

# Step 1

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_

Sometimes we use our intelligence to “dam up” reactions that would be better left to run their course and be drained. We spend a lot of energy building and maintaining walls that are under a lot of tension—just to look calm and “put together” on the outside or to try to live a “normal” life.

Of course, we do let some things flow. When you exercise you probably don’t fight to keep your heart from beating faster, or your breathing from becoming faster and shallower, or your body from sweating. We let those reactions happen naturally.



That is because we understand that our brain is quietly adjusting those things for our own good. We realize they are only *temporary* and will stop when they are no longer perceived by our brain as necessary.

That activity is called “autonomic” which is similar to automatic: they don’t require conscious decisions or even awareness. Does that make sense to you? (Y/N) Yet other bodily reactions sometimes disturb us and we try to suppress them. For example, we might force ourselves to avoid crying despite a great personal loss or injury. Have you ever done that? (Y/N). Or we might work hard to avoid situations that might trigger a racing heart, or sweat, or light-headedness, or sadness. It is as if we expect that those bodily reactions—or feelings—will last forever if we allow them in.

Research does show that anger often grows by focusing on who did what. But with fear or anxiety, and grieving losses, and even just the physical feelings of anger, that is not the case. Your body cannot sustain crying, sweating, a racing heart, etc. for very long. If you ride them out, they become exhausted, and at some point your autonomic brain stops issuing orders for them. By allowing these reactions to run their course, you reduce tension and fatigue, and this may help your immune system, and free you up to do more things you used to like doing. Of course, it takes some practice to notice the way your mind triggers physical responses, unhelpful tension, and fatigue.

## EXERCISES – NOTICING & INFLUENCING OUR AUTONOMIC SYSTEM

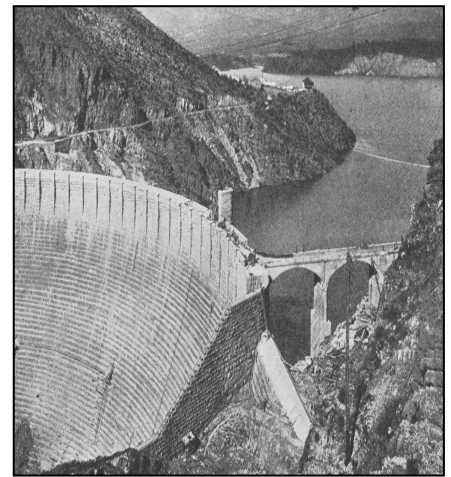
1. Close your eyes and vividly *imagine* you’re holding a lemon. A big, ripe, juicy lemon. Bring it to your nose, smell it, and take a large bite. Let me know when you feel your mouth water.

2. *Imagine* yourself jogging. Do it so vividly... speeding up... that your breathing becomes more constricted or you feel warmer... Let me know when you feel something change.

If your mouth salivated in response to *imagining* tasting a lemon, then you experienced the interplay of your *thoughts* and autonomic responses. Similarly, if your thoughts about jogging were vivid enough, they triggered unconscious orders such as to breathe faster or for your heart to pump blood to your muscles faster, resulting in greater warmth. Now try one more exercise:

3. Take a deep breath and relax... Drop your shoulders... Drop them more if they will go... Even more this time, really let your arms and shoulders relax... Did you get more relaxed with each request? We often don’t realize how much tension we’re holding, even when we’re trying to relax.

Similarly, we can learn to catch ourselves trying to avoid certain memories or block painful emotions—even when we think we’re being open to them. Such efforts might be keeping you from better recovery from the disturbing things you have experienced. You can work to reduce this avoidance and related tension by noticing them and letting your body *feel the weight* of what you have been through. Naturally, recalling these events may be unpleasant at first, just like the first time you go running. But after a while you may become conditioned and react with less distress. Allowing the sensations takes practice, especially if you’ve been avoiding them.



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## Step 2

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
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Imagine sleeping next to a loud clock, or with crickets nearby. Covering your ears or fighting the noise rarely brings much peace. Instead, allowing the noise in, paying close attention, or even imitating it may lead to it becoming “background noise” sooner. Disturbing and intrusive memories can also become like background noises that come and go without reacting to them much, but this takes practice.



This protocol is not appropriate if you are currently in danger, such as living with an abuser. But if you are safe, yet you have strong reactions to reminders of the event, then this exercise can help either reduce those reactions and the fatigue that comes from fighting them.

In this step you will identify, allow, and *ride out* feelings associated with your disturbing event. They may feel overpowering at first, but the feelings are not actually dangerous. Eventually your autonomic side will *catch up* and realize the intense physical reactions are not necessary. It will start to realize a memory is like a movie; you are not really “back there”; you are here, in this room, and your brain needs time to start recognizing “false alarms”. Any questions? (Y/N)

This will not work if you deny or hold back feelings. When you are ready, allow yourself to visualize the most disturbing event you have ever experienced. Allow it to *feel as if* it’s all happening *right now*, using present tense. Let your heart beat faster if it wants to. Don’t hold back tears, etc. Use tissues if necessary. Skip words that are unfamiliar or don’t apply to you.

Tell yourself: “***As I see it happening I am feeling...***” (Circle words)

Surprised	Powerless	Freakish	Furious	Polluted	Challenged
Shocked	Violated	Fake	Hateful	Cheap	Overwhelmed
Disbelieving	Castrated	Grotesque	Resentful	Ashamed	Avoidant
Confused	Disrespected	Abnormal	Distrusting	Blameworthy	Intimidated
Ambushed	Helpless	Burdened	Tired	Regretful	Jumpy
Isolated	Insignificant	Stressed	Cold	Guilty	Fearful
Abandoned	Miserable	Reckless	Empty	Battered	Scared
Alone	Devastated	Blind	Numb	Abused	Shaky
Forgotten	Broken	Dumb	Distant	Bullied	Sickly
Sold	Off Balance	Ignorant	Detached	Attacked	Queasy
Hated	Ruined	Foolish	Lifeless	Hurt	Anxious
Robbed	Lost	Idiotic	Dead	Bruised	Nauseated
Cheated	Cursed	Stupid	Adrift	Heartbroken	Sweaty
Deprived	Imprisoned	Gullible	Meaningless	Sad	Tense
Disgusted	Mutilated	Pathetic	Unloved	Unlucky	Terrified
Deceived	Charred	Absurd	Unlovable	Pessimistic	Cowardly
Brainwashed	Crippled	Ridiculous	Rejected	Discouraged	Spineless
Betrayed	Choked	Humiliated	Neglected	Crushed	Stuck
Manipulated	Damaged	Mocked	Overlooked	Depressed	Trapped
Coerced	Handicapped	Embarrassed	Friendless	Bitter	Paralyzed
Exploited	Unfixable	Belittled	Unvalued	Cynical	Conflicted
Naked	Hopeless	Scolded	Unsupported	Faithless	Oppressed
Exposed	Despairing	Accused	Unheard	Fed Up	Overworked
Vulnerable	Futureless	Judged	Unvalidated	Tormented	Punished
Defenseless	Doomed	Condemned	Silenced	Troubled	
Unprepared	Defeated	Misunderstood	Worthless	Unclear	
Unsafe	Defective	Frustrated	Disposable	Uneasy	
Weak	Flawed	Annoyed	Dirty	Uncomfortable	
Tiny	Useless	Angry	Filthy	Exhausted	

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## Step 3

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_

It's also important to acknowledge positive feelings that you might experience, some of which may surprise you. There may not be any, but consider the ones below. ***“On the positive side, when I think about my traumatic or disturbing experience, I also feel...”***

Encouraged	Appreciated	Effective	Cherishing	Whole
Positive	Belonging	Dependable	Comfortable	In Control
Recovering	Reconciled	Equal	Comforted	Undisturbed
Processing	Reconnected	Fulfilled	Protected	
Liberated	Supported	Prepared	Treasured	Adventurous
Absolved	Loved	Lucid	Immunized	Amused
Renewed	Lovable	Insightful	Resilient	Amazed
Clear	Loving	Aware	Rugged	Fun
Coherent	Optimistic	Enlightened	Seasoned	Limitless
Harmonious	Hopeful	Inspired	Recharged	
Closure	Cheerful	Sharpened	Reassured	Useful
Authentic	Brightened	Purposeful	Rebounding	Productive
Genuine	Content	Put Together	Passionate	Resourceful
Complete	Delighted	Spirited	Rebuilding	Healed
Clean		Strong	Successful	Open
Beautiful	Calm	Fortunate	Sturdy	Patient
Cured	Capable	Blessed	Hardworking	Nostalgic
Balanced	Accepting	Lucky	Stable	Nurturing
Fixed	Operational	Grateful	Fixable	Undefeated
Free	Present	Joyful	Exceptional	Thoughtful
Human	Mindful	Honored	Superior	Peaceful
Normal	Interested	Touched	Extraordinary	Penitent
Lovely	Knowledgeable	Proud	Courageous	Profound
Compassionate	Relaxed	Celebratory	Dignified	Realistic
Generous	Released	Enthusiastic	Energetic	Vindicated
Sorry	Rewarded	Excited	Faithful	Understood
Charitable	Relieved	Humbled	Familiar	Validated
Forgiving	Motivated	Glorified		Respectable
Likable	Determined	Happy	Flexible	Significant
Merciful	Committed	Praising	Flourishing	Vibrant
Competent	Driven	Noble	Forthright	Victorious
Intelligent	Focused		Radiant	
Educated	Assertive	Hardened	Serene	Redeemed
Able	Brave	Persistent	Transformed	Reflective
Confident	Fearless	Purified	Transcendent	Refreshed
Surviving	Bold	Experienced	Triumphant	Regenerated
Conquering	Accomplished	Mature	Tranquil	Rejoicing
Connected	Achieving	Wise	Tall	Upbeat
Accompanied	Fruitful	Ready	Rested	Valiant
Close	Devoted	Believing	Safe	Warm
Acknowledged	Enduring	Blameless	Sane	Whimsical
Recognized	Firm	Considerate	Satisfied	Youthful
Affirmed	Tenacious	Caring	Secure	

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## Step 4

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_

Sometimes we ask *why* something happened to us, or we make *negative predictions* about our future, or we are disturbed about *who is responsible* for the event(s), including God. Circle and write in **thoughts that bother you** regarding your most disturbing event. Once again, don't hold back any emotions that arise. Let them ride themselves out.



- *(Maybe) I should have* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *(Maybe) I should NOT have* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *If only* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *If only* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *Why* \_\_\_\_\_?
- *Why* \_\_\_\_\_?
- *Why* \_\_\_\_\_?
- *I can't believe* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *Where was* \_\_\_\_\_ *when this was happening?*
- *Where was* \_\_\_\_\_ *when this was happening?*
- *How could* \_\_\_\_\_?
- *I'm so* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *I'll always be* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *I feel like such a(n)* \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *being punished.*
- *It was my fault. I deserved it. I'm just a(n)* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *Now I'll probably never* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *This will probably keep me from* \_\_\_\_\_.
- *No one* \_\_\_\_\_ *can understand what I've been through.*
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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# Step 5

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
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Building on the last exercise, what is your worst or most disturbing thought or conclusion about what your disturbing experience(s) mean(s) about you, your future, or the world? For example, "Because this thing has happened, now I will never have a normal life."



*My worst conclusion:* \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

If you had a lawyer arguing for this idea in court, what would they say is evidence that supports this conclusion or prediction? ("Your Honor, my client now will never... *because...*")

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

It is important to identify our ideas and then cross-examine them. What would an opposing lawyer say about the evidence or conclusion? (E.g., "It was only 1 time out of 30" or, "They didn't have the necessary skills back then but that doesn't mean they can't learn them now.")

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### What other negative or haunting thoughts are tied to your disturbing event(s)?

Negative predictions or thoughts	Evidence that supports this thought or prediction	Exceptions to the negative prediction or thought

Disturbing events can make us feel very isolated. If you have not told anyone else about this important aspect of your life, how would you go about doing so? (1) Who would it be? (2) Would you do it one-on-one or in a group? (3) In what setting: over coffee, taking a walk, etc? (4) What could you say first that might help them be ready to be supportive?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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## Step 6

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
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This section is about anger, blame, shame and guilt. These emotions can contribute to keeping disturbing events present and powerful in our lives. Anger is a special emotion in that it does not necessarily lessen by “venting”. Many approaches to *thinking* about it or trying to *make sense* of it can actually make it grow, and the same may be true for shame, blame, and guilt. This may be due to thinking in terms of a “bottom line” or a one word “answer” that appears to explain everything (e.g., *jerk, murderer, stupid...*). Yet reality is often more complex.

For any event, there may have been several factors contributing to the outcome. For example, imagine you are driving and another car slams into you and then races off. Perhaps you even get hurt and need medical attention. You might feel anger towards that driver, not only at first but every time you recall the incident. However, imagine later you found out that the other driver was bleeding to death and racing to the emergency room. This new piece of information might lessen your anger, even though the harm to you and your car had been real and undeserved. Recognizing that we might not have all the information can help us *accept* what occurred.

If your anger is toward yourself, imagine you were that bleeding driver and ran over a child. You might have trouble accepting that you could do such a thing, while others would understand that you cannot be bleeding to death and still function at a normal level. It’s hard to accept how impaired we and others can be, yet it can help to consider limitations involved.

Thinking about your disturbing event, could any of the following have kept individuals from acting as fully functioning healthy adults? (Circle “they” or “I” as appropriate.)

- They/I were/was **very young** (even though we thought we were mature).
- They/I were/was had a **mental situation** that kept them from functioning normally.
- They/I had been severely **abused** and never got treatment for it.
- They/I were/was **too young or scared to know what to do** about the situation.
- **Nothing had prepared** them/me for such an experience.
- The situation was very **confusing** and they/I **did not know whom to turn to**.
- They/I were/was **overwhelmed** by pressures coming from all sides.
- They/I **did not have the coping skills** needed for that situation.
- They/I were/was **addicted** to something that had a powerful hold on them/me.
- They/I had gone **too many days without enough sleep**.
- They/I **would know what to do now** but **didn’t know back then**.
- The situation was **inevitable under those circumstances**, even though it’s different now.
- I/they were **unable to listen or understand at the time**, but this can change.
- They/I did not seek professional help **but can now**.

Think of 3 special circumstances that if you “found out” would make you less shocked. For example, after a perpetrator’s death the autopsy shows they had a rare disease that caused their behavior. Keep in mind that what occurred is still terrible; there is no need to minimize it.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

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## Step 7

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
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There are probably some physical or sensory reminders that you would rather forget and never experience again. These could be visual images, odors, sounds, names of people, and more. They probably have the power to “trigger” your disturbing memories, dreams, and emotions—and often not consciously. It can be as subtle as a flash of light on a car bumper. This exercise is about *undermining* the power of reminders and making them less disturbing to us.

Living by avoiding them keeps you vulnerable when you do encounter them. Plus, trying to avoid all reminders can really limit your life. Instead, looking *right at* reminders over and over again, in all sorts of contexts, while letting your reactions exhaust themselves, can make sensory items less tied to a single memory. For example, there may have been a doorway where your event occurred, but your daily experience of doorways probably keeps them from becoming triggers for that memory. However, if there was a *red* door, then maybe red doors trigger a fear response and you try to avoid them. That very avoidance might be keeping the *association* strong between red doors and your disturbing memory. Instead, if you spend a week often looking for red doors and letting your reactions ride themselves out you might weaken that association and fear.

Recalling sensory details about your experience can be uncomfortable. Remember to let any feelings ride themselves out. **List any current reminders. Try to put yourself in the memory and write every sensory detail you can notice in terms of:**

1. Sounds

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2. Smells

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3. Touch

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4. Tastes

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5. Sights

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## Step 8

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
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Some people say that looking back, they *learned* something from a disturbing experience. Write 3 *positive* things you've *realized* or *learned* since your most disturbing event. For example: For so many years I have been telling myself ... but it's actually more...

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Acceptance of what occurred, and allowing thoughts and emotions to come and go without fighting them, are 2 important steps in recovery, yet sometimes it is hard to imagine getting there. Imagine yourself as a **much older person**, like in 20, 30, even 50 years from now. A lot more life has gone by. What will your relationship with your disturbing event(s) probably look like? Will you be...

Denying or not believing it happened?	Yes	No	Maybe
Acting as if it did not affect me much?	Yes	No	Maybe
Desperate to know <i>why</i> it happened?	Yes	No	Maybe
Restless to know why it happened <i>to me</i> ?	Yes	No	Maybe
Vigorously suppressing any thoughts about it?	Yes	No	Maybe
Seeking distractions from it?	Yes	No	Maybe
Getting upset at reminders of it?	Yes	No	Maybe
Focused on blaming someone?	Yes	No	Maybe
Accepting the fact that it happened?	Yes	No	Maybe
Feeling the strength of a survivor?	Yes	No	Maybe
Hoping that memories will stay tucked away and not bother me again?	Yes	No	Maybe
Open to memories and reminders coming and going?	Yes	No	Maybe
Willing to examine aspects that still bother me and "ride out" related feelings?	Yes	No	Maybe
Willing to discuss the event(s) with others?	Yes	No	Maybe
Feeling like a stronger person overall?	Yes	No	Maybe
Afraid of the possibility of other difficulties?	Yes	No	Maybe
Feeling triumphant towards what could have left me hopeless for the rest of my life?	Yes	No	Maybe
Ready for whatever else life brings?	Yes	No	Maybe
Ready to help others benefit from my experience?	Yes	No	Maybe
Accepting of suffering?	Yes	No	Maybe
Afraid of life?	Yes	No	Maybe

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## Step 9

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=*calm*, 100=*very bothered or distressed*),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_

Now it's time to put it all together into a coherent story. Include details of what happened, who was involved or missing, how old you were, what you heard, saw, smelled, tasted, and felt. Also what you were thinking at each moment, and bodily reactions and emotions you were having. Include things from the previous pages that help tell the complete story. Tell it like a movie, as if it's happening right now. Start with what you were doing and feeling before the event(s) interrupted that day, and how those thoughts, feelings, and activities changed because of it. Don't just tell the external facts; try to describe all that went through your mind. At the end, include things you have learned, and recent changes regarding thoughts about what this event means for your life. Do not worry about grammar or even full sentences; key words are enough.

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(Continue on as many pages as necessary to tell your story.)

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## Step 10

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_

This is a chance to let your mind and body acknowledge current feelings. Identify emotions **you are feeling right now about the event(s)**, and allow yourself to fully experience them. Consider each word slowly and don't hold back any bodily reactions.



Surprised	Miserable	Stupid	Overlooked	Troubled
Shocked	Devastated	Gullible	Friendless	Unclear
Disbelieving	Broken	Pathetic	Unvalued	Uneasy
Confused	Off Balance	Absurd	Unsupported	Uncomfortable
Ambushed	Ruined	Ridiculous	Unheard	Exhausted
Isolated	Lost	Humiliated	Unvalidated	Challenged
Abandoned	Cursed	Mocked	Silenced	Overwhelmed
Alone	Imprisoned	Embarrassed	Worthless	Avoidant
Forgotten	Mutilated	Belittled	Disposable	Intimidated
Sold	Charred	Scolded	Dirty	Jumpy
Hated	Crippled	Accused	Filthy	Fearful
Robbed	Choked	Judged	Polluted	Scared
Cheated	Damaged	Condemned	Cheap	Shaky
Deprived	Handicapped	Misunderstood	Ashamed	Sickly
Disgusted	Unfixable	Frustrated	Blameworthy	Queasy
Deceived	Hopeless	Annoyed	Regretful	Anxious
Brainwashed	Despairing	Angry	Guilty	Nauseated
Betrayed	Futureless	Furious	Battered	Sweaty
Manipulated	Doomed	Hateful	Abused	Tense
Coerced	Defeated	Resentful	Bullied	Terrified
Exploited	Defective	Distrusting	Attacked	Cowardly
Naked	Flawed	Tired	Hurt	Spineless
Exposed	Useless	Cold	Bruised	Stuck
Vulnerable	Freakish	Empty	Heartbroken	Trapped
Defenseless	Fake	Numb	Sad	Paralyzed
Unprepared	Grotesque	Distant	Unlucky	Conflicted
Unsafe	Abnormal	Detached	Pessimistic	Oppressed
Weak	Burdened	Lifeless	Discouraged	Overworked
Tiny	Stressed	Dead	Crushed	Punished
Powerless	Reckless	Adrift	Depressed	
Violated	Blind	Meaningless	Bitter	
Castrated	Dumb	Unloved	Cynical	
Disrespected	Ignorant	Unlovable	Faithless	
Helpless	Foolish	Rejected	Fed Up	
Insignificant	Idiotic	Neglected	Tormented	

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# Step 11

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_

***On the positive side, when I think about my traumatic or disturbing experience, at this point I am also feeling...***

Encouraged	Close	Achieving	Experienced	Serene	Victorious
Positive	Acknowledged	Fruitful	Mature	Transformed	
Recovering	Recognized	Devoted	Wise	Transcendent	Redeemed
Processing	Affirmed	Enduring	Ready	Triumphant	Reflective
Liberated	Appreciated	Firm	Believing	Tranquil	Refreshed
Absolved	Belonging	Tenacious	Blameless	Tall	Regenerated
Renewed	Reconciled	Effective	Considerate	Rested	Rejoicing
Clear	Reconnected	Dependable	Caring	Safe	Upbeat
Coherent	Supported	Equal	Cherishing	Sane	Valiant
Harmonious	Loved	Fulfilled	Comfortable	Satisfied	Warm
Closure	Lovable	Prepared	Comforted	Secure	Whimsical
Authentic	Loving			Whole	Youthful
Genuine		Lucid	Protected	In Control	
Complete	Optimistic	Insightful	Treasured	Undisturbed	
	Hopeful	Aware	Immunized		
Clean	Cheerful	Enlightened	Resilient	Adventurous	
Beautiful	Brightened	Inspired	Rugged	Amused	
Cured	Content	Sharpened	Seasoned	Amazed	
Balanced	Delighted	Purposeful		Fun	
Fixed		Put Together	Recharged	Limitless	
Free	Calm	Spirited	Reassured		
Human	Capable	Strong	Rebounding	Useful	
Normal	Accepting		Passionate	Productive	
Lovely	Operational	Fortunate	Rebuilding	Resourceful	
	Present	Blessed	Successful	Healed	
Compassionate	Mindful	Lucky	Sturdy	Open	
Generous	Interested	Grateful	Hardworking	Patient	
Sorry	Knowledgeable	Joyful	Stable	Nostalgic	
Charitable	Relaxed	Honored	Fixable	Nurturing	
Forgiving	Released	Touched	Exceptional	Undeclared	
Likable	Rewarded	Proud	Superior		
Merciful	Relieved	Celebratory	Extraordinary	Thoughtful	
	Motivated	Enthusiastic		Peaceful	
Competent	Determined	Excited	Courageous	Penitent	
Intelligent	Committed	Humbled	Dignified	Profound	
Educated	Driven	Glorified	Energetic	Realistic	
Able	Focused	Happy	Faithful		
Confident	Assertive	Praising	Familiar	Vindicated	
Surviving	Brave	Noble		Understood	
Conquering	Fearless		Flexible	Validated	
	Bold	Hardened	Flourishing	Respectable	
Connected		Persistent	Forthright	Significant	
Accompanied	Accomplished	Purified	Radiant	Vibrant	

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## Step 12

On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
how are you feeling right now? \_\_\_\_\_

Throughout these exercises you heard about principles related to trauma recovery and you practiced several skills you can take with you. To recap, they are:

1. We may not be able to control what pops into our head or senses, but we can make choices about fighting it, allowing it, or even seeking it out. Our responses are important to notice because automatic ones such as such as ignoring, avoiding, suppressing, or minimizing may be feeding the tendency to think about them or be on the lookout.
2. We can weaken the effect of certain triggers. For example, imagining a lemon produced saliva, and recalling your event(s) also had physical effects. If we allow or even summon these images repeatedly (in a safe place) our body will probably not continue to keep producing physical reactions. Your autonomic brain will begin to “hold out” for an *actual* lemon or an *actual* threat to your survival before stirring up all your physical resources.
3. You experienced that intense feelings such as fear or sadness are not permanent; they arise quickly and then slowly taper down. As with physical exercise, allowing these feelings tends to make them less intense the 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> times.
4. Losing the physical reactions does not mean that what happened is somehow “OK”. It means the event does not have to be allowed to keep you away from being present to people and your life *now*. You get to *choose* your direction rather than always be *pulled*.
5. There may be a benefit to understanding the many nuances of our experiences. Using a rich emotional vocabulary list can help us fully acknowledge and mourn our losses. (We may still choose to fight for justice, reform, reconnection, etc., but that is about the future and different from sorting out the past and allowing the feelings that occur.) Identifying these many tangled feelings *now* may help reduce their ability to trigger you in the future.
6. Negative experiences can make us biased toward expecting excessive negative things in our lives. But thoughts are not facts. Troubling conclusions and predictions need to be *identified* and then *cross-examined*. Evidence *for* and *against* their accuracy or likelihood should be considered. This helps achieve a more objective outlook. This can also initiate problem-solving and doing things differently to increase our control.
7. A particular area that can disturb us involves anger, blame, shame, and/or guilt. By understanding the “bigger picture” of all the circumstances involved, including things that occurred long before these events, we might realize that the disturbing experience(s) can rarely be attributed to a single cause. We humans are limited in so many ways and it’s not easy to accept the outcomes of those limitations in ourselves and others.
8. You have been willing to examine specific memories and sensory cues carefully, and you have put the whole experience together into more of a coherent, logical memory. What are some things you are now more hopeful about? \_\_\_\_\_

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On a scale of 0 to 100 (0=calm, 100=very bothered or distressed),  
what was your highest level of distress on this page? \_\_\_\_\_