



PROCESSING AND HEALING SADNESS

WORKBOOK

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The Experience Of Sadness

Everyone experiences sadness sometimes, just as they experience joy, anger, frustration, sorry, delight, and a range of other emotions. Our feelings constantly change as we navigate our day, whether we bat some of them aside or take the time to process them. When you're having fun you feel happy, but when there is downtime, suddenly you find yourself sitting in sadness. Your sadness is real and it's just a part of living. However, you don't have to stay in sadness, you can process it.

Negative emotions can be helpful. The world is focused on finding happiness and we treat unhappiness as useless or unnecessary. While sadness may slow you down, it gives you the opportunity to reflect on your life, the people around you, and your feelings. Sadness can help you re-focus your attention on your dreams, relationships, and joy!

Understand this, just because you feel sad right now doesn't mean you aren't dealing with a situation. Sadness is something that will help you come to terms with an event or situation and move on from it. Sadness is important, it's an emotion that can help you accept, adapt, focus, and grow. The best part is you can manage sadness.

Other Terms For Sadness

There is a range of words you can use to discuss sadness:

- Hurt
- Sorrow
- Dejection
- Dismay
- Unhappiness
- Anguish
- Agony
- Broken-hearted
- Homesick

All of the emotions we just listed have one thing in common – they are the result of a negative situation.

Sadness is almost a second-hand emotion, where it stems from another big emotion like grief, anger, anxiety, shame, or hopelessness. Often, the first-hand emotion is so strong that you don't even realize you're dealing with sadness. It's the underlying issue and you only pay attention to the big ones.

What is sadness? What does it feel like?

It can interrupt your sleep, it can give you a headache, stomach ache, and influence how you feel emotionally.

You might be grumpy, frustrated, teary, withdrawn, or even bored. When you recognize your sadness, when you understand sadness is okay, then you'll know your wellbeing is stabilizing.

Sadness can appear for a range of reasons. Life is filled with situations that may bring sadness, do you recognize any of these as the cause of your sadness?

Make a mark next to any statements which are applicable to you.

- I'm experiencing trouble at home.
- I am experiencing trouble at work.
- I am about to or currently moving.
- I lost someone close to me.
- I care for someone with a life-changing illness.
- I have been diagnosed with a life-changing illness.
- I am going through menopause.
- I am experiencing changes in my body (due to medication or drugs).
- I am experiencing a negative shift in my thought process.

When you're faced with situations like this, it's common to experience negative and unhelpful thoughts around your sadness. Those thoughts will make you feel worse.

Take a different approach. Try first to acknowledge the sadness and more importantly, the event that prompted that feeling. Allow yourself time to deal with the problem and process your sadness.

Exercise 1 – Satisfaction Checklist

Let's take the temperature on how satisfied you are with life in general. Make a tick in the box below if you can confidently agree with the statement preceding it.

Life Satisfaction	Tick Box
1. I can say truthfully that most of the time my outlook is positive.	
2. I really like me as a person.	
3. I know I'm good at doing certain things.	
4. I know there are weak points I can work on.	
5. I always learn a lesson when I make a mistake.	
6. I can deal with any event life throws at me.	
7. I recognize the different emotions I feel.	
8. I am happy most days of the week.	
9. I recognize my positive qualities.	
10. I know how to cope with my emotions and feelings.	
11. I enjoy my free time properly.	
12. I know how to enjoy myself.	
13. I use my talents.	
14. The activities I do are enjoyable.	
15. The activities I do allow me to express myself.	
16. When I'm feeling down, I know which activities to indulge.	
17. When I'm feeling angry, I know which activities to indulge.	
18. I take the time to find new activities I will enjoy.	
19. I feel positive about my current level of activities.	
20. I always try my best in activities.	
My Total Score:	

Add up all of the ticks – there are 20 statements.

- If you have ticked more than 12 statements, then you're looking in a decent place when it comes to your emotional health. You can deal with the odd disappointment, you're aware of your strengths and opportunities, you tend to be a happy, positive person.

- If you haven't ticked 12 statements or more, then it's clear you need to work on your emotional health. You will struggle to process sadness more than someone who is emotionally healthy.

Exercise 2 – Define Your Emotions

When you start defining your emotions and putting names to them it encloses them rather than allowing them to envelope you. A feeling requires not just your thought process, but also physical sensations and sensory experiences. **That’s what you're doing to do now – you're going to think of an emotion (try to keep it within the realm of sadness, but it's okay if you wander from it), you're going to highlight your thoughts when you're feeling the emotion, as well as the sensory experiences, and physical sensations you experiences.**

Emotion	Thought	Sensory Experience	Physical Sensation
Example: Anger	If she had just washed the dishes, I wouldn't be running late.	The tap dripping endlessly.	Muscle tension, heart rate, and headache.

Exercise 3 – Finish the Sentence

Let's work on better defining your feelings by finishing the sentences for the basic emotions of sadness, longing, humiliation, fear, and happiness. The idea behind this is to increase your awareness so that you recognize the more subtle signs an emotion brings. The quicker you can recognize an emotion you are experiencing, the sooner you can intervene if it's an emotion that will derail you.

Happiness

If this emotion was a color, it would be _____.

If this feeling was the weather, it would be _____.

If this feelings was scenery, it would be _____.

If this feeling were put to music, it would sound like _____.

If this feeling was a physical object, it would be _____.

Sadness

If this emotion was a color, it would be _____.

If this feeling was the weather, it would be _____.

If this feelings was scenery, it would be _____.

If this feeling were put to music, it would sound like _____.

If this feeling was a physical object, it would be _____.

Longing

If this emotion was a color, it would be _____.

If this feeling was the weather, it would be _____.

If this feelings was scenery, it would be _____.

If this feeling were put to music, it would sound like _____.

If this feeling was a physical object, it would be _____.

Humiliation

If this emotion was a color, it would be_____.

If this feeling was the weather, it would be_____.

If this feelings was scenery, it would be_____.

If this feeling were put to music, it would sound like_____.

If this feeling was a physical object, it would be_____.

Fear

If this emotion was a color, it would be_____.

If this feeling was the weather, it would be_____.

If this feelings was scenery, it would be_____.

If this feeling were put to music, it would sound like_____.

If this feeling was a physical object, it would be_____.

Lined writing area with multiple horizontal lines.

Exercise 5 – Distancing Emotions

An important aspect of processing sadness is distancing your emotions. How can you see something clearly if you're in the middle of it? By putting distance between you and your emotions, you gain a different perspective on the situation. You are probably familiar with the phrase time heals all wounds... well, it won't heal emotions that go unacknowledged. The key to this is the recognition that emotions are fleeting. While you may be deeply sad right now, other emotions will come again. You will feel happy again, you will feel excited again, you will feel relaxed again.

A good way to practice distancing emotions is by first writing about a positive experience. It's an emotional anchor that will remind you that there is life beyond the negative emotion you are feeling right now.

Before we provide you with space to free write, we want to provide you with a form that may help you get started.

I remember a positive feeling (when) _____.

I felt (describe your feelings)_____.

I was (where) _____.

I recall (sensory) _____.

At that point in my life, I was (activity or description) _____.

_____.

I will never forget (environment, people, weather, etc.)

_____.

_____.

around me. I can't be in that moment again, but I can recapture the feelings I experienced in that moment.

_____.

_____.

Once you have completed this, you can free write a bit more about the event. Once you have written your memory out, you should think about how it feels when you are overwhelmed with sadness. Now read your memory again. Go back and forth between the feeling of sadness and the overwhelming joy your positive memory brings. By doing this, you create an association between the two things. While your sadness is a possible reaction to an event, it's not the only reaction, nor is it necessary the correct reaction.

To further illustrate this, think of three people in your life.

1. A person who knows me well _____.
2. A person who makes me feel uncomfortable _____.
3. A person I consider an acquaintance _____.

Put yourself in their shoes and imagine how they would react to the same event that has brought you such sadness. This is an excellent way to create distance between you and your negative emotion by forcing you to look at through a radically different lens. This will allow you to calm down and assess the situation better.

1.	
2.	
3.	

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Exercise 6 – Addressing Relationship Sadness

Learning to manage relationships is key in learning needs and dealing with emotions. While it's difficult to balance everyone's needs, it's something that needs to be dealt with. This exercise is helpful for people dealing with sadness directly stemming from situations with the people around you. Bear that in mind as you complete it. This exercise is going to help you learn three different effectiveness skills – self-respect, objective, and relationship.

Take a situation you are dealing with right now that is bringing you sadness and work through it in the table below.

Describe	Describe your situation objectively. Stick to the facts, avoid interpretation and opinion.
Express	When you are experiencing feelings, be clear in explaining them. People cannot read your mind – frame the situation with <i>I feel</i> (emotions) <i>because</i> (reasons).

Assert	Be clear about what you're feeling and what you want. Don't say you don't know, say <i>you are sad</i> and.
Reinforce	When someone responds well, reward them with acknowledgment of their understanding.
Mindful	Always keep the objective in mind when you interact with others and discuss your emotions.

Appear	Be confident in your language, body language, tone, and eye contact.
Negotiate	You can't get everything you want in any situation. In <i>any</i> situation, be prepared to negotiate with someone.

Exercise 7 – Improving Relationships

Relationships provide us with a lot of support, so it's important to manage relationships effectively by fostering more positive interactions. **You can choose another situation causing sadness about a relationship or you can continue using the one from exercise 5.**

Gentle	Never threaten, attack, or judge when you interact with someone.
Interested	Practice active listening and show that you are interested in what they have to say. Sit back, open your ears, and hear what is being said to you.

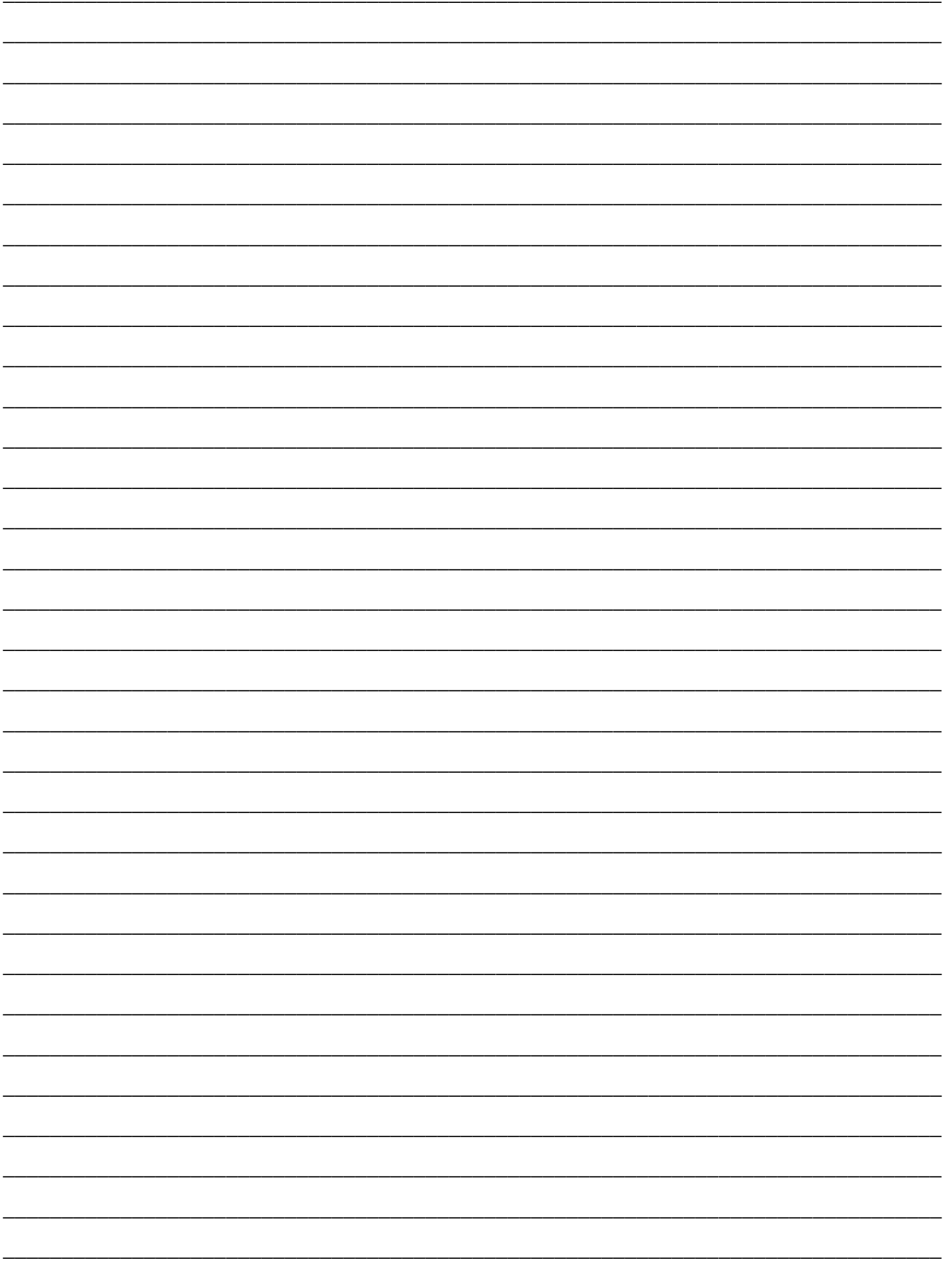
Validate	Validate the thoughts and feelings of others outwardly. Acknowledge how they feel, just as you want them to do for you.
Easy	Try to be warm and lighthearted in your interactions. You can discuss difficult emotions while keeping an easy attitude.

Exercise 8 – Self-Respect

Often, you betray your values in a relationship. This can create its own sadness, as you struggle with staying true to your values and beliefs and find yourself compromising them in order to maintain peace. Your self-respect matters and betraying it might just be the cause for your sadness. **Again, if you used the same situation in exercises 5 and 6, continue the theme here. Or, choose a new situation entirely.**

Fair	You should be fair in all of your interactions, to yourself and to others.
Apology	You don't need to apologize for expressing an opinion, disagreeing, or stating your values. Only apologize when it's warranted.

Stick To It	Your values matter – don't compromise them just so people like you.
Truthful	Don't use dishonesty or exaggeration to get what you want. If it's outright lying, it's manipulation at best. Stick to the facts.



Exercise 10 – Challenge Negative Thoughts

In the table below, make a rational counter-argument for the negative thoughts we have provided.

Negative Thought	Counter-Argument
I lost my job, the boss said it was a normal layoff, but it was all my fault and I will never find a new job.	Example: My work generally receives positive feedback; I'm not going to lie down and feel sorry for myself. I can find a new job.
I forgot to feed the dog this morning, my partner was very angry, and now I'm sad that I'm such an irresponsible idiot.	
I'm never going to find someone to love, who could love someone like me?	

Now, think of three negative thoughts you frequently deal with and write them in the table below. Then, create a compelling, rational counter-argument for it.

Negative Thought	Counter-Argument

You don't need this table to carry out this exercise – you can challenge any negative thought you experience by creating a counter-argument in your mind or simply jotting it down on paper if you work better that way.

Exercise 11 – The Mood Chart

Track your mood with the mood chart for the next few months. You will notice some of the times are when you should be asleep, but as we all know sadness and other emotions can interrupt sleep. So, if you are awake, log your emotions. In addition to logging the emotion, you are experiencing at the time, be sure to make a note of what you're doing or what is going on. The purpose of this exercise is to help you identify what is triggering the emotions you are dealing with. When you have a greater understanding of how you feel and why you feel that way, it will be easier to process those emotions.

Month 1

Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						

2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						

2 am – 6 am						

Month 2

Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						

2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						

2 am – 6 am						

Month 3

Week 1	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 2	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 3	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						

2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						
2 am – 6 am						

Week 4	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
6 am – 10 am						
10 am – 2 pm						
2 pm – 6 pm						
6 pm – 10 pm						
10 pm – 2 am						

2 am – 6 am						