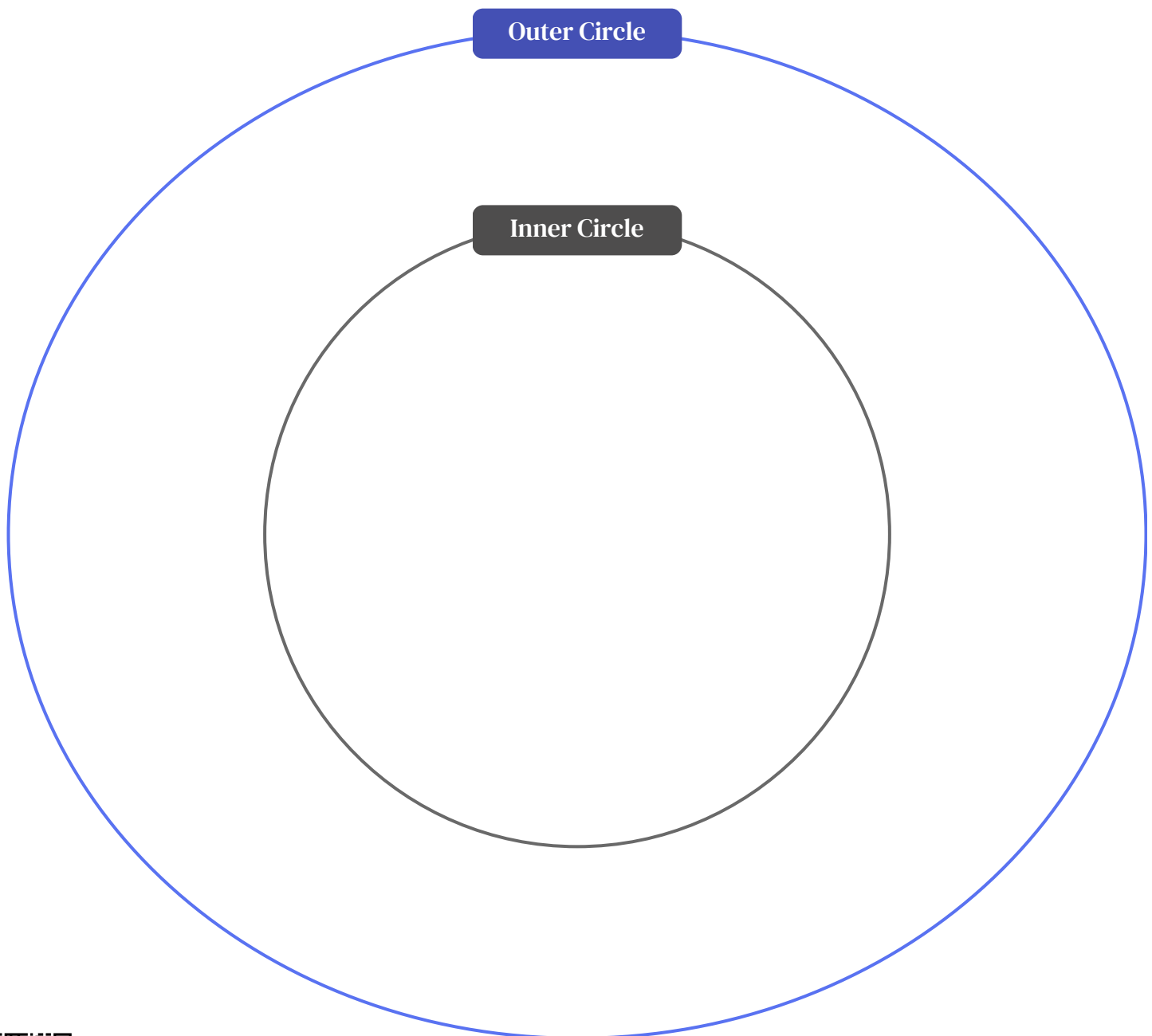


Scan to learn more about how to set boundaries with parents.



When filling out your inner and outer circle, here are some questions to consider:

- What boundaries do I currently have in place to protect my mental well-being around my parents?
- Who or what helps me feel understood, calmer, or safer when dealing with my parents?
- How do I take care of myself after difficult interactions with my parents?
- What specific behaviors from my parents make me feel disrespected or uncomfortable?
- What behaviors from my parents make me feel guilty, criticized, or ashamed?
- What types of conversations with my parents leave me feeling drained, anxious, or overwhelmed?
- In what ways do my parents try to control my decisions or push me to act against my own needs?



Scan to learn more about how  
to set boundaries with parents.

## PART 2: How to Establish Your Communication Boundaries

Here are some basic rules and examples for communicating your boundaries effectively.

### Use Confident Body Language

Stand or sit up straight, maintain eye contact, and use firm but calm gestures to convey confidence and assertiveness.

### Be Clear & Set Consequences

Be specific about what behavior you want to change and clearly state what will happen if your boundary is not respected.

### Keep Your Tone Calm and Respectful:

Speak calmly and assertively, avoiding raised voices or aggressive tones to maintain a respectful atmosphere.

### Practice Active Listening:

Listen to the other person's response without interrupting and acknowledge their perspective while staying firm on your boundary.

### Verbal Boundaries

- "I need you to speak to me in a calm, respectful tone."
- "I need you to avoid using sarcasm."
- "I need you to focus on the issue at hand and not make personal attacks."
- "I need you to clearly and honestly communicate without being evasive."

### Emotional Boundaries

- "I want to feel that my feelings are acknowledged and validated."
- "I want you to apologize if you hurt my feelings during the argument."
- "I need you to avoid using my vulnerabilities against me."
- "I want to take breaks when I start feeling overly emotional."

### Physical/Time Boundaries

- "I will visit on weekends, but I need my weekday to focus on my own family and work."
- "I can't attend every family gathering, but I will make time for the ones that are most important."
- "If the conversation becomes disrespectful, I will leave or take a break."



## PART 3: Develop Strategies for Maintaining Boundaries (Example Page)

Use the following prompts to create a plan for reinforcing your boundaries consistently and effectively.

### Situation:

*My mom often criticizes how I'm raising my kids, particularly when it comes to discipline and routines. She frequently makes comments like, "That's not how I raised you," or "You're too strict with them," especially during family gatherings. This makes me feel defensive, frustrated, and disrespected.*

### Boundary I will set:

*I will tell my mom that I understand she has different parenting styles, but I need her to respect my choices. I will clearly state that I don't want her to offer unsolicited advice or criticize how I handle my children, especially in front of them. I will also explain that I will step away from conversations if the criticism continues.*

### Any potential challenges:

- *My mom may feel hurt or defensive and accuse me of shutting her out or say something like, "I'm just trying to help."*
- *She might continue to make comments despite my request, especially during stressful moments or in front of extended family members.*
- *Other family members may get involved or try to defend her, putting pressure on me to ignore the issue to "keep the peace."*

### How I will handle these challenges:

- *I will remind myself that setting boundaries is important for my well-being and my relationship with my children, even if my mom feels upset at first.*
- *If my mom continues to criticize, I will calmly disengage by stepping away from the conversation or leaving the room if necessary. I can say, "I'm not comfortable continuing this conversation right now."*
- *If other family members intervene, I'll stay firm and explain that I'm handling the situation with my mom and don't need additional input. I will emphasize that respecting boundaries is important for healthy relationships.*



## PART 3: Develop Strategies for Maintaining Boundaries

Use the following prompts to create a plan for reinforcing your boundaries consistently and effectively.

**Situation:**

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**Boundary I will set:**

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**Any potential challenges:**

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**How I will handle these challenges:**

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Scan to learn more about how to set boundaries with parents.

# Self-Care Inventory

Caring for yourself is essential when you are dealing with the emotional strain of navigating unhealthy relationships with your parents. Self-care includes any practice that helps restore your well-being and protects your mental, emotional, and physical health. For example, setting boundaries, taking time for yourself, and seeking support from trusted friends or professionals can create space for you to process and recover from difficult interactions.

This worksheet is designed to help you explore a variety of specific self-care activities that can improve your well-being. You will be asked to rank each activity on a scale from 1-3 to determine how well you are currently engaging in these practices. After ranking, you can “star” the activities you would like to do more often. The goal of this worksheet is to help you recognize the different types of self-care available to you, identify what you are doing well, and pinpoint areas where you can improve to feel better overall.

## Ranking

- 1 I rarely engage in this, and it is not a regular part of my routine.
- 2 I occasionally engage in this, but it is not consistent.
- 3 I regularly engage in this, and it is a frequent part of my routine.
- ★ I want to do this more frequently.

### 1 2 3 ★ Physical Self-Care: Improving your physical health.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Engaging in regular physical activity such as walking, running, yoga, or strength training.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ensuring you get enough restful sleep each night to rejuvenate your body.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Eating a balanced and nutritious diet, including plenty of fruits, vegetables, and grains.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Drinking enough water throughout the day to stay hydrated.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining good hygiene practices such as bathing, brushing teeth, and grooming.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Attending regular check-ups and following medical advice from healthcare professionals.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Taking time to relax and unwind, through activities like taking a bath and getting a massage.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limiting or avoiding the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spending time outdoors in natural sunlight to enhance vitamin D levels and improve mood.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Paying attention to your body's needs, such as stretching when tense or resting when tired.



Scan to learn more about the different types of self-care.

# Self-Care Inventory

1 2 3



## Emotional Self-Care: Processing & expressing your emotions.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participating in activities you enjoy to boost your mood and provide a sense of fulfillment.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spending time with friends and family to build support and reduce feelings of isolation.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Practicing mindfulness to stay present and manage negative thoughts.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Writing down thoughts and feelings to process emotions and gain insights.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Keeping a gratitude journal or reflecting on things you are thankful for.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using positive affirmations to counter negative self-talk and build self-esteem.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Using music to relax, uplift your mood, or express your emotions.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Expressing your emotions through art, music, writing, or other creative outlets.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Set achievable goals and celebrate your progress, no matter how small.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Regular sessions with a therapist or counselor to explore and address emotional challenges.

1 2 3



## Social Self-Care: Fostering & maintaining healthy relationships.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spending time with people you like and make you feel good about yourself.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asking for help from friends or family when you're feeling down or overwhelmed.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Learning to say no and establishing boundaries to protect your emotional well-being.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participating in support groups to gain insight and emotional support from others.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participating in clubs or organizations that align with your interests to meet new people.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Giving your time to help others in your community to foster connection and purpose.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Going to social gatherings, parties, or community events to build your social network.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduling regular get-togethers, such as a weekly coffee date, or a monthly dinner.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Actively listening when talking with others, which helps strengthen your relationships.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Scheduling intentional alone time with your romantic partner.



Scan to learn more about the different types of self-care.

# Self-Care Inventory

1 2 3



**Professional Self-Care:** Maintaining a healthy work-life balance and pursuing career development opportunities.


Clearly defining work hours and sticking to them to ensure a healthy work-life balance.


Stepping away from work to recharge, through daily short breaks and using vacation time.


Talking to a supervisor or HR about mental health challenges (if it feels safe).


Exploring available support options, such as employee assistance programs (EAP).


Organizing and prioritizing work tasks to manage workload effectively and reduce stress.


Ensuring your work environment is comfortable and conducive to productivity.


Establishing achievable work goals and celebrating small accomplishments.


Being kind to yourself during work and avoiding excessive self-criticism.


Building positive relationships with coworkers for mutual support and camaraderie.

1 2 3



**Spiritual Self-Care:** Nurturing your spirit and providing purpose.


Practicing meditation to connect with your inner self and find peace and clarity.


Engaging in prayer or other forms of communication with a higher power.


Spending time in nature to experience connection to the world around you.


Regularly reflecting on what you are thankful for to cultivate an appreciative mindset.


Reading inspirational books, scriptures, or quotes to uplift and inspire your spirit.


Participating in spiritual or religious community activities.


Engaging in artistic activities, such as painting, music, or writing.


Performing acts of kindness and service to others, fostering a sense of purpose.


Acting in accordance with your morals to create a sense of integrity in your life.


Spending time with the people who give your life meaning.



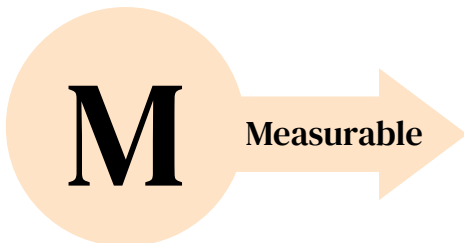
Scan to learn more about the different types of self-care.

SMART Goals is a structured goal-setting method that breaks down larger, overwhelming personal goals into manageable steps, helping you take ownership of your life and make decisions that reflect your true self. By setting clear, measurable, and time-bound goals, you can regain control over your choices, build independence, and focus on living authentically—outside the shadow of your parents' influence.



**What is your goal?** Write down exactly what you want to achieve. Be clear and detailed about what you expect to accomplish.

*Example: I want to move out of my parents' house and live independently within the next 6 months, as this will help me create more emotional and physical space to explore who I am outside of their influence.*



**How will you measure your progress?** Determine how you will track your progress and know when you have achieved your goal.

*I will track my progress by creating a savings plan and budget for my own apartment. I'll aim to save \$500 each month, research affordable housing options, and start visiting potential places within 3 months. I'll also begin purchasing items I'll need for the move, like furniture and kitchenware.*



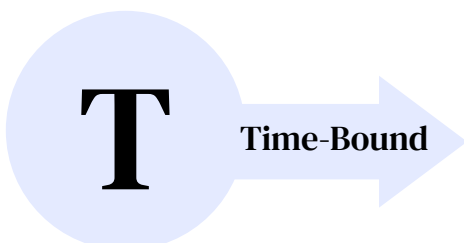
**Is your goal achievable?** Consider what might make this goal difficult and plan how you can overcome those challenges.

*To make this goal achievable, I will create a budget that allows me to save monthly while still covering my existing expenses. I will also look for part-time freelance work to supplement my income if needed. I'll start with affordable apartments in areas close to work to reduce commuting costs and make sure I'm financially ready.*



**Why is this goal important to you?** Ensure that your goal is relevant and meaningful to your overall life or career goals. Reflect on the value and impact of achieving this goal.

*This goal is relevant because moving out will allow me to establish a clear boundary with my parents, reclaim my personal space, and start making decisions that reflect my own values, not theirs. Living independently is a key step in building my confidence and making choices that honor who I am and what I want from life.*



**What is your deadline for achieving this goal?** Set a specific date by which you plan to achieve your goal.

*I will move into my own apartment by the end of 6 months. Within the first 2 months, I'll have saved \$1,000 and visited at least 3 potential apartments. By month 4, I will have made my final decision on an apartment and signed a lease. The final 2 months will be spent preparing for the move and gathering all necessary items.*



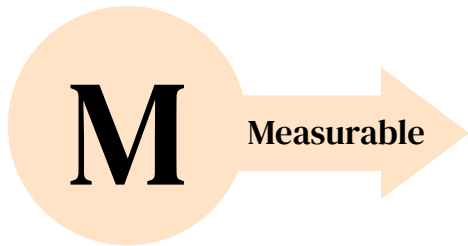
Scan to learn more about setting and achieving goals.



# SMART Goals



**What exactly do you want to accomplish?** Be clear and detailed about what you expect to accomplish.



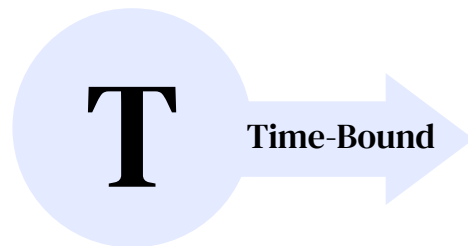
**How will you measure your progress?** Determine how you will track your progress and know when you have achieved your goal.



**Is your goal achievable?** Consider what might make this goal difficult and plan how you can overcome those challenges.



**Why is this goal important to you?** Ensure that your goal is relevant and meaningful to your overall life or career goals. Reflect on the value and impact of achieving this goal.



**What is your deadline for achieving this goal?** Set a specific date by which you plan to achieve your goal.



Scan to learn more about setting and achieving goals.

## Be Flexible

If you're struggling to reach a goal, don't be afraid to adjust it. It's okay to change the timeline, make the goal smaller, or alter the steps as needed.

## Celebrate Milestones

Reward yourself for every step or milestone you reach, no matter how small. This could be as simple as taking a break, enjoying a favorite treat, or planning a fun activity.

## Give Yourself Enough Time

Make sure you have enough time to achieve your goals without feeling overwhelmed. It's better to allow extra time and feel accomplished than to set an unrealistic deadline and feel discouraged.

## Stay Patient & Be Kind to Yourself

Progress may be slow, and setbacks can happen. Remind yourself that change takes time, and be kind to yourself if things don't go perfectly.

What obstacles have I encountered, and how have I handled them?

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What progress have I made so far? What am I proud of?

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What support or resources might help me continue making progress?

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# Personal Strengths Inventory

Constant criticism, controlling behavior, or unrealistic expectations from parents can lead you to internalize their negativity, resulting in a harsh inner dialogue. Over time, this self-criticism can significantly impact your mental health, making you feel inadequate and increasing feelings of stress and anxiety. When you're constantly telling yourself you're not good enough, you can fall into a cycle of self-doubt, focusing solely on your perceived flaws and failures, which prevents you from seeing your strengths and moving forward in life.

Creating a personal strengths inventory is a powerful tool to [combat the effects of self-criticism, especially when rooted in unhealthy family dynamics](#). By identifying and acknowledging your unique strengths, you can begin to shift your focus away from the negativity instilled by your parents and toward your positive qualities. This practice allows you to reframe your self-perception, building a more balanced and realistic view of yourself.

## PART 1: Discovering Your Strengths

Take some time to read through the list of attributes carefully and circle at least 6 strengths that you believe apply to you.

### Self-Control

I manage my emotions and impulses, which allows me to make thoughtful choices.

### Confidence

I believe in my abilities and have positive expectations of success.

### Flexibility

I adapt to change, adjust my approach, and think creatively in new situations.

### Ambition

I have a strong desire and determination to achieve success and accomplish my goals.

### Wisdom

I use knowledge and experience to make sound judgments and decisions.

### Creativity

I think outside the box and generate original ideas.

### Curiosity

I desire to to ask questions, discover new things, and expand my knowledge.

### Bravery

I face fear, uncertainty, or danger with determination and resolve.

### Fairness

I believe in just treatment, and that everyone has equal opportunities.

### Forgiveness

I let go of resentment and anger, choosing to understand and move on from a hurtful experience.

### Gratitude

I appreciate and am thankful for the positive aspects of life.

### Honesty

I am truthful and sincere in my words and actions.



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# Personal Strengths Inventory

## Optimism

I expect the best possible outcome and believe in a brighter future.

## Humility

I have a modest view of my importance, which allows me to learn from others.

## Humor

I have the ability to find and share amusement, and create a lighter perspective on challenges.

## Kindness

I am caring, considerate, and desire to help others.

## Patience

I stay composed while waiting or facing challenges, without getting frustrated or giving up.

## Love of Learning

I have an enthusiasm for acquiring knowledge and skills, driven by a desire for understanding.

## Perseverance

I am committed to see things through, despite obstacles and setbacks.

## Open Mindedness

I am willing to consider new ideas and perspectives with receptiveness.

## Teamwork

I collaborate effectively with others to achieve a shared goal.

## Social Awareness

I understand the emotions, needs, and perspectives of others.

## Spirituality

I believe in a purpose or connection to something larger than myself.

## Enthusiasm

I have a zest and passion that fuels my excitement and motivation.

## Generosity

I give my time, resources, or skills to help others without expecting anything in return.

## Problem-Solving

I am able to analyze situations, identify solutions, and overcome challenges effectively.

## Dependability

I am reliable and others can count on me to fulfill my commitments and responsibilities.

## Authenticity

I live and express myself genuinely, being true to my values and beliefs.

## Adventurousness

I am eager to experience new and exciting things, with a sense of curiosity and daring.

## Assertiveness

I communicate my needs, wants, and opinions clearly and confidently.

## Independence

I am self-sufficient and resourceful, taking responsibility for my own well-being.

## Logic

I am able to think clearly and reach sound conclusions based on reason and evidence.



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## PART 2: Applying Your Strengths to Relationships

Use the prompts to explore how you currently use your strengths in your romantic relationship(s), friendships, and family. Then, discover how you can apply your strengths in new ways to achieve relational growth.

**Lists the strengths you possess that help you in your relationships:**

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**Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help your relationships:**

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**Describe two new ways you could use your strengths to help you in your relationships:**

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## PART 3: Applying Your Strengths to Your Profession

Use the prompts to explore how you currently use your strengths in your professional endeavors (at work or school). Then, discover how you can apply your strengths in new ways to achieve professional growth.

**Lists the strengths you possess that help you in your profession:**

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**Describe a specific time your strengths were able to help your profession:   ent**

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**Describe two new ways you could use your strengths to help you in your profession:**

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Scan to learn more about how to overcome your inner critic.

## PART 4: Applying Your Strengths to Achieve Personal Fulfillment

Use the prompts to explore how you currently use your strengths to increase your sense of purpose and enjoyment. Then, discover how you can apply your strengths in new ways to achieve personal growth.

**Lists the strengths you possess that help you achieve personal fulfillment:**

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

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**Describe two new ways you could use your strengths to help you with personal fulfillment:**

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Scan to learn more about how to overcome your inner critic.

# Overcoming Shame

Living with unhealthy or controlling parents can make you feel like you're constantly falling short, especially when they criticize your every move. This dynamic can lead to deep-rooted feelings of shame—those thoughts that tell you you're not good enough or that you're constantly failing to live up to their standards. Over time, this shame can undermine your sense of self-worth and make you feel powerless.

**Understanding how shame affects you, especially when it originates from unhealthy parental relationships, is a crucial step toward healing.** Addressing these feelings with kindness and understanding can help you create a more positive and supportive relationship with yourself. This worksheet will guide you in exploring how shame has been triggered by your parents' behavior and how you can begin to cope with it in healthier ways.

## PART 1: Identify Shame

Understanding what shame looks, sounds, and feels like for you is a first step toward healing.

### What does shame look like for you?

Is there a particular facial expression or posture you associate with feeling ashamed?

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What actions or behaviors do you engage in when you feel shame (e.g., withdrawing, avoiding eye contact)?

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Scan to learn more about how to overcome shame.



# Overcoming Shame

What does shame feel like for you?

How does shame manifest in your body (e.g., tightness in the chest, heaviness, a pit in your stomach)?

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How does it affect your energy levels (e.g., feeling drained, wanting to hide)?

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What does shame sound like for you?

How would you describe the “voice” of shame in your mind?

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Scan to learn more about  
how to overcome shame.

## **PART 2: Draw Your Shame Monster**

Drawing your shame monster can help you visualize this emotion and see it as something separate from yourself.

Grab some markers, pencils, stickers, or any other art supplies you have on hand. On the blank space provided, draw what your shame monster looks like. It doesn't need to be a perfect drawing; the goal is to capture how you perceive your shame. Think about what colors, shapes, and features represent your shame. Is it big or small? Does it have a voice? Is it looming or hidden?



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how to overcome shame.

# Overcoming Shame

## PART 3: Journal Questions for Reflection

Journaling can be a powerful tool for processing emotions and shifting your perspective. If journaling feels overwhelming, try setting a timer for maybe 10 minutes, and come back to this part as needed. Use additional paper as needed.

**What specific actions or words from your parents have triggered feelings of shame in you?**

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**How does shame impact your daily life and self-esteem?**

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**What beliefs about yourself have you internalized due to your parents' criticism or control?**

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**If you imagine a kinder, more supportive inner voice, what might it say to you in moments of shame?**

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Scan to learn more about how to overcome shame.



## PART 4: Practicing Self-Compassion

Shame often thrives when we are too hard on ourselves. Self-compassion is about treating ourselves with the same kindness and understanding that we would offer a friend.



Replace self-critical thoughts with compassionate ones.



Use gentle physical touch to comfort and soothe yourself.



Journal your thoughts and feelings with a focus on self-compassion.



Observe your thoughts and feelings without judgment.



Speak to yourself with the same kindness as you would a friend.



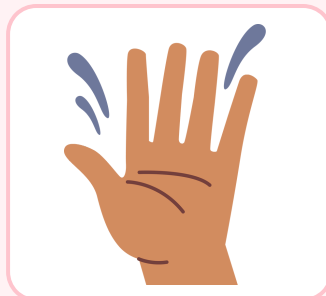
Practice gratitude, focusing on what you appreciate about yourself.



Pamper yourself with some over the top self-care



Surround yourself with people and animals who love you



Protect your well-being by setting boundaries - say no when you need to.



# Overcoming Shame

## PART 5: Positive Affirmations & Mantras

Positive affirmations and mantras can be used to counteract shameful thoughts.

Circle one or two that resonate and repeat them daily.

1. I am enough just as I am.  
.....
2. I did my best today, and that's enough.  
.....
3. Mistakes are a natural part of growth.  
.....
4. I am worthy of compassion and understanding.  
.....
5.  
.....
6.  
.....
7.  
.....

## PART 6: Action Plan

Write down four steps you can take when you notice shame arising. Make the action plan as specific as possible, keeping in mind where you are and what is available to you.

### Situation Description #1:

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### Self-Compassion Practices:

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Scan to learn more about  
how to overcome shame.

# Overcoming Shame

## Situation Description #2:

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## Self-Compassion Practices:

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## Situation Description #3:

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## Self-Compassion Practices:

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Scan to learn more about  
how to overcome shame.



# Additional Resources to Support Your Mental Health Journey

It can be hard to know where to begin looking for support in your mental health journey. Getting a referral from a primary care physician is a reliable first step. Also, sometimes family and friends have experienced similar issues and have professionals they would recommend. The experts at ChoosingTherapy.com are here to help as well, with resources we have reviewed and recommend. Our [strict editorial standards](#) ensure our reviews are fair, honest, thorough, and based on firsthand experience.

## You Can Trust ChoosingTherapy.com



300+  
Companies Reviewed



2,350+  
Hours of Firsthand Experience



1,150+  
Data Points Analyzed



### [Best Online Therapy](#)

Online therapy is a convenient way to connect with a licensed therapist to address mental health issues, reduce unhealthy behaviors, develop effective coping skills, and get more satisfaction out of life. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.

### [Best Online Psychiatry](#)

Online psychiatry providers enable patients to consult with licensed psychiatrists and other mental health professionals. They can evaluate, diagnose, and prescribe medication to help manage mental health issues. Many companies accept insurance and most have next-day appointments available.



### [Best Mental Health Apps](#)

Apps can be great way to monitor mood, track sleep, journal, and practice healthy coping skills like mindfulness and meditation. There are apps specifically designed to help people reduce the symptoms of depression, anxiety, ADHD, chronic stress, and burnout.

### [Therapist Directory](#)

When you're looking for a mental health provider with a very particular skill set, level of experience, or personality type, a therapist directory can be very helpful. Using the filters, you can refine your search until you find a therapist who feels like a perfect fit.

