

## LESSON 1: IDENTIFY YOUR TOXIC SELF-TALK

**The Everyday Self-Love Course begins where you are.** In order for you to move toward greater self-love, we must first explore the ways in which you are currently unloving towards yourself.

This will involve you identifying the toxic voices in your head that are telling you that you are not enough while blaming and shaming you for being yourself.

Not fun, right? I wish I could say you can just skip this part and get to self-care where you give yourself a hot bubble bath or take a long walk in the woods.

But in healing (as in most of life), the only way out is through. You need to address the crap you've internalized, or else you're just putting icing on top of crap.

Then it would just be more of the same - not a transformation. And we're going for transformative change in your life.

So stick with me as we go through these lessons together. Remember, you're not alone in this struggle. You're with a community of over 100 feminists in this course who are all working toward greater self-love and self-acceptance.

So let's get started!

### **Where These Toxic Messages Come From**

From birth, we are bombarded with different messages about who we are, who we should be, and what we're worth in this world.

These messages can come from society, culture, politics, economy, media, institutions, family, friends, colleagues, bosses, and even strangers, such as:

- Your mom telling you to not eat so much (because no one will love you if you're fat)

- The magazine ads primarily showing thin, white, young women (because they're the only ones who can actually be pretty)
- Your dad teaching you to not run in public (because a black man running must be running from the police)
- Your friends saying "don't be such a girl" or "man up" when you get upset (because having "feminine" qualities and expressing feelings is so bad)
- The police officers who won't acknowledge that you, as a trans woman, was sexually assaulted because they insist you're a man and men can't be raped (because it's not like you would know what your own gender identity is)
- The random man telling you to smile as you walk to work (because it's important you try to look pretty for him and other men regardless if you actually feel happy or not)
- Your state Medicaid not covering abortion services and you can't afford to pay for one so you have the baby (because it's not like you should be trusted to determine if you should have children or not)
- Your HR department won't address your sexual harassment complaint against your boss (because it's not really that big of a deal even though you say it is)

And the list could go on but as feminists, you're probably pretty familiar with how these messages play out in your everyday life and society at large.

And these messages leave us feeling like:

- I'm not good enough
- I'm not lovable
- I'm not important
- I'm not capable

These messages and their impact are our social inheritance. We didn't ask for them but received them anyway. These messages are like air to us. We exist with them, usually not recognizing that we're surrounded by them.

We internalize them, believing that they're our own voices and that they're true.

These messages are powerful and are affirmed by many others in our life and society. So don't beat yourself up for having internalized them. The systems of oppression in our society were designed for you to believe them. That's why the majority of people in our society do!

Remember, you are being courageous in standing up to society and its messages, standing up to what you've been taught since you were a kid.

And thankfully feminism helps us think critically about them and see how they are a part of a larger system to keep us in our place and from disrupting the status quo for the elites.

But intellectually understanding all of that doesn't necessarily translate into us feeling free from them.

It's a good start but we need more - due to the nature of thoughts and emotions.

### **What You Avoid, Just Comes Back Stronger**

As human beings, we live in both the physical world and our internal world. When we are faced with problems in both worlds, we often have the same approach to fixing it – figure out how to resolve it and then get rid of the problem.

In the physical world, if you're hungry, you may make it go away by eating. If the room is dirty, you may fix it by vacuuming. You do something to it that resolves the problem.

In our internal world, when we have a thought or emotion we don't like, we usually take the same approach – figure out a way to fix or avoid painful thoughts and emotions in order to get rid of them.

If you think "I'm not lovable", you may push people away so no one realizes that and you're not reminded of it. If you're feeling sad, you may distract yourself with food or tv.

But this approach of avoiding painful internal experiences backfires, especially in the long-run. You may get temporary relief (which is why you still do it after all these years).

But over time, the more you avoid certain thoughts and emotions, the stronger they become. Why? Because these painful thoughts and emotions invariably point to something important to you, something that is hurting. Or else it wouldn't keep showing up.

It's actually an opportunity to pay attention to some part of you that got hurt at some point that needs healing, compassion - not judgment or rejection. We'll talk more about how to do this in the future lessons.

But for now, just remember that there's nothing wrong when these toxic voices come up. Their impact on you obviously isn't welcomed or helpful. But they just happen and it's important to accept that thoughts and emotions arise as they do, as they will.

We can't "control" them or make them "go away" as we would often like to. We can't just pick them up and put them in the trash can like a physical object. If we try, it just makes them more real to us.

So don't blame yourself or beat yourself up for having toxic thinking. And remember, when they do, it's because there's something important for you to pay attention to.

Which is why we start out the course with just noticing your toxic self-talk.

## **What Is Toxic Self-Talk**

Now that you have a better understanding about the general nature of thoughts and feelings, let's break down toxic self-talk.

At the heart of feminism is the belief that all persons have inherent self-worth regardless of our gender, sexual orientation, race, class, age, size, ability, and other social differences.

Given this inherent self-worth, every person has the basic right to self-respect.

As described in Six Pillars of Self-Esteem by Nathaniel Branden:

“Self-respect is the conviction of our own value. It is not the delusion that we are “perfect” or superior to everyone else. It is not comparative or competitive at all. It is the conviction that our life and well-being are worth acting to support, protect, and nurture; that we are good and worthwhile and deserving of the respect of others; and that our happiness and personal fulfillment are important enough to work for.”

Yet our patriarchal and kyriarchical society teaches us that we don’t have an inherent right to self-respect and that it’s up to society to judge our value.

When society holds us to impossible and irrational social ideals that we can never reach, we are then judged when we inevitably fail to achieve them. We are told that there is something inherently wrong with us – over and over again.

When we then internalize those messages and tell ourselves that there is something fundamentally wrong with us, these messages turn into toxic self-talk.

You can identify toxic self-talk by how it violates your right to self-respect. It shows up when you:

- Believe you’re not enough, instead of believing that you are enough.
- Reject yourself for just being you, instead of accepting yourself as you are.
- Judge yourself, instead of being compassionate towards yourself.

Having self-respect (and self-love) doesn’t mean that you’re perfect or can’t do anything wrong. It just means that you as a person aren’t wrong and that you have inherent self-worth.

For example, if you are not completing your tasks at work, the toxic message would be to judge you for being lazy or incompetent. A self-respecting message would acknowledge that you’re not completing your tasks and would ask what is going on that you’re not succeeding at work.

## Why Identifying Toxic Self-Talk Deprives It Of Its Power

While you're probably aware of some of your toxic voices, you may not have realized how pervasive and deeply held they are in your view of yourself and your life.

Toxic self-talk thrives from being in the shadows of our consciousness. When you're not fully aware of it or when you're ignoring it, it has more power to drive your thinking, feelings, and actions because you haven't distinguished its voice from your own.

Its power comes from being fused with your own voice - where you actually believe its judgments to be true about yourself and where you identify yourself with those beliefs.

Whereas a self-respecting voice would notice the same behavior, but without judgment and without diminishing your basic sense of self-worth.

For example, if someone broke up with you, a toxic voice might say, "It's because I'm too fat. No one will ever love me." Whereas a self-respecting voice might say, "Someone broke up with me. I'm still lovable." If you didn't get promoted, the toxic voice might say, "I'm not competent or important enough to the company," versus "I didn't get a promotion and I still matter and make a difference through my work."

In order to deprive toxic voices of their power, you have to identify them as something external to you so that they are no longer experienced as your voice. You may still believe in them initially, but overtime, as you continue to distinguish and simply observe that self-talk, they will loosen their emotional grip on you and lose their power.

Instead, you will be able to hear the toxic self-talk as it is, acknowledge it and set it aside, and then listen to your own inner voice.

## How To Identify Your Toxic Self-Talk

Now that you understand what and how toxic self-talk works, let's dive into how to identify it.

The deeper underlying belief about ourselves that drives our toxic self-talk usually stays hidden from us because it's so painful. We will go into those beliefs in Lesson 2.

For this lesson, we'll focus on common phrases used in toxic self-talk. These phrases are red flags to you that a toxic voice may be speaking. Examples include:

- I'm not (good, pretty, thin, successful, smart, confident, etc) enough – as opposed to "I'm enough"
- I'm too (fat, old, abrasive, needy, etc) – as opposed to "I'm \_\_\_ and that's ok"
- I should, must, or have to (or I shouldn't or can't) – as opposed to "I choose to" (or choose not to)
- I need – as opposed to "I want"
- I don't deserve – as opposed to "I deserve"
- I can't – as opposed to "I don't want to and that's ok" or "I am capable")

Any time your thoughts start to make you feel like bad about yourself or like you don't have choice, stop and engage in this process below:

1. Pause when you notice toxic thinking.

Toxic thinking is often happening in the background. So it's important to bring awareness to it in order to distinguish it. Just notice when you're feeling ashamed, afraid, hurt, guilty about yourself or feel upset, trapped, angry, hopeless, powerless about a situation.

2. Take 10 slow, deep breaths and focus on your breath.

This centers your mind on something other than the toxic voices and grounds yourself in your body. So just focus on your breath and feeling it go in and out as you count to 10.

3. Simply notice that the toxic voice is speaking.

Revert your attention back to the toxic voice and observe what the toxic voice is saying about you. Do not think about what it's saying, argue with it, or mentally run away from it. If you engage with the toxic voice, you only give it more power by treating it as if it is real.

Instead simply notice what the toxic voice is saying without trying to change anything about it. Notice that it's the toxic voice that's speaking and not you.

And remember, it's ok if you're having these toxic voice come up. That's what it does. It's not you. It's just talking – nothing more, nothing less.

4. Notice what physical sensation is happening.

As you are noticing what the toxic voice is saying to you, pay attention to how your body is reacting to it. Is it tensing up? Where and how much? Does your stomach hurt? Is your body slouching?

Just bring some awareness to what's going on in your body. Don't try to change it, judge it, evaluate it, or make it go away. Simply notice what's going on.

And remember, whatever is happening is ok.

5. Write the toxic message down in your Course Journal.

Writing it down in your journal will help you bring greater awareness to how and when your toxic voices flare. The process of writing it down also helps you distinguish the toxic voice from your own and lets you observe it as something external.

Remember, that toxic voice is not you. It's something society has taught you to believe about yourself. And as a feminist, you know that society normally teaches you crap!

6. Focus on your breath some more (optional).



Listening to the toxic voices can feel overwhelming sometimes, especially if it's your first time. If you find this process to be emotionally difficult, end it with some more focused breathing.

Remember that conscious breathing is always your friend that never goes away.

Breathing slowly and deeply will help calm your mind and body and ground you in your physical body. It's a simple but powerful tool you always have with you no matter what.

A quick short hand to remember this identification process is: Notice, breathe, notice, breathe. That's it.

## Next Steps

Toxic self-talk is just a self-limiting mental habit that you developed over the years. You weren't born with it. And now you can develop a new mental habit – one that's self-respecting. All it takes is practice, practice, and more practice.

Now it's time for you to start applying these concepts to you and your life. To get started, review the Weekly Action Plan for this lesson. Use the Journal Exercises, Guided Visualization, Group Coaching, and Forum to help you go deeper. And be sure to use your Course Journal daily for the next two weeks to record your negative self-talk and reflect on its patterns.

Please remember the most important part of these exercise is to NOT judge yourself for not being to do any of the exercises! It's ok if you are struggling. Of course you are! This is tough work and you've only begun to practice it. It's ok – everyone gets to fail and no one is a failure. You just keep trying, building the muscle memory until over time, it'll becomes easier.

If you have any questions on the concepts or other written materials, you can share them in the Forum or in the Group Coaching Call.

## Course Journal Exercises - Lesson 1

### Exercise 1 - Distinguish Toxic Messages from Self-Respecting Messages

**Directions:** Read the scenarios below and write what would be a toxic message and self-respecting message for the same situation.

The toxic message will take your feeling and/or behavior and use it to make a globally judgmental statement about you as a person. The self-respecting message will acknowledge your feeling and/or behavior and affirm your self-worth as a human being.

You can refer to the Lesson 1 Reading for some examples.

#### Scenario 1

You are standing in line at the post office and someone cuts in front of you. Surprised, you don't respond and that person goes to the desk.

- Toxic Message:
- Self-Respecting Message:

#### Scenario 2

You get excited about the opportunity to become the leader of a group at work. When you share this with your mother, she warns you that you'll have to be responsible for a lot if you took on that leadership role and it would look really bad if you failed.

- Toxic Message:
- Self-Respecting Message:

#### Scenario 3

You just went on a first date that you thought went great. But you don't get a call back from the person.

- Toxic Message:
- Self-Respecting Message:

#### Scenario 4

A friend calls asking you to help them organize an event you don't want to even attend. You feel torn between helping out because you believe you "should" and not wanting since you don't have the time.

- Toxic Message:

- Self-Respecting Message:

**Scenario 5**

You're wondering if you should attend your school reunion. On the one hand, you'd like to catch up with old friends that you haven't seen in years. On the other hand, you're nervous about how successful others might be in comparison to you.

- Toxic Message:
- Self-Respecting Message:

## Exercise 2 – Daily Record of Toxic Self-Talk

**Directions:** When you're feeling upset about yourself, follow the process in the Lesson Article and write down what happened in your Course Journal. (Adapted from *Daily Record of Dysfunctional Thoughts* by Aaron Beck)

In each entry, we recommend you note the **date and time** along with:

### **Situation**

Describe the actual event, feelings, and/or thoughts leading up to the toxic voice speaking up. Note what actions were taken, by whom, what exact thought occurred, what was said, what emotion you experienced. Do not explain or add meaning to describe the situation. Write down just the straight facts.

### **Emotions (and rating)**

For Emotions, describe specially what emotion you felt and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being you feel them very strongly. Emotions could be angry, depressed, confused, helpless, indifferent, afraid, hurt, sad, etc.

### **Physical Sensations (and rating)**

For Physical Sensations, describe what you notice happening in your body as the toxic voice is speaking and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being having extremely strong sensations. Try to be concrete and specific about what part of your body is reacting and how it's feeling to you.

### **Thoughts (and rating)**

For Thoughts, write the thoughts you hear as you noticed the toxic voices speaking to you about yourself and rate how much you believe in them from 1-10 with 10 being you truly believing in them. Don't try to edit or simplify the thoughts. Write them down as you heard them.

If you don't include all of these, the most important part to record is the Thoughts.

### **SAMPLE ENTRY**

**4/3/2013**

#### **Situation**

On a first date.

#### **Emotions (and rating)**

Felt feelings of self-consciousness and shame. Rating: 6

#### **Physical Sensations (and rating)**

Pit in my stomach. Tension in my neck and shoulders. Dry mouth. Rating: 5

#### **Thoughts (and rating)**

Thinking that she thinks I'm fat. Thinking that she doesn't find me attractive and that she wants to leave. Rating: 8

### Exercise 3 - Identifying Patterns in Your Toxic Self-Talk.

**Directions:** You will review what you wrote in your Course Journal of your daily record of toxic self-talk and note any patterns in the situations, emotions, physical sensations, and thoughts. If you don't observe 6 patterns, don't worry. 1 or 2 will do if that's all you notice.

This is merely for you to look at what's been happening in your mind in order to raise your awareness around what you struggle with. Since toxic voices thrive in the dark, knowing what to look out for and being more primed to sense them will help you catch them quicker and distinguish them from your own voice.

#### Situations

What particular actions, thoughts, and/or feelings consistently were involved in the lead up to a toxic voice flaring?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

#### Emotions

What strong emotion did you consistently feel when the toxic voices were speaking? Emotions could be angry, depressed, confused, helpless, indifferent, afraid, hurt, sad, etc.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

**Physical Sensations**

What strong physical sensations did you consistently experience when the toxic voices were flaring?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

**Thoughts**

What thoughts about yourself did the toxic voice repeatedly say?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

## Optional Exercises

Since people experience their toxic voices in different ways, I've outlined some additional ways to help you distinguish your toxic voices from your own.

### 1. Use the Guided Visualization for Toxic Voices

Go to: <http://everydayfeminism.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Guided-Visualization-for-Toxic-Voices.mp3> to play the guided visualization that will help you practice simply noticing the toxic voices and letting them pass through.

### 2. Go to the Balcony

Use this exercise when you are struggling with distinguishing the toxic voices from your own. Image you're on stage acting out a scene where another actor is saying toxic messages to you. Envision yourself walking off the stage, going up the aisle and then the stairs, until you're in the balcony.

From the balcony, watch the actor continue to say the same toxic messages, maybe even getting upset that you've walked away. Just watch it as if you would watch tv. You wouldn't argue with the actor on stage or try to engage with them in any way. So just notice them and see how separate they are from you.

### 3. Ask Your Body

Use this exercise when you can feel your physical sensations reacting to the toxic messages but can't hear the message itself clearly. Find a quiet spot where you can be alone and close your eyes. Notice where in your body you are experiencing the physical sensations – maybe its your stomach hurting, your neck tensing, your heart heavy – and place a hand on where it's hurting (if possible!).

Then ask the body part what it's saying to you. Remember to stay open to what it's saying – not closing up, arguing, resisting, etc. Just listen and notice and keep asking what it's trying to say.

### 4. Exploring Your Body's Reaction

Use this exercise when you feel physically numb to your body's reaction to the toxic messages. Find a quiet spot where you can be alone and close your eyes. Scan your awareness over your body from your feet, legs, back, torso, arms, neck, to finally your head. Notice where you feel any tightness, openness, heaviness, lightness, pain, no sensation, etc.

Don't judge any sensations, try to change any, fight any, etc. Then go back to where you felt some tightness, heaviness, pain, etc. Envision giving it some physical texture - what does it look like, what color is it, what does it smell like, what does it feel like to touch? And for bonus points, try asking it if it wants to tell you something.



## Appendix 1 - List of Difficult/Unpleasant Feelings\*

Since our society doesn't support us talking about or processing our feelings, we often don't have a good grasp of what emotions we're even experiencing. To help you name what you're feeling, here's a list of difficult, unpleasant feelings to help you distinguish what's going on inside.

ANGRY	DEPRESSED	CONFUSED	HELPLESS	INDIFFERENT	AFRAID	HURT	SAD
irritated	lousy	upset	incapable	insensitive	fearful	crushed	tearful
	disappointe						
enraged	d	doubtful	alone	dull	terrified	tormented	sorrowful
hostile	discouraged	uncertain	paralyzed	nonchalant	suspicious	deprived	pained
insulting	ashamed	indecisive	fatigued	neutral	anxious	pained	grief
sore	powerless	perplexed	useless	reserved	alarmed	tortured	anguish
		embarrasse					
annoyed	diminished	d	inferior	weary	panic	dejected	desolate
upset	guilty	hesitant	vulnerable	bored	nervous	rejected	desperate
hateful	dissatisfied	shy	empty	preoccupied	scared	injured	pessimistic
unpleasant	miserable	stupefied	forced	cold	worried	offended	unhappy
offensive	detestable	disillusioned	hesitant	disinterested	frightened	afflicted	lonely
bitter	repugnant	unbelieving	despair	lifeless	timid	aching	grieved
aggressive	despicable	skeptical	frustrated		shaky	victimized	mournful
						heartbroke	
resentful	disgusting	distrustful	distressed		restless	n	dismayed
inflamed	abominable	misgiving	woeful		doubtful	agonized	
provoked	terrible	lost	pathetic		threatened	appalled	
incensed	in despair	unsure	tragic		cowardly	humiliated	
infuriated	sulky	uneasy	in a stew		quaking	wronged	
cross	bad	pessimistic	dominated		menaced	alienated	
	a sense of						
worked up	loss	tense			wary		
boiling							
fuming							
indignant							

\*Adapted from <http://www.psychpage.com/learning/library/assess/feelings.html>

## Everyday Self-Love

### Lesson 1 Group Coaching Call

SANDRA: Hi everyone, this is the group coaching call for lesson one which is identifying your toxic voices. And so, first off, I just want to thank you for being in the program. This is a very important course for me both personally as well as professionally, because my way of dealing with what had happened in my life was to repress my feelings. And so I didn't know at all how to handle any emotions, really, until I was in my 20's until somebody, and that somebody turned into my husband, mentioned to me emotional processing, and I was like "I don't know what you're talking about." And so I ignored it and kept going. And I was like "Huh, maybe I'll try that." And so I asked him "What is this thing? How do you do it?" Because I had never seen it modeled for me and I had never heard anything about it before. And I can't imagine I'm the only one. And so he told me what to do and I said "Alright, I'll try it." And I went home and I tried it, and amazing things started happening for me. And that was really the start of my own healing process where I read a lot of healing and self-help books and had a therapist and I really devoted a lot of time to my process and it took a while to figure out what really worked for me, too. And then I also worked with a lot of folks who had experienced a lot of trauma, violence and abuse. And so, to be clear, I'm not a therapist. And I wanted to really share what I had been so privileged to have, between the support system and the books that I know a lot of books don't. And I had actually quit my job to focus on healing, which is not something a lot of folks can do. I really wanted to provide folks with a really clear cut process that they could fit into their schedule and that they didn't have to do all the intense research that I had to do to figure out what works. I'm not saying that this is a bullet proof system. You've still got to make it work for yourself. But I think this is, what I'm sharing with you isn't necessarily new. A lot of it is based on a lot of theories and research that has been proven to be effective, this is just packaged in a slightly different way. And so I wanted to really thank you, it means a lot to me that folks are taking the step towards healing.

I would like folks to start out by sharing what was it about now, this moment, that made you want to take this course, and what made you want to address issues and work on loving yourself more. I know I asked that in the survey but the answers were so great I wanted to be able to share that with other folks. If you would like to share, that would be great.

COURSE MEMBER: Sure, hi. Can you hear me ok? My name is Julie and I just wanted to share that a friend of mine was a member of your website and she just happened to forward me a link to this course. I am a therapist but I'm not practicing right now because I have three young children, so I'm focusing on them right now. But I find myself getting stuck in the same self-sabotaging type behavior. Specifically, over eating and things like that. And it's starting to affect my self-esteem in negative ways. That's what really gave me the push to do something for myself. So this is a big deal for me to devote time daily to focus on my thoughts.

SANDRA: Great. Thank you so much. And thank you for taking the time.

COURSE MEMBER: No problem. Thank you.

SANDRA: Anybody else want to share with the rest of the course?

COURSE MEMBER: My name is Aurora. I'm currently on disability for my bipolar disorder. And I'm seeing a therapist, and I sort of got overwhelmed with past trauma and so when I heard about this course, I thought, "That's great. I can figure out a way to deal with how the trauma has affected me while taking a break from focusing on the actual trauma. I've had toxic thoughts and negative self-image for so many years now. I'm engaged to be married, and I don't think it's fair to my fiancé and I know it's not fair to me to have those thoughts, and it's something I want to work on.

SANDRA: Great. I did a lot of work prior to getting engaged, because I wanted to feel that I was loveable, so I totally feel you on that. And I got there. And then I got engaged to be married, happily.

COURSE MEMBER: Hi. Well for me, it was out of desperation. I'm really scared, I went through a very severe depression about eight years ago right after getting married. And I also felt it wasn't fair to my husband. Because I'm unemployed and don't really have a support network, and I'm struggling with a dissertation I abandoned over ten years ago and this is my last chance to complete it. I guess loneliness and a lot of repeated past trauma and abuse of all sorts. Lately I got very frightened because I started to see some of the symptoms from that very profound depression eight years ago, and I will do anything and everything to avoid it, because when I had it, it lasted maybe about two years where I couldn't get out of bed hardly to eat or brush my teeth, and it was just horrific. And I'm terrified to go back there, and I'm willing to try anything and everything.

SANDRA: I want to acknowledge you for seeing that and taking the steps to not go there. It takes a lot of strength. I'm sure there are a lot of things pushing you down that path, but it takes a lot of strength to try to stem that tide and do something about it. So, I want to acknowledge that. It seems like you do have a lot of strength.

COURSE MEMBER: Hi, I also came from a pretty horrific upbringing. And I suffered with depression, which started over ten years ago. And I have done an incredible amount of work since then. I went from major depressive disorder to suicidal. I just recently graduated from massage school, and I'm hoping to start my own business. I remember in college, the toxic thoughts, they were just so loud, and they were so brutal and they were just constant. When I hit that really dark part of my life, this is rock bottom and I have to climb my way up any way I can. I've done a lot of different things, I've done therapy. I've read self-help books. Being in massage school and getting regular massages have done amazing things for my own ability to assimilate healthy touch and to start to feel comfortable in my body. I see the amount of progress that I've made with all these things and yet I still have those voices. The more aware of them I become, the more insidious I recognize them to be, because they're not shouting at me anymore, but they're whispering all the time. Every time I feel a twist in my stomach or feel insecure, this very toxic voice is telling me "You're going to fail. You're not good enough. You're never going to be perfect, and you have to be perfect. You can't do it." I want take that last step and really finally be free, really come into the amazing person I know I can be. I want to be able to bring that feeling to my clients. I don't want to carry this baggage anymore.

SANDRA: Thank you, thank you for sharing that. It is a long work in progress, we're all works in progress. The toxic voices can be so pervasive, and that's why the first lesson is just about noticing where they're at. Sometimes, like you said, they're not shouting, just whispering, but as you bring them forth into the light I think, just how effective you've been in bringing their sound level goes down, it will help you even more. I'm definitely excited to have you part of this program, to go even further with the work that you've done.

COURSE MEMBER: Hi, my name is Prina, and I chose to do this for two reasons. One is that my partner and I recently started a weight loss journey. She was extremely unhealthy and was carrying a lot from growing up in poverty, and from gaining a lot of weight in childhood and adolescent and being unable to lose that. And I had gained a lot of weight over the past several years. I have lost a lot of weight and I feel like I'm now in a healthy weight range, I wear a size six and I'm in very small clothing but I haven't felt like I could stop and I find myself fixating on every tenth of a pound and weighing myself a couple of times a day, and feeling compelled not to eat, which is a big deal for me because I'm a huge foodie and love food and talk about food all the time. So, for me to decide to skip a meal is a big deal, and I know it's not healthy but I'm not able to stop myself.

And the other reason has a lot to do with my job. I have a lot of independence because my boss works remotely. I have a lot of freedom but I also have a lot of responsibility. I've been doing a pretty good job, I get a lot of great feedback. I had a really great annual review and I got a raise, but I'm just not able to process that as an accomplishment. I keep feeling like it was luck or I have just fooled people into thinking that I'm competent and have really great ideas. I don't actually feel like I do, and I think the feedback has been sincere but I don't process it that way. Those are my two reasons for being here.

SANDRA: Great, thank you so much for sharing. And, it's true, our situations can improve and it can be amazing in a lot of different ways, but how we're interpreting and experiencing them can often be stronger than what's actually happening. I also want to applaud you for seeing that, for being aware enough to notice, "Something's not really going right with the weight loss program." Or, "My boss is saying true things about me but I don't feel it." It takes a lot to make that distinction and I want to acknowledge you.

I wanted us to share, and I'm really thank for everybody who did, because as you can tell, people are coming from a wide variety of places, but what everybody has in common is this feeling that they deserve more and deserve better from themselves and they don't quite have the tools or support to get that, and that's what this course is going to try and do. You are bringing a pro-active orientation to this work, and that hope, that motivation is a huge part of being successful in this healing process. And you are so not alone, and I hope everyone got that through the call as well as the forum. You really aren't alone. Things society tells us that it's our fault, that you shouldn't talk about it with anybody, you should be ashamed about X, Y, and Z, and so we feel like we're the only ones who feel like this, who feel not good enough and not loveable, not important, that we can't do anything right. I mean, we're not. It's much more common, and most people probably have some variation of those toxic voices running through their heads all the time. We just don't share it because we're ashamed of it, actually, and we've

been taught that it's our fault. So, I hope people are getting the real sense that they're not alone and there are actual real reasons why you think the way that you do. It's not because of you, it's actually because of society. Going back to the -ism's, sexism, racism, homophobia, and all that stuff...

And I also want to acknowledge that this lesson may be one of the harder lessons for folks, because it's asking you to look at what's really difficult to look at. So, if you've been actively doing that, I also want to acknowledge that. It's not easy work. It's much easier just to turn away and try to forget about it and that it ever happened. You're not doing that. You're bringing yourself into the light so we can do something about it. And that takes a lot of strength. Do not think that if it makes you cry, that you're weak.

I wanted to have folks share also what they learned so far from the lessons, readings, exercises. Anything they were surprised by? Either about themselves or about toxic voices?

COURSE MEMBER: Well, I think the main thing for me, I feel like a punching bag. You know, in the movies you see the boxers practicing with these bags. It's like constant, constant, constant, back and back and back, getting hit? That's how I feel. I was so surprised that, I felt like it wasn't just a toxic voice but many, and I feel a little out-numbered but it also helped me understand why I'm so constantly exhausted and run down. I don't know, I just feel so overwhelmed. There's just some patterns that I was able to see that was helpful but at the same time it takes so much to make myself even do the exercise. I have been doing a few, I think I've done like four. But it's hard. Listening to what you just said about how it's so common, reading on the forum and the posts on one hand I feel relieved but I also feel bad that we're all coming from very difficult stories, from abuse or different issues. At first, that gave me some relief, because I thought "Ok, so it's not just me. I'm not alone. I'm not a freak. It's a common human thing." But then of course, I think my strongest pattern, one of them, is my voice kept coming back saying "Yeah, but, look at them. They have something that you don't have that allows them to make something positive out of their situation or their story, to move forward. They're surviving better than you are. Look at you – you're unemployed, you can't put your life together. Look how old you are, blah blah blah." It's just this feeling that something is missing from birth, and to be able to try to talk to myself and say "No, it's situational, it's an accumulation of too many bad things that happened to you that were not your fault." It's kind of hard when it's so many voices. Or that one voice to so repeatedly and so viciously, and you're just this little voice trying to get that space. The first exercise I did did help me and give me a lot of hope, because it felt like "Oh, yeah, look at it go." Like when you meditate, "Oh, it's just this cloud passing by, you can let it go." I noticed that my torso, from my solar plexus down, it didn't stop being tense, even during the breathing exercises.

I'm just really, really trying and hoping, it seems like that pattern of comparison and that feeling, "But, yeah, they have this, they have what it takes to get out of the hole, but I don't." So, it's kind of hard.

SANDRA: And are ways you can be gentle with yourself when you're feeling this?

COURSE MEMBER: It's kind of hard. I don't know, maybe it's up to me. It seems like I immediately look for evidence for why I deserve to be in the situation that I'm in. "Oh, of course you're lonely, and don't have friends, because you're an idiot. Because of the abandonment by your parents, and all of this. Who wants to be with someone who's depressed or needy? Or who feels so very disconnected? It's hard, gentleness does not come easy.

SANDRA: We'll get more in to this in future lessons, but just try thinking of talking to a young child who was saying these things, how would you speak to them? It's kind of a preview of future lessons, but just so you have that in your toolbox, of how you can be gentle with yourself. Because this is a process and it sounds like there's a lot of stuff happening. And it's if you want to take a break. So if you don't want to do the tracking with the toxic voices for a few days because you need a break from them punching away at you, you want to put them to the edge of your mind, you can do that. That's also taking care of yourself. This can be really intense work. If you need breaks, take breaks.

Thanks for sharing.

COURSE MEMBER: Hi. I wanted to say I appreciated this lesson because it was hard, and to bring up one of the parts I really appreciated was when the lesson said what you repress comes back stronger. And for me, I'm a community organizer, which was like learning a whole other terrain, just learning the area and the people. I guess back home, when I would have little bouts of depression I could just jump in my car and go to the beach, or go to a friend's house or something to distract me from the sadness that I'm feeling. And now that I'm in a new state and have a lot of free time, it just, it gives me a lot of time to think about all of the things I've been putting on the side and not dealing with. Like, the fact that, I used to take care of my dad and now he's in a nursing home, which is awesome, and it gives me a lot of space to explore and live my own life. The fact that he's declining and trying to deal with that, and also I'm not working in sort of organization that I did at home, which is being in a community throughout the day that I could relate to, and now I'm working in a whole other universe where class issues are shoved in my face on the regular. Having the opportunity to confront all of things I haven't had to deal with is really nice.

SANDRA: Thank you. And taking the time to step back and reflect is one of the biggest steps that we can do in this process. Often times we keep ourselves busy and distract ourselves. And sometimes that's what we need to do. Often times that prevents us from moving forward, actually. It's great that you're taking the time now.

COURSE MEMBER: I've just been noticing that over the last couple of day, the first day that I did it, I was shocked at how many toxic voices there were. And I had similar thoughts that someone else shared, to say "No wonder I'm feeling rough." There's a lot of stuff coming towards me. No wonder I'm struggling. And then I noticed a couple of days where I didn't really struggle at all, so that was kind of different. And then I noticed when I spoke to a certain person, I had a floods of toxic voices during my conversation with them and after. It was my mom. And I do have a lot of hurt from her in the past and in the present. Not to label people, but I really feel and have learned through reading and other different things that she puts herself first a lot, almost to the point of narcissism at times. And so I guess, I just noticed a huge increase in the toxic thoughts

and guilt and things like that when I was speaking with her. So, I'm exploring that, how to have a relationship with her. My first instinct is to push her away and not talk to her, but at this point in my life I'm not willing to do that. Her husband just very suddenly passed away, so I've got compassion on one hand but then I've got a lot of unresolved stuff on the other hand. That's what I've learned so far.

SANDRA: There's a lot that we're not terribly conscious of sometimes or aware where it's coming from. Parents are often sources of that since we've been hearing their voices since we were babies, literally. A lot of well intentioned stuff can be impacting us in toxic ways, actually. My family said a sort of very problematic things to me, especially with the cultural and generational divide. I come from a Korean family who immigrated over here with a lot of old school values. If you post about this in the forum, or we can talk later about it, how difficult it can be with people that we care about so deeply but who can say really toxic things to us, because that's something I've definitely worked at, and it works actually. We can talk a bit more about that. We did a podcast about it. If you email me, I can get you a sneak peak.

COURSE MEMBER: I'm Aura from Uptown, Massachusetts. I think there's two things I've learned. One, is that I really, really want this to work because I just get overwhelmed sometimes with these feelings of self-hatred and not wanting to be here. And I know it's not fair to me and it's not fair to my fiancé. And I guess some there's some part of me that things she's going to get sick of coddling me and she's going to want to leave me. And so I know I really want this to work, but on the different side of the same coin, I really worry that it won't. It's so easy to get trapped in the toxic messages and it takes so much work to have to stop giving in to that part of yourself, "What if I don't want to get better? What if I want to stay in this place? And not putting the effort in to moving past it?" And it's so easy to think of myself in 10 to 15 years have the same problems even though I don't want to.

SANDRA: Yeah, there's a forum post actually, we talked a bit about that. I'm reiterating that, someone once told me that the hell that we know can be more comfortable than the heaven that we don't. And it is really difficult work, so I totally get that feeling. Especially if you've been doing this for a while, to keep going and to keep flogging through. And I think focusing more on, even if you don't believe right now at this moment that you're going to heal, that you're whole, that you're loveable, to think that it's possible – you can hold on to that. If you can't hold on to the belief that you're whole and loveable, what about that it's possible that you're whole and loveable. Try that out for size and see if that gives you something to hold on to while you're going through those moments.

And so we'll do our last one. Last sharing on this question and then we'll get directly talking about and asking people to share the questions people had about the lesson and get a little coaching around it.

COURSE MEMBER: On the positive side, I was super impressed with the amount of release that I felt. I just want to say, what an amazing experience it was. Because I've had a lot of issues with women in my life, with female friends and a lot of drama. It's really great hearing everyone telling stories and what they're going, and I'm really impressed by everybody.



I was really happy with how relieved I felt by doing the first exercise where you juxtapose the toxic thoughts and the self-respect you've got, learning about all the associated bodily feelings that went with it. It was really hard to come up with "Well, what could I say to myself that would be self-respecting in that situation?" It was this flood of release went through me and the physical pain that went with the toxic thoughts went away. Obviously they came back again later, but to feel that release in that instance was really liberating. And also, with the weekly affirmation that it's just a thought and a thought can be changed, and you don't have to be trapped just because [muffled] that was just like "woah, this is so cool."

Oh, I'm sorry, did you want to say something?

SANDRA: No, I was just smiling and laughing, because I agree.

COURSE MEMBER: In terms of what I have learned personally, it seems like a lot of my issues come up with work and setting my boundaries at work. It's like the toxic thoughts, they take what is an integral part of my being and use it against me. I'm very much a helper, I'm very much a problem solver. I pride myself on my problem solving and my desire to help people, but there are so many people at my job who will take advantage and will not be grateful, and basically act helpless until someone comes along and does something for them. I feel very pushed around, and my time and my work is not respected on the job. The toxic thoughts, when someone "Can you help me with this?" The toxic thoughts will be "You're such a helper, why are you feeling bad?" So it makes me feel bad for wanting to help, and then I feel bad for feeling bad. It's definitely, it's improving the more aware of it I become.

SANDRA: Excellent. It can be really surprising to found out how deep and how prevalent these thoughts can be. But they are just thoughts, and we're going to practice swapping them out, in addition to dealing with the hurt that underlies those thoughts.

So, I wanted to now switch to us just asking questions, and then I'll give my feedback around how to deal with different challenges you've faced in the past week or so as you've been doing these exercises. So, if you have any questions or challenges you want to discuss with me, this is it.

COURSE MEMBER: I feel like. This is Tracy, sorry. I feel like a lot of what I'm noticing is that my toxic voices, I'm actually projecting them on to people. SO, I'll have a conversation with someone and I'll assume their intent or meaning and what they're saying and what happened is something other than what's on the surface. I probably have done this for a long time and wasn't aware of it. Is that a separate thing? Or would you say that's what's going on there?

SANDRA: It's pretty common to project our toxic messages. Like, what we're hearing in our mind, that the people we're talking to are actually meaning that. That's pretty common, and I would recommend learning to make a distinction between the two and not assuming you know. And getting curious, actually, getting curious about the other person. Because you may be right, they may be thinking that. Often times they may not be. Those are two different issues of you dealing with toxic voices and dealing with another person externally who may be saying



something toxic and maybe not. Those are two different situations and the only way you'll find out is to be curious and to ask, actually.

I remember my own healing process. I had a lot of very neurotic thoughts in relation to my then boyfriend, now husband. And I remember I offered him salt at the dinner table and he said "No," and I thought, "He doesn't like me anymore." So, not the most logical train of thought but in my current state of when I was very aware of my feelings of being unlovable, it occurred to me that he didn't love me, not because of the salt, but because at the end of the day I felt very unlovable. It had nothing to do with the fact that he rejected my salt. So I made that distinction, and I told him "I'm feeling really upset right now, and that's why I'm crying. And I know it's because of what happened and I know that it's not your fault. You're not responsible for this." Because he wasn't. And we were able to create this space where I was able to be gentle and loving towards myself because I was feeling upset.

Now, say, another situation where he is being pushy and trying to get me to do something that I don't want to do, that goes off in my head as a red flag. That's different. And I will start a conversation about why I'm feeling smaller. Why is that pit in my stomach happening. And also have him share what it is that he's feeling and trying to do, and acknowledging that he's trying to do something that isn't appropriate and had to have that conversation. Is that helpful to see the distinction?

COURSE MEMBER: I think what I'm realizing is that because of legitimate past trauma, I do get in to situations where I attract people who bully me. I definitely get in that dynamic with people in a real way. But I also think I'm becoming aware that I'm assuming or believing that people who have no intention of doing me harm, are bullying me. I lost my job this year, and my husband is a really good person. He's not a bully, he's never been a bully to me. But since I lost my job, I started having these conversations with him that I realize are completely neurotic. "I never do anything right. Why are you always being critical?" He really isn't. I'm starting to get some clarity and realize it's not real. I'm believing something that isn't happening. Now I feel like I can't trust myself. He can say something, "Do you mind picking up something at the store?" And I'll take it to mean that I can't do anything right.

SANDRA: It's great that you're trying to make that distinction, because it's a very difficult distinction. Particularly when it's repeating things that happened to you in the past or it's unclear whether something legitimate or violating is happening, so I want to acknowledge that. Secondly, I would not lean towards not trusting yourself, I would lean more towards trusting yourself when you're feeling upset about things, because there's some need that you have, there's some feeling that you have that needs to be acknowledged. And whether or not that's based on what's actually happening right then and there in the situation of your husband asking you to get something from the store, that's kind of irrelevant. You still, regardless of whether he did something or did not do something, you still have your feelings to take into consideration and be gentle towards. It happens to get triggered by what happened, but that underlying feeling is still there and needs some loving attention. And then, often times when you can focus...I found in my experience that if I can get clarity around what I'm feeling and I take care of it, I'll get clarity about why I'm feeling like that and I'll get clarity about how much of it is me and how much is the other person. I'm not sure I how much I still ask. I know I share how I'm

feeling, saying “I’m not assuming that you mean it, you meant to say I’m too incompetent to get stuff but that’s how I’m feeling. What did you mean by that?” And have that conversation. Especially with someone who you have a trusting relationship with, like your husband. You can always couch it, “I know it’s not something you normally do, but this is how I’m feeling. What were you were intending by that?” If you’re really unclear. How does that sound?

COURSE MEMBER: I think that’s the sort of thing that he’s going to say, “No, I just want you to get something at the store.” You can’t assume that someone else is going to be self-aware enough to that clarity either. I understand what you’re saying though. I think that, I was betrayed by a lot of people when I lost my job, and it kind of upended my structure for my world. And so then it just sort of turned things on their ears, so I started to feel like there’s no one I can trust. So I feel like suddenly some of these idea that are coming up at home, I just tend to feel like I’m projecting that situation on the person who’s readily available to me. I think what you said about being clear about what you’re feeling helps to understand where it’s coming from is probably the most useful place to start, I guess.

SANDRA: Yeah, just get curious. Don’t shut it down, just get curious about what’s going on with yourself and start the exploration process. And there will be more about this obviously in the future lessons, some different ways of doing that, of not judging it, just noticing what’s going on. It’s part of your homework. You’ll have lots of opportunities to do it.

Thank you so much.

COURSE MEMBER: Hi, this is Bethany. I just want to go back to the caller who was talking about talking with her mother, and how that inspired this huge cascade of negative self-talk. I notice something similar to myself. In fact, one of the reasons I signed up for this class was a situation I have with an ex-partner that was doing a lot of that sort of thing. I just wanted to say I would welcome a discussion about that in the forum, an opportunity to talk some more about how to explore that and approach that, and maintain a loving relationship with somebody when you have that response to them, how to keep that going when you’re working on the issue of which issues are yours and which issues are theirs.

SANDRA: I will see if I can get that interview shared with you all before it’s published. It’s not going to go live until February. I’ll speak a bit right now on that. At the end of the day it comes down to you not believing in that toxic message. Those toxic messages will continue to come at us – from family, from society, from the media. We grew up with them and they will continue to be there regardless of how much healing we do. So it’s not about getting them to stop, because they’ll never stop. Media certainly won’t, you might be able to get some individual folks in your family to stop. So the idea is actually that they don’t have power over you anymore. There are a lot of messages that we receive that we don’t believe because it’s not relevant to us. It just kind of washes off of us. It’s more about getting yourself to the point where you are so strong in the belief that you are good enough, that you are lovable, you are important, that you can hear it from anywhere. And it will just slide right off of you. I think it gets obviously tricky when it’s folks who you love and trust to a large degree. I ground myself first in the belief that it’s not true. That my worth isn’t tied to having babies, getting married or wearing makeup, which is my family, or being skinny enough. Those are the messages I get constantly bombarded with. And I

remember that they come from a different context. They come from a different culture. And this could be even if you're raised in the same country, because everyone has their own different culture, which is different from you. And their perspective is shaped by their lives and how they grew up too. A lot times my family says all sorts of what I think are very problematic stuff – like they take away my spoon because they don't want me to gain any more weight, and I'm a size one! I don't think that's much of an issue. But they still take away my spoon and make me use chopsticks so I don't eat as much rice. So I don't gain weight. I was also told I needed plastic surgery my entire life, since I was a little girl actually. I remembered that this, for them, they want me to be happy. And in their minds, to be happy as a woman, to be successful as a woman, you have to be beautiful. And so much attention is placed on how I look and how much effort I put in to being attractive. And I ground myself in the fact that they're doing this out of love for myself, a love for me and that is not necessary. My worth is not attached to how I look. And when they cross the line, then I assert it again. And thankfully, they are folks who respect when I say "I don't want you taking photos of me laying on my stomach and poking me in my stomach after dinner to get me to suck in my stomach. This was all pre-wedding stuff – my mother and my uncle called it "shock treatment" to try and get me to suck in my stomach more. I stood up to it and told them no more. And I also acknowledge and understand why they're doing it, and it's not helpful.

So that's a quick summary of my strategy, of how I deal with it. The most important part is that you don't believe it in the first place and you stand strong in your self-worth. And sometimes your family is not doing things for your own good, they are consciously not doing things for your own good. And that's a different situation. That probably would be more like an abusive situation, and I would recommend a different strategy which is to not be in that situation with them. And that's kind of a different deal. A lot of the times, they're doing what they think is best for you, which is often times not helpful to you.

COURSE MEMBER: Mostly, my issue with a partner I just recently broke up with and we're trying to negotiate around a relationship with his new partner who used to be a friend of mine, and the fact that we have a child together. Trying to figure out what the boundaries are, and how that's all working. It's more a matter of coming to that place of recognizing my own self-worth and value, and not defining myself in relationship to him the way that I used to and all the messages that are coming up around that, but I recognize also that a lot of those are echoes of things that came from my family origin, so there are those pieces to work through as well. I look forward to seeing article if you can get it to us. Anybody who wants to talk about that more on the forum, I would be really interested in participating in that conversation.

SANDRA: Can you make sure that forum post gets started?

COURSE MEMBER: Ok, sure.

SANDRA: Thank you so much, because this is an issue that comes up quite a lot. And there's different variations of what people are facing and different ways people are dealing with it.

So it's 9:10, and I wanted to go a little bit longer because I know we started ten minutes late, so if there's one more person who wants to ask a question or share, now is your time.

Ok, well it looks like that's actually everybody. Thank you so much everybody for sharing as much as you did. I know that it can be a little nerve wracking, can cause a little anxiety to share things you may not have shared in public ever before with strangers. And I think that's one of the great things about this course, is that we're all going through a similar process together, so it's a much more welcoming space to talk about things we may have never felt comfortable talking about elsewhere. So thank you everyone, again, and this lesson is foundational, so please make sure to do the exercises. And at the same time, if you're finding them difficult to do emotionally, take a break. That's all a part of the self-loving that we're getting more and more practice in.

## LESSON 2: COUNTER TOXIC SELF-TALK

For Lesson 1, you've been noticing and tracking when and how the toxic voices start speaking to you. By now, you've gathered a good amount of information and identified some patterns in your toxic messages in your Course Journal.

In Lesson 2, we're going to go deeper by exploring what's (or rather who's) behind the toxic voice. Remember how Dorothy pulled back the curtain to reveal just an ordinary man behind the scary big voice of the Wizard of Oz?

Well, we're going to help you pull back the curtain to see who's behind the toxic voices in your mind. And they won't be nearly as scary as you may have thought they were.

### Starting From the Beginning: The Origin of Our Mistaken Beliefs

I'm going to take the long road by starting with where most toxic voices begin – **our childhood**. (While some may develop during our adult years, particularly if you've experienced trauma when older, similar logic still applies.)

When we faced overwhelmingly stressful situations as children, we didn't have the experience, understanding, or tools to handle it or understand what was going on.

So to cope and make sense of our experiences, we made **certain decisions about ourselves and the world to protect ourselves in future situations** – which became our **Mistaken Beliefs**.

For example, if a child's parents got divorced and her father was suddenly not present, she may believe that she wasn't lovable and important enough to her father to keep her family together.

As adults, we can see that the parents get divorced due to problems within their marriage. But as children, we don't have the ability to see all the different factors since we see things from a child's limited perspective.

Frequently, we end up making it about ourselves, believing that something is wrong with us or that somehow we weren't enough.

These Mistaken Beliefs we developed as children are carried into our lives as adults and are powerful lenses through which we see the world and ourselves.

Some examples of common Mistaken Beliefs include:

- I'm not lovable.
- I have to be perfect.
- I can't rely on others.
- I shouldn't upset people.
- Something is wrong with me.
- I need other people's approval to be ok.

In our child's world where these Mistaken Beliefs are true, we needed some way of protecting ourselves.

Enter the **Misguided Helpers**.

## Welcome To Your Worst Best Friend

The Misguided Helpers are the "protectors" our subconscious created to help stop us from being hurt again.

They **act on our Mistaken Beliefs, telling us who we are and what we should, can't, must, have to, and don't deserve to do.**

Similar to how a parent might discipline a child to prevent them from getting into more trouble, Misguided Helpers warn, scold, berate, and punish us through their toxic messages.

"Don't let yourself be vulnerable," "You don't deserve something better," and "You can't trust him" are all common messages from our Misguided Helpers designed to keep us from "messing up" again.

The Misguided Helpers also don't want others to find out the "truth about us" - that there's something wrong with us. This is what sets up our shame cycle where we blame ourselves and beat ourselves up. (This also keeps us from sharing our struggles and from realizing that we're not alone and that so many others are going through this too.)

I put "protector" in quotes because obviously the Misguided Helpers do more harm than good. Instead of helping, they end up giving us messages that limit our actions and keep us small.

But it's important to understand that they weren't originally created to hurt us. Our child's subconscious created it with the intention of **protecting us in future situations**.

For example, if your Mistaken Belief is that you're **not lovable**, not inherently worthy of love, then the Misguided Helpers may try to "protect" you by making you:

- Do things for others so they have to love you
- Assume people weren't going to like you anyways
- Not rock the boat so people don't get upset with you
- Use guilt and emotional manipulation to get people to show they love you

If you believe you're **not important**, nobody cares about you, the Misguided Helpers may push you to:

- Not care about other people either
- Prove to others that you were important
- End relationships early and not risk putting yourself out there
- Be a know-it-all and super useful to people

If your Mistaken Belief is that you're **not capable**, not competent enough, the Misguided Helpers may make you:

- Avoid responsibility at all cost or take charge always to prove that you could do it

- Go it alone so others won't see you fail
- Ask for everyone else's opinion before you made a decision
- Make your situation so crazy no one could blame you for not succeeding

As you can see, there are tons of ways that these Mistaken Beliefs can show up in our lives through the Misguided Helpers.

This naturally has a toxic impact on your life and your sense of self-worth. You've been hearing the Misguided Helpers for years or even decades without fully realizing who was speaking.

So of course you're having difficulty loving yourself! Of course you feel trapped and hopeless! Your Misguided Helpers' been doing their best to keep you small and keep you from venturing out in the world.

Why? Because it doesn't want something worse to happen to you.

They put you in a cage because they think it's safer for you. They believe the world out there is big, mean, and bad and you can't handle it because you're not enough in some way (since you actually couldn't as a child).

That made sense from the child's perspective and maybe it was even helpful to you in a limited way at certain times in your life.

But ultimately, the Mistaken Beliefs are not reality-based. They do more harm than good, stopping you from hearing your inner voice, taking responsibility for your happiness, and stepping into your full power.

Now let's look at what it means to be free from your Misguided Helpers and their toxic messages.

### **What Freedom from Misguided Helpers Really Means**

**Freedom from Misguided Helpers and their toxic messages does NOT mean you will never hear them again.**

In fact, you'll probably hear their voices for the rest of your life, though less frequently and less loudly. Even if you were to stop hearing them from within yourself, you'll still be receiving the same messages from other people and from society.

So true freedom isn't about stopping the voices and messages or getting completely rid of your Misguided Helpers.

**Freedom from the toxic voices means their negative messages cease to have power over you.**

It means you can hear them in your mind, from your family and friends, from the media and society, but you won't experience them as being toxic.

While at first this might seem an incredibly distant dream, the reality is that *you are already doing it all the time.*

We all hear hundreds of potentially toxic messages every week, but only some of them ‘stick’ while the others bounce off, stopping them from having any toxic impact on us.

For example, a comment like, “You shouldn’t order a dessert” might be experienced as a toxic message to one person, but might simply seem absurd, silly, or irrelevant to someone else.

What makes the difference? What makes a message toxic for one person and meaningless for another?

**You simply don’t believe that it’s true.**

You can see the messages for what they are and recognize how false and unhelpful they are. You can see how they reveal more about the person who said them than you.

This means you don’t have to purge your mind and body of the Misguided Helpers in order to be “healed”. This expectation is actually another toxic message telling you that you “should be healed” already and easily becomes a gateway to more self-blame and guilt.

So it’s ok if their voices keep flaring. That’s going to happen. And unless you’re trying to become Buddha, I’d recommend accepting that you will never be completely free from hearing their messages.

You can learn how to hear them, distinguish their voice from yours (as you’ve been doing), and counter their Mistaken Beliefs with Self-Affirmations. And in Lesson 3, you’ll learn how to support the younger you that got hurt and scared and ended up creating the Misguided Helper to protect you.

Remember, your Misguided Helper grew to be strong and loud because you keep engaging with them, feeding them, and repeating them in your mind.

The same dynamic is true for Self-Affirmations. What we feed within us, grows within us. That’s why we’re focusing on feeding what you actually want to grow – your sense of self-worth.

## **How To Counter The Misguided Helpers**

In the Journal Exercises, you’ll be creating a profile and name for each of your Misguided Helpers (most of us have more than one) and then developing Self-Affirmations to counter their toxic voices.

Just like for Lesson 1, you’ll be continuing to notice and track when the toxic voices are speaking. But now when you notice them, you can repeat this countering Self-Affirmation in this quick and easy formula:

*“Thank you [insert Misguided Helper’s Name], I know you’re trying to [insert well-intentioned but not helpful desire] but [insert self-affirmation].”*

OR the shorter version:



*“Thank you [insert Misguided Helper’s Name], but [insert self-affirmation].*

For example, you may say:

- Thank you Otis, I know you're trying to make sure no one laughs at me, but I am enough.
- Thank you Plain Jane, I know you're trying to keep me from getting hurt again, but I am lovable.
- Thank you Ghost, I know you don't want me to put myself out there to keep me safe, but I am important.
- Thank you Droopy, I know you don't want me to take risks and fail, but I have the right to be happy.

**Each time you hear a Misguided Helper, engage in - Notice, Breathe, Repeat, Breathe.** This brings together the practice from Lesson 1 and 2.

Remember that focusing on your breathing will help you center and ground yourself in your body and outside of your mind (where the Misguided Helper exists).

This simple formula works because you:

- **Acknowledge but don’t engage with the Misguided Helper.** This keeps you from agreeing with, arguing against, resisting, etc, which only gives it more power over you. But by consciously identifying them as a voice that’s speaking, you’re bringing them into your full awareness and reinforcing the distinction that their voice is not yours.
- **Are respectful toward the Misguided Helper.** Thanking them (genuinely and not in a snarky way) may seem odd, especially after all the harm they’ve done. But being respectful actually 1) reminds you that they have a positive (if misguided) intention and are not trying to hurt you, and 2) ensures that you are in a place of power by not letting them make you upset or angry. The longer version will help you keep in mind that the Misguided Helpers are trying to help, which helps to defuse the antagonistic relationship you may have with them.
- **Keep the focus on your inherent self-worth.** By repeating your inherent right to self-respect, you’re creating a new muscle memory for yourself – one that will eventually be stronger than the Misguided Helper. Even if you don’t believe in it now, repetition will help it become stronger in you, until you can fully believe the truth of it.

You’ll learn more about creating effective Self-Affirmations in the Journal Exercises.

## Next Steps

To dive into Lesson 2, read through and follow the Weekly Action Plan along with the Journal Exercises.

As always, remember that there are no “should’s” about how quickly you’re supposed to make progress. You may still be struggling to distinguish your own voice from the toxic voices. You

may still be caught up in the dark vortex of the Misguided Helper. You may still be having difficulty hearing these toxic voices at all.

That's completely ok.

This process will take time and part of practicing self-love is giving yourself all the time that you need. As you follow the steps of this lesson, you *will* begin to be freer and freer from the toxic messages, both from within your mind and from society.

Please remember that if you have any questions on this, you can share them in the Forum or in the Group Coaching Call. We're here to support you however we can!

## Lesson Two Exercises

Please refer to the Weekly Action Plan for guidance on when to do each of these exercises below.

### Misguided Helper Profile

**Goal:** Have a quick reference to help you distinguish the different toxic voices from each other and your voice and counter them. Delving deeply into the toxic voices each time they arise can be exhausting over time. By distinguishing each separate Misguided Helper, the overwhelming chorus of voices become separate, individual voices – which are much easier to handle than a whole group.

Naming each also helps you more quickly notice who's speaking and reinforces that it's not your inner voice. So instead of exploring deeply each time the Misguided Helper speaks, you can quickly identify them, and be like, "oh, it's just Plain Jane again."

**Directions:** You're going to create a profile for each individual Misguided Helper you identify. You probably have a few to several and may identify more later as you continue to raise your awareness around the toxic voices.

Review the patterns of toxic voices you noted in your Course Journal and create a profile for each of them, which include:

**1. Name:** Give the Misguided Helper a name that reflects its main toxic message somehow like Plain Jane who tells you you're not pretty enough or Otis who feels like no one likes him. You may want to do this last after you've written the rest of the profile to get a name that captures the feeling.

**2. Primary Messages:** Note what the common toxic messages they tell you, listing out a few different examples. This will help you more quickly identify such thinking as theirs and not yours.

**3. Mistaken Belief(s):** Reflect on what Mistaken Belief underlies those toxic messages. You can refer to the list of common Mistaken Beliefs that we've included in the Lesson 2 Course Materials to help you.

For example, if the toxic message is "Ugh, I can't believe I've gained 5 more pounds", then the mistaken belief could be that "I have to be skinny to be lovable."

**4. Origin of Mistaken Belief (optional):** Try to remember an early experience that may have helped create your mistaken belief.

For example, maybe you were super excited to give a presentation in 2nd grade and when you messed up, the other students laughed at you. So you decided that you weren't going to do things you might fail at.

If you can't remember an early experience, that's fine, but if you can, it will be helpful for Lesson 3 when you will focus on being compassionate towards yourself.

**5. Self-Affirmation:** Create a counter statement to the mistaken belief that affirms your inherent self-worth and promotes your well-being. In *The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook*, Edmund Bourne provides the following guidelines to help you:

- Keep it short, simple, and direct. "I believe in myself" is better than "There are a lot of good qualities that I have that I believe in."
- Keep it in the present tense and not the future tense. "I am enough" is better than "I will be enough one day."
- Avoid negatives. "I deserve to be happy" is better than "I don't deserve to be unhappy."

Depending on how strongly you believe in the mistaken belief, you can use different level of counter statement strengths. For example, if you don't really believe in the mistaken belief and you're ready to give it up, you can do a strong self-affirmation like "I'm doing my best and that's enough."

If you don't want to believe in the mistaken belief intellectually but emotionally feel like it's true, then you can do "becoming" and "learning" statements like "I'm learning to be ok with making mistakes" or "I'm becoming more forgiving towards myself for mistakes."

If you have a part of you (or a lot of you) that believes intellectually and emotionally that the mistaken belief is true, try a "willing" statement like "I'm willing to see that it's ok to make mistakes." If you believe strongly in a mistaken belief, it will feel naive or silly to say "Doing my best is good enough."

So adjust your self-affirmation to what feels like a stretch but within reach. And over time, you can work up to stronger self-affirmations as you increasingly cease to believe in the mistaken belief.

## Experiencing Non-Toxic Negative Messages

**Goal:** Experience what it's like to hear a negative message and not have its impact be toxic.

### Directions:

**1. Brainstorm Non-Toxic Negative Messages:** List out 3 negative messages you hear or might hear from friends, family, media, coworkers, society, etc. These messages may or may not be directed at you but should have no toxic impact on you. If you have trouble coming up with some, try making them more absurd or clearly not relevant to you. You can write these down in your Course Journal.

**2. Reflect on What You Notice:** Observe your experience as you think about this negative message. What are your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions? What is it like to hear a negative message and have it not be toxic for you? Write down these reflections in your Course Journal.

**3. Imagining Freedom from Your Toxic Messages:** Choose 2-3 messages that are currently toxic for you. What would it be like to hear them and to not experience them as toxic? How does it feel? How is it different? What becomes possible if you always felt this freedom around each of the toxic messages?

Use your memory of steps 1 and 2 to help you experience this freedom, even if it is fleeting. Record these reflections in your Course Journal.

## Daily Record of Countering Toxic Self-Talk

**Goal:** Track how effective the self-affirmations are in countering the toxic messages.

**Directions:** When you're feeling upset about yourself, follow the process in the Lesson Article and write down what happened in your Course Journal.

In each entry, we recommend you note:

### 1. Date

**2. Messages:** Write the thoughts you hear and rate how much you believe in them from 1-10 with 10 being you truly believing in them. Don't try to edit or simplify the thoughts. Write them down as you heard them.

**3. Name of the Misguided Helper:** Identify which Misguided Helper is flaring based on your Misguided Helper Profiles.

**4. What They're Trying To Protect You From:** Name what the Misguided Helper is shielding you from. What are they afraid will happen if you didn't do what they say?

**5. Self-Affirmation:** Note what Self-Affirmation you used to counter that Misguided Helper.

**6. Outcome:** Reflect on what you noticed in your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions after you repeated your Self-Affirmation. Was your Misguided Helper reacting to your Self-Affirmation? What thoughts came up? Did you feel tense, relaxation, pain, breathing slowed, etc? Did you feel sadness, calmness, uncomfortable, relief, etc?

Remember that there are no 'shoulds' around this exercise. Don't beat yourself up or feed negative thinking by telling yourself you 'should' be making more progress. By simply doing the exercise, you're taking a hugely important step and progress will come over time.

## Mirror Exercise

**Goal:** This exercise will help you strengthen your belief in your Self-Affirming Statement, providing an alternative to your Mistaken Belief for your subconscious to believe in.

**Directions:** Write the Self-Affirmation you want to most believe in on a sticky note or card and stick it in your bathroom mirror. After you brush your teeth in the morning, repeat the Self-Affirmation 10 times slowly and out loud. Look at yourself directly in the face, in the eyes as you say it.

You may experience some emotion or perhaps numbness during this exercise. Once you're done repeating it, let the words sink in and the feeling linger in your body - don't try to change, judge, or resist it. Just notice what's happening in your body - where you're feeling pain, release, tension, openness, etc.

After you're done, write in your Course Journal:

### 1. Date

**2. Self-Affirmation and Rating:** Write down the self-affirmation you repeated and rate how strongly you believe in it after you complete the exercise from 1-10 with 10 being very strongly believing in it. extremely strong sensations.

**3. Physical Sensations and Rating:** Describe what you notice happening in your body as the toxic voice is speaking and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being having extremely strong sensations. Try to be concrete and specific about what part of your body is reacting and how it's feeling to you.

**4. Emotion and Rating:** Describe specially what emotion you felt and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being you feel them very strongly. Emotions could be happy, angry, alive, depressed, positive, pained, calm, etc.

If you don't have time to do write up your reflection in your Course Journal every time, that's ok. What's most important is that you repeat the self-affirmations every day.

## Self-Loving Act

**Goal:** Build your belief in being inherently worthy by doing an action that affirms that belief.

**Directions:** Based on what the Self-Affirmations you most want to believe in, make a list of 3 easy actions you can take that would support the truth in that Self-Affirmation.

For example, if your Self-Affirmation is "I deserve to be take care of myself," then some easy acts are watching a movie you've wanted to see for a while, eating your favorite dish, and spending quality time with your family. Don't go for anything difficult, complex, time consuming, or costly like choosing to take a cruise vacation the next day. Keep it realistic, easy, and cheap.

In your journal, note:

**1. Date**

**2. Self-Loving Act:** Write what action you took.

**3. Self-Affirmation:** Note what Self-Affirmation you are supporting.

**4. Outcome:** Reflect on what you noticed in your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions after you repeated your Self-Affirmation. Was your Misguided Helper reacting to your Self-Affirmation? What thoughts came up? Did you feel tense, relaxation, pain, breathing slowed, etc? Did you feel sadness, calmness, uncomfortable, relief, etc?

## Lesson 3: Heal the Hurt Within

### Reading

In Lesson 2, you learned how to see the Misguided Helpers behind the toxic messages and now, we're going to work on seeing the Hurt Ones who are behind the Misguided Helpers.

As I talked about in Lesson 2, the Misguided Helpers were created in our subconscious when we faced overwhelming experiences that hurt and scared us, especially as children. They were created to "protect" us from future similar situations by controlling our behavior through toxic messages.

Behind our Misguided Helpers, we have the Hurt Ones – who the Misguided Helpers are trying to "protect." When we experience something overwhelming or traumatic, we often freeze emotionally. Without the skills or support to process those experiences, the pain of what happened and fear of being hurt again stay with us – creating the Hurt Ones.

The Hurt Ones deeply believe the Mistaken Beliefs you've identified in Lesson 2. They are in fact the source of the Mistaken Beliefs because it was in those moments of pain and fear that you made a decision as to how to avoid it again, which became the Mistaken Belief.

For example, let's say your parents brought home an infant and all of a sudden it felt like everyone's attention from then on was focused on the new baby. This results in:

- You feel alone and abandoned -> **Hurt One is created**
- The Hurt One decides you must not be lovable in order for your parents to ignore you -> **Mistaken Belief is created**
- The Hurt One decides to not let anyone get close in order to not feel the pain of rejection again -> **Misguided Helper is created**

And as you grew up, you got reinforcing messages about how you weren't good enough - from your friends and family, the media, society in general. When faced with a potentially long-term relationship, you would think thoughts like "it won't last," "you might as well get out before you

get hurt...again,” or “s/he can do better – why would s/he love me?” So you struggle to maintain romantic relationships, often sabotaging them or ending them early.

As you can see by this example and reflecting on your own experiences, we mainly deal with the Misguided Helpers and their toxic impact on our lives and seldom with the Hurt One.

Yet until the Hurt One is healed, the Misguided Helper can never be quiet because they exist to protect the Hurt Ones. So while it's important to counter the Misguided Helper with self-affirmations (and is a good shortcut and useful in of itself), it is actually just a supplementary tool to freeing yourself of toxicity.

We must now go deeper and begin to help the Hurt One heal.

## **Loving the Hurt One**

Similar to the inner child concept, the Hurt Ones represent our mental-emotional relationship to the pain and fear from those overwhelming and/or traumatic experiences in our past (but from any age including our adult years).

Given the level of pain surrounding the Hurt Ones, you have probably repressed them when they do flare. And like the crying child who learns that no one is listening, they stop after a while.

But now that you have insight into your Misguided Helpers, you can look for the Hurt Ones that the Misguided Helpers are protecting.

Once you meet them, you can begin developing a relationship with them by being the loving, compassionate caregiver they never had and reminding them that they are enough.

But the Hurt One's trust in this relationship with you will take time to develop. It will require a lot of patience – the same level of patience needed if you were taming a wounded animal through kindness and care.



The Hurt Ones not only have the pain from the original experience but also have had the pain and fears from other similar situations in your life. And on top of that, the Misguided Helper has been reinforcing those Mistaken Beliefs and fears.

And so have you. By acting according to the toxic messages, you showed the Hurt Ones that they should be afraid, that they will get hurt again, that the world is a scary dangerous place. Your actions have reinforced their pain and fears.

Now, this isn't mean to blame, shame, or judge you for doing what the Misguided Helper wanted you to do. You didn't even know what a Misguided Helper was until two weeks ago!

You did the best you could, given what you knew. And sometimes our best ends up hurting ourselves and others. The point isn't to point fingers and lay blame but to acknowledge the consequences and take action to address them responsibly.

In this situation, the consequence is that the Hurt One has a lot of reasons to not believe you when you suddenly show up after ignoring them all these years, saying nice things like, "You are lovable and important to me" and "Don't worry – I'll take care of you."

Would you believe it? Probably not. Is it imperative to your well-being and happiness that you eventually do? Yes.

So let's talk about the different challenges you're likely to face as you build the relationship with the Hurt Ones.

### **Common Roadblocks**

This isn't an exhaustive list of obstacles you may face but some of the more common ones. Some are related to how the Hurt Ones view you and some are how you may view the Hurt Ones.

## 1. You Can't Find Them

In the Exercises, I offer a few different ways to get in touch with the Hurt Ones and recommend you keep trying different ones until you find the approach that most resonates with you.

However, I caution you that it may take time for the Hurt Ones to reveal themselves to you if they've trained themselves to hide from you.

Since there's so much pain wrapped up in our Hurt Ones, we often mentally run away from them when they appear. So after a time, they cease to show themselves to us. Sometimes, part of their coping strategy is to stay hidden as well. What you can't see, you can't target.

All of this can make it difficult to meet the Hurt Ones. For those situations, I recommend you keep showing up and remain open to whatever may happen

In time, your calm, loving presence will coax out the Hurt Ones.

## 2. They're Mad At You

Some Hurt Ones will channel their hurt into anger and lash out at you. So don't be surprised if they verbally or even physically attack you in your visualization of them.

Just like real living people, the Hurt Ones can be overwhelmed by their own pain and decide to redirect their attention by focusing on blaming someone else. Without a healthy way of processing their pain, they feel more comfortable being angry.

This may feel quite shocking to you, especially since you're trying to express your love and concern to them.

But is a wounded animal more likely try to protect itself by getting angry and aggressive at the hand reaching out to help them or lay down and accept this strange person's help calmly? The former.

So it's important when this happens to remember that the Hurt Ones are scared and hurt behind that anger and doesn't trust you to be an ally. They may think you've been working with the Misguided Helper, reinforcing their fears and Mistaken Beliefs. So it's important for you to distinguish for the Hurt Ones that you are not the Misguided Helper and don't believe in the Mistaken Beliefs.

It's also important that you acknowledge that you have done so in the past but that you know better now. Admitting that you weren't there for them during this period because you weren't able to is important. It will build their trust faster than if you pretended you always supported them.

So acknowledge the fact that they are angry at you and give them the time and space to work through it and build trust with you. You can't force them to stop being angry with you.

But you can ask them questions in order to better understand the pain behind their anger. Then acknowledge the pain there and keep being that steady, loving presence for them.

In time, they will see that you won't just leave them and will begin to trust you.

### **3. You Feel Guilty About Them**

Sometimes we feel guilty about not having been there for our Hurt Ones, making us feel more like failures and unable to take care of ourselves.

STOP! This is a dangerous path to go down and one that leads to wallowing in self-pity. It actually does nobody good – neither yourself or the Hurt Ones – if you feel guilty. Guilt distracts you from taking action because you see yourself as even less competent than before.

Also, as I said before, we all do our best and sometimes our best isn't good enough. You didn't have the tools, knowledge, or support you have now. Even if you did have all of that, you still may not have been emotionally ready to explore all of this due to the pain associated with the Hurt Ones.

That's ok. The point is not to fixate on what happened in the past but to figure out what you can do in the present and future.

#### **4. Their Pain Feels Overwhelming**

In the beginning particularly, you may feel the Hurt One's pain as viscerally as your own. In fact, you have been most likely all this time.

But just like you learned how to distinguish your voice from the Misguided Helper's voice, you can learn how to distinguish the Hurt One's pain from your pain.

Like a caregiver that comforts a crying child, you can feel empathy for the Hurt Ones but without it consuming you as if you yourself were reliving the pain. As you develop your loving, compassionate approach to the Hurt One, you will assume that responsibility more and more and less and less of the direct pain.

That means taking care of the Hurt Ones and doing things that comfort them in your visualization or in real life. That could include holding them as they cry, rocking your real physical body as you mentally rock the Hurt One, taking a bath in real life to play bubbles with them, etc.

Will the pain ever completely go away? It may but it may just weaken over time. When terrible things happen to us, there may always remain a sense of pain and grief along with it. To not feel that, may mean we are actually emotionally repressed or desensitized to what is horrible. That only means we may not recognize it if it happens again actually.

There is nothing wrong with us feeling pain and empathy when someone is hurt – it means we care. It becomes problematic when due to the level of pain, we are unable to function properly and if it limits our life in unhealthy ways.

## How To Help The Hurt Ones Heal

Once you've met the Hurt Ones and started to develop a relationship with them, what in the world as you supposed to do with?

Listen to them and do what helps them feel safe and loved. This may be in your visualization or be in real life. It depends on what's going on with the Hurt One and if you're able to do something in real life without having others think you're a little loony.

If you can feel the Hurt One speaking but aren't in a situation where you pay attention to them (such as in a work meeting), just let them know you can't talk now but will once you're free. And then do so the next chance you get. It's like building trust with a real child – you have to follow through on what you say.

You will best build this relationship like any real life relationship - with frequency and quality of interaction. It's important to reach out to the Hurt Ones are not actively upset about something in order to better understand them.

But each time you hear the Misguided Helper, there's an opportunity for you to talk with the Hurt One and remind them that you're there to take care of the situation.

So building upon what you learned from Lesson 1 and 2, here's how to respond in the moment of a toxic flare:

1. **Identify messages that feel toxic:** Continue to keep an eye out for the toxic messages in your daily life. Since they often hide or disguise themselves, you'll need to continue paying attention for signs that a thought is having a toxic impact on you – leaving you feeling judged, small, trapped, etc.
2. **Identify the Misguided Helper:** Identify who's behind the toxic messages by naming the Misguided Helper. If you'd like to counter with a self-affirmation, you can. But since you'll be talking with the Hurt One, it's not necessary.

3. **Identify the Hurt One:** Many Misguided Helpers have a correlated Hurt Ones so by knowing the Misguided Helper, you can often figure out who the Hurt One that's popping up is. As part of the Exercises, you'll be creating profiles for them.
4. **Speak with the Hurt One:** Create a mental image of the Hurt One and visualize yourself going to them like a loving caregiver goes to a crying child. Depending on how the Hurt One reacts, respect their wishes and continue to inquire into what they need and share that you care about them. If there's something you can do to help them feel safer and loved, do it.

In time, this will become more fluid and happen quicker. But in the beginning, it's helpful to know each step and make sure you're doing each one.

Remember, through your words and actions, you will show the Hurt One that you will and can take care of them. So they can let go of this pain and go back to being their happy selves.

## Next Steps

To start Lesson 3's practice, read through and follow the Weekly Action Plan along with the Lesson 3 Exercises.

The Exercises will help you flesh out your Hurt Ones so you can start building relationships with them. While you may have several Hurt Ones, you may want to focus on just one for these two weeks since quality and frequency are important in building the relationship.

Please remember that if you have any questions on this, you can share them in the Discussion and Questions forum or in the Group Coaching Call.



## Lesson 3 – Heal the Hurt Within

### Journal Exercises

#### Exercise 1 - Engage with Your Hurt Ones

**Goal:** To develop trust and relationship with your Hurt Ones over time.

**Directions:** There are different ways for you to get in touch with your Hurt Ones. Below is a list of different methods for you to experiment with and see what works best for you. After you engage with them, keep track of each of your encounters with the Hurt Ones in your Course Journal.

**Note:** You don't need to do all of these – just pick the approach or approaches that work best for you.

1. **Do the Guided Visualization:** Download and listen to [this recording](#) which will help you focus on visualizing the Hurt One you seek to meet. After you listen to the recording, you can continue to use it or visualize the Hurt One on your own without it. In your Course Journal, you can keep track of each of your encounters with the Hurt Ones.
2. **Write a Letter:** In your Course Journal, you can write a letter expressing your feelings toward the Hurt Ones. If it's the first letter and you don't have a strong sense of who the Hurt One is, you can write about how you'd like to meet them and acknowledge why they may be scared or hurt. If you've in the middle of developing a relationship with them, just write what you image a loving caregiver would write to a real child who was hurting like this.
3. **Draw the Hurt One:** For artistic people, drawing the Hurt Ones and their environment may help them tap into them the most. Draw how you envision they would look like and where they would be. You can place yourself in the drawing interacting with them and let the drawing be a starting place for your relationship building with them. Letting it flow from intuition and not searching for any "right" way is best.
4. **Do Something with Them (in Real Life):** Reinforce your loving messages and build their trust in your ability to take care of situations that scare them through taking real life actions. If the Hurt One is afraid to relax and have fun, go out and run around while visualizing them with you, showing them it's ok to do so. If they're afraid to call someone you like, then call that person while acknowledging their fears and that you can handle it.



## Exercise 2 - Create Hurt One Profile

**Goal:** To begin to understand who the Hurt Ones are and what they need for you to heal.

**Directions:** You're going to create a profile for the Hurt One that corresponds with a Misguided Helper. After you meet one for the first time, fill out the following:

1. **Name:** Give the Hurt One a name that helps you remember who they are. It may be just "little girl" or "Tough Cookie" or any other name that occurs to you.
2. **Misguided Helper:** Note which Misguided Helper is "protecting" this Hurt One. This will help you know which Hurt One to reach out to when you hear toxic messages from the Misguided Helper.
3. **Physical Description:** To the degree possible, write how the Hurt One appears to you in terms of age, dress, demeanor, etc. This is important because as your relationship with them grows and they begin to heal, their physical appearance will change to match their how they feel. For example, one of mine was all wrapped in black clothing with only her eyes showing and rarely moved in order to protect herself and now she runs free in meadows when I visualize her.
4. **Fears:** Note what your Hurt One is afraid of after you ask them. It is probably similar to the Mistaken Beliefs and toxic messages that the Misguided Helper says but it's important to hear it directly from the Hurt One. Sometimes it is different or has a different nuance to the fear. It may take time to develop the relationship enough that you are told what they fear. If so, have patience and keep showing up with love and compassion until they are ready to share with you.
5. **Needs:** Either based on what the Hurt One has told you or what you would give to a real child who's hurting in this way, write what they need from you as a loving caregiver. Maybe it's holding them as they cry, acknowledging that they're scared and hurt, playing with them, assuring them you can handle these situations, etc.

You can create as many Hurt One profiles as you want but I recommend focusing on just developing a relationship with one at a time. However if you feel called to work with a few at the same time, then do what resonates with you.

### Exercise 3 – Move from Toxic Voices to the Hurt One

**Goal:** Practice addressing the toxic voices as opportunities to connect and comfort the Hurt One

**Directions:** When you hear a toxic voice flaring, follow the process below.

1. **Identify messages that feel toxic:** Continue to keep an eye out for the toxic messages in your daily life. Since they often hide or disguise themselves, you'll need to continue paying attention for signs that a thought is having a toxic impact on you – leaving you feeling judged, small, trapped, etc.
2. **Identify the Misguided Helper:** Identify who's behind the toxic messages by naming the Misguided Helper. If you'd like to counter with a self-affirmation, you can. But since you'll be talking with the Hurt One, it's not necessary.
3. **Identify the Hurt One:** Many Misguided Helpers have a correlated Hurt Ones so by knowing the Misguided Helper, you can often figure out who the Hurt One that's popping up is. As part of the Reflection Guide, you'll be creating profiles for them.
4. **Speak with the Hurt One:** Create a mental image of the Hurt One and visualize yourself going to them like a loving caregiver goes to a crying child. Depending on how the Hurt One reacts, respect their wishes and continue to inquire into what they need and share that you care about them. If there's something you can do to help them feel safer and loved, do it.

If you feel like you don't have the time or energy to address the Hurt One appropriately, then simply tell them that you know they're upset and you'll talk with in soon. And then make sure to check back in with them later.

## Exercise 4 – Daily Record of Engaging with the Hurt One

**Goal:** Track your progress with engaging with the Hurt One when the Misguided Helper flares.

**Directions:** When you begin to hear toxic messages, follow Exercise 3 and write down the following in your Course Journal:

1. **Date**
2. **Situation:** What happened that triggered the Misguided Helper to appear?
3. **Toxic Message:** Note what you're hearing that's making you feel judged, small, trapped, etc.
4. **Misguided Helper:** Name which of your Misguided Helpers is flaring.
5. **Hurt One:** Name which of your Hurt Ones is scared.
6. **Engagement:** Describe how your outreach to the Hurt One went. How did you help them feel more safe and loved? What did you do? How did they respond?
7. **Outcome:** Reflect on how you (not the Hurt One or Misguided Helper) feel about the situation after having comforted the Hurt One.

If you don't have time to do write up your reflection in your Course Journal every time, that's ok. What's most important is that you reflect upon your experience engaging with the Hurt One.

## Exercise 5 - Self-Loving Act

**Goal:** Build your belief in being inherently worthy by doing an action that affirms that belief.

**Directions:** Based on what the Self-Affirmations you most want to believe in, make a list of 3 easy actions you can take that would support the truth in that Self-Affirmation.

For example, if your Self-Affirmation is "I deserve to be take care of myself," then some easy acts are watching a movie you've wanted to see for a while, eating your favorite dish, and spending quality time with your family. Don't go for anything difficult, complex, time consuming, or costly like choosing to take a cruise vacation the next day. Keep it realistic, easy, and cheap.

In your journal, note:

**1. Date**

**2. Self-Loving Act:** Write what action you took.

**3. Self-Affirmation:** Note what Self-Affirmation you are supporting.

**4. Outcome:** Reflect on what you noticed in your thoughts, physical sensations, and emotions after you repeated your Self-Affirmation. Was your Misguided Helper reacting to your Self-Affirmation? What thoughts came up? Did you feel tense, relaxation, pain, breathing slowed, etc? Did you feel sadness, calmness, uncomfortable, relief, etc?

If you don't have time to do write up your reflection in your Course Journal every time, that's ok. What's most important is that you do a self-loving act.

## Exercise 6 - Mirror Exercise (Optional)

**Goal:** This exercise will help you strengthen your belief in your Self-Affirming Statement, providing an alternative to your Mistaken Belief for your subconscious to believe in.

**Directions:** Write the Self-Affirmation you want to most believe in on a sticky note or card and stick it in your bathroom mirror. After you brush your teeth in the morning, repeat the Self-Affirmation 10 times slowly and out loud. Look at yourself directly in the face, in the eyes as you say it.

You may experience some emotion or perhaps numbness during this exercise. Once you're done repeating it, let the words sink in and the feeling linger in your body - don't try to change, judge, or resist it. Just notice what's happening in your body - where you're feeling pain, release, tension, openness, etc.

After you're done, write in your Course Journal:

1. **Date**
2. **Self-Affirmation and Rating:** Write down the self-affirmation you repeated and rate how strongly you believe in it after you complete the exercise from 1-10 with 10 being very strongly believing in it.
3. **Physical Sensations and Rating:** Describe what you notice happening in your body as the toxic voice is speaking and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being having extremely strong sensations. Try to be concrete and specific about what part of your body is reacting and how it's feeling to you.
4. **Emotion and Rating:** Describe specially what emotion you felt and rate how strongly you feel them from 1-10 with 10 being you feel them very strongly. Emotions could be happy, angry, alive, depressed, positive, pained, calm, etc.

If you don't have time to do write up your reflection in your Course Journal every time, that's ok. What's most important is that you repeat the self-affirmations every day.

## Lesson 4 Reading: Honor Your Voice and Needs

This is what you've been working toward with the first three lessons. You've practiced noticing your Misguided Helpers, identifying your Mistake Beliefs, and building a relationship with your Hurt Ones.

And now you get to hear Your Voice.

But guess what? You've been doing that throughout this entire course.

It's the voice that's been telling your Misguided Helpers, "thanks, but I got this." It's the voice that's been telling your Hurt Ones that they are loved and safe with you. It's the voice that hears the toxic messages and replies with the affirmation, "I am important."

That's all Your Voice.

It's the voice that chooses what to say, instead of being bullied by the Misguided Helper. It's the voice that speaks from a place of love and values, instead of from fear and shame. It's the voice that takes a stand and says what it believes is true.

That's all Your Voice.

That's what you've been practicing for the last two months – and you didn't even know it!

So let's talk about how to intentionally do it and why we're challenged to do so.

### Why It's Hard To Hear Your Voice

As you're very aware of, our minds are filled with voices other than our own – usually our Misguided Helpers and sometimes our Hurt Ones. By addressing the Misguided Helpers and the Hurt Ones, you're developing Your Voice to be stronger and stronger.

But we've been conditioned to silence Our Voices. Too often, we've been shut down, told to not be selfish, or dismissed when we spoke up, especially as children. So we are often afraid or nervous about sharing our needs and wants with others and even to ourselves. (Enter Misguided Helpers!)

And when we do speak up and nothing changes, we often feel like that means what we said wasn't important. So we sometimes learn to stop speaking up, assuming nobody cares and that it won't make a difference. (Enter more Misguided Helpers!)

Given the potential pushback and the backlash, why is it even worth using Our Voices? Why is it worth speaking Your Truth?

**Because you're acknowledging your emotional reality and your needs as being real and important.**

And while that may not be real or important to anyone else (and if that's true, you may want to find other friends), that has nothing to do with the fact that they are real and important TO YOU!

**And you are the most important person in validating that for yourself.**

It actually doesn't matter if others validate it for you. It's nice if they do but honestly, it's not entirely in your control unless you went...well... controlling on them.

That's why it's actually really disempowering to base the validity of your needs and wants on whether or not other people acknowledge them. If you do, then you've transferred the power to deem what you feel as "right" or "wrong" to other people.

That's not a good situation to be in obviously. It's a game you can't win because you'll never be able to please everyone or control everyone to get their approval.

And you don't need their approval for your emotional reality to be real. Why? Because you have inherent self-worth and so your needs and wants are real. Simple as that.

Does that make it easy when people dismiss what you're saying? Of course not. But you don't need it to know what you're saying is true for you.

So speak your truth (either just to yourself and/or to others) and let the chips fall where they may.

### **The Difference Between Honoring Your Needs and Acting On Them**

A lot of people think that if they voice their needs or wants, even to themselves, that means they have to act on it. And trying to achieve it can feel really scary for them. So they avoid even acknowledging to themselves what they want.

So let's unpack this unhappy cycle. Does honoring Your Voice mean that whenever you have a need or want, you should act on it? No, not necessarily. There are no "should's" even with things you know are good for you.

When you have a want or need, you can:

1. Acknowledge it and act on it.
2. Acknowledge it and not act on it.
3. Acknowledge it and not act on it now but choose to do something later.

If you can act on it and want to, by all means, please march forward. It's probably a good idea.

But you can also choose not to (choice being the important characteristic here). Some common reasons why you might not want to act on it is:

- You are not emotionally ready
- You face consequences you are not willing to risk
- Your desire violates someone else's boundaries
- You have other priorities



And that's ok.

To repeat, what is most important is you acknowledge your emotional reality as being real and important.

And even this isn't a "should." You can choose not to if you feel too scared or overwhelmed to acknowledge it. That happens.

If so, then I recommend you acknowledge that you're too scared and overwhelmed to acknowledge your emotional reality.

If that's too much for you, then acknowledge that acknowledging that you're too scared and overwhelmed to acknowledge your emotional reality.

And so forth until you get to a place where you can acknowledge emotional reality. It might be a mouthful by the end but you'll have honored Your Voice.

But also remember, that you can choose to not act on something at that moment but plan of doing it later. Usually what Your Voice is saying is for your own well-being. So while right now might not be the best time, it's probably something you want to keep in mind for the future.

So remember, true power comes from acknowledging your needs and making the choice of how to act.

## **What's Next**

For this lesson, you'll be doing a Guided Visualization on your future self, which will help flesh out Your Voice and make it more real for you. You can use what you learn from this exercise to help you develop Your Voice that's speaking your wants and needs.

Remember, you're doing the hard work of processing your pain and in that process, strengthening Your Voice. And over time, Your Voice will become loudest and most frequent in your mind as the Misguided Helpers become less toxic to you and the Hurt Ones heal.

So it's important to understand that healing is not a linear process and it's not one you can force along. It's a few steps forward, a few steps to the side, a few steps diagonal, and some swirling around.

So instead of striving for one big healing goal, you're going to focus on the little things you can do everyday – all of which builds up to have a ripple affect across your life.

This will take time but you have the strength to do it. You've had the strength to carry you to this point and you have the strength to carry you forward.

## Lesson 4 Exercises

Please refer to the Weekly Action Plan for guidance on when to do each of these exercises below.

### Exercise 1 - Guided Visualization of Your Future Self

**Goal:** To get in touch with the person you want to be in 20 years from now.

**Directions:** Listen to the Guided Visualization recording. Afterwards, write down:

- Name of Your Future Self
- What Your Future Self is like
- What advice you received
- How you feel about Your Future Self

### Exercise 2 - Create a Vision of Self-Love, Part 1

**Goal:** To explore what could be possible for your life if it was filled with self-love and not toxic voices.

**Directions:** To make this process a bit more manageable, you're going to focus on a single Misguided Helper and how it impacts on one area in your life. While you will see that Misguided Helper showing up in many parts of your life, you will choose just one to focus on. In the future, you can apply this exercise to other Misguided Helpers and other areas of your life.

1. Select the Misguided Helper you want to work with and in what area of life (for example, relationships, body image, friendships, work, fun, money, health, etc.).
2. Based on the Misguided Helper you chose, identify the Mistaken Belief and Hurt One that you will also be working with.

3. Based on your Future Self, write down some ways your life would be different and what could be possible for you if you were free from this Misguided Helper.
4. What are some concrete ways that the Misguided Helper impacts this area of your life?
5. What would be different if you didn't pay attention to the Misguided Helper regarding those ways you identified in Question #1?
6. Of all the different ways your life could be different, what's the one way that you could turn into a goal?

### Exercise 3 – Brainstorm a Self-Love Grab Bag

**Goal:** To brainstorm a list of concrete self-loving actions you can take to replace out the toxic actions you normally take.

**Directions:** Building on *The Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* by Nathaniel Branden, here is a list of sentence completions to help you imagine what more is possible with self-love.

Keeping in mind the Misguided Helper and area of life you want to focus on, complete the following sentences with what you will do. Give at least 5 answers for each question but feel free to give more if you have more ideas.

We recommend quickly writing the first ideas off the top of your head for each question, rather than taking time to ponder each one. This will help make sure the toxic voices don't kick-in.

While you should write down any and all of the action steps you can think of, make sure many of them are easily doable.

1. If I distinguish my Misguided Helper's voice from my own,
2. If I choose to let go of my Mistaken Belief,

3. If I am more loving to my Hurt One this week,
4. If I move more toward being my Future Self,
5. If I am more accepting of the fact that I'm enough,
6. If I am more accepting of the fact that I'm loveable,
7. If I am more accepting of the fact that I'm important,
8. If I am more accepting of the fact that I'm capable,

## **Exercise 4 – Daily Game Plan**

**Goal:** To see how you can do self-love work in little ways that will eventually add up over time.

**Directions:** Follow the directions below.

### **1. Schedule 15 minutes to do your Daily Game Plan after a certain regular event.**

By doing it right after something you do daily, you're much more likely to follow through because you're piggy backing on an established habit. For example, you could do it after you brush your teeth, when you drink coffee, when you get to your office, etc.

### **2. Review your Self-Love Grab Bag and add any more ideas that occur to you.**

This is just to keep the list fresh and growing for you. If you don't have more ideas, it's ok.

### **3. Choose one that you would like to do that day.**

You may choose it based on whatever criteria that serves you at that moment. Maybe it's because of what's going on that day, what might cause the Misguided Helper to flare, or just what seems like fun.

If you'd like more structure, you can plan them out one week at a time instead of choosing one every day. Sometimes it's easier to do if you don't have to make a decision every time but just follow what you had planned out.

#### **4. Do it.**

If you feel your Misguided Helper flaring as you're taking a self-loving action, remember you can use this as an opportunity to distinguish it from your voice and/or have a conversation with your Hurt One.

#### **5. Record and reflect on it (optional).**

To help you keep track of your progress, you can write down your reflections after completing an action. However, if you feel like you can't take an action until you have time to record it, skip this step. It's more important you do something than try to do everything.

1. Date
2. Action
3. Feeling Prior to Taking Action
4. Resistance and Approach (note if any Misguided Helpers or Hurt Ones showed up and how you addressed their concerns)
5. Feeling After Taking Action

### **Journal Exercise 5 - Create a Vision of Self-Love, Part 2**

**Goal:** To turn the vision into a plan to fill your life with self-love and not toxic voices.

**Directions:** Re-read your answers to Journal Exercise 2, Create a Vision of Self-Love, Part 1 and answer the following questions based on the goal you chose at the end (or if you thought of a better one, go with that!)

1. Of that one goal (which is probably big), write down the steps it would take to get there. Work backwards and keep breaking down the steps until you have something that you can do tomorrow.

You don't have to do anything just yet. Just get a nice list started with small action steps that you can do immediately.

2. Starting with the small action step that you can do immediately if you wanted to, add deadlines to the first 3 steps. This deadline could be in the next week, next month, in 3 months – something that feels like both a stretch *and* within reach for yourself if you challenged yourself.
3. Write a list of obstacles that might get in the way of you doing those first 3 steps and then write down what you can do to work through them. It might be an affirmation, asking someone for help, looking up something, etc. By having this list of possible solutions to refer to when you're doing that step, you'll be better equipped to handle the obstacle.
4. Once you're taken an action, look at your plan and adjust it if necessary. Remember, just because your plans change, doesn't mean it's too hard or not worth doing. It's a normal part of life – you're doing something new, so of course your initial plan isn't going to be perfect.
5. Take the next step. And if you feel like you need something else before you can do it, turn that into a next step until you have something you can do tomorrow.
6. Keep repeating this process until you reach your goal.

After this course is over, continue working on this vision and plan – fleshing it out and taking small steps toward making it come true.

You can apply this to any part of your life and any Misguided Helper and Hurt one. You have the ability to transform your life.





I deserve love.



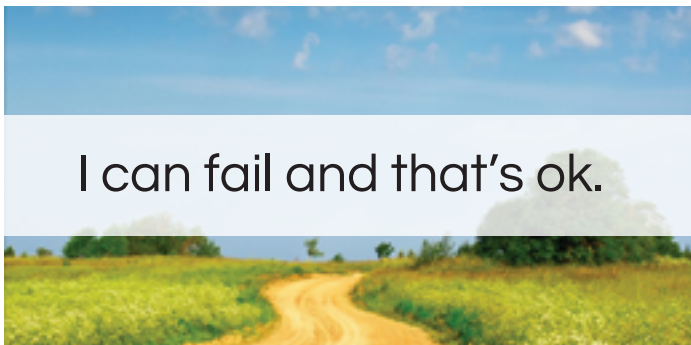
I am whole and complete.



I am perfect  
in my imperfections.



I deserve happiness.



I can fail and that's ok.



I love and approve  
of myself.



It is enough to be me.



I am lovable.



I love \_\_\_\_ about me.



Who I am is enough.