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Childhood Emotional Neglect Clinical Practice Workbook

A clinically branded, function-preserving edition retaining the original exercises, psychoeducation, checklists, logs, planning tools, and response space.

DSM-5-TR · ICD-11 CLINICAL ALIGNMENT

1 · Self-Assessment

2 · Identify The Emotional Neglect

3 · Reflect On Your Childhood

4 · Validate Your Emotions

5 · Challenge Self-Critical Thoughts

6 · Challenge Self-Blame

7 · Challenge Perfectionistic Tendencies

8 · Write a Letter of Compassion to Yourself

9 · Connect With Your Inner Child

10 · Self-Care Checkup

11 · Engage in Self-Soothing Activities

12 · Express Your Needs And Wants Assertively

13 · Establish Healthy Boundaries

14 · Get To Know Yourself

15 · Practice Forgiveness

How to use this workbook

- Use this workbook selectively and collaboratively; it is educational and does not replace individualized assessment, diagnosis, treatment, medical care, or crisis services.
- Skip, pause, or modify any activity that increases distress, danger, shame, or loss of functioning. Adapt language for culture, disability, neurodivergence, health, resources, and lived context.
- Ratings in this workbook are reflection tools unless a named, validated measure and interpretation are explicitly provided.

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Self-Assessment

The following are common signs you might have been emotionally neglected. Rate each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”):

Statement	Rate (1-5)
1. “I often feel like my needs and emotions were overlooked or dismissed during my childhood.”	1-2-3-4-5
2. “I struggle to identify and express my emotions effectively, and I often feel numb or disconnected from my feelings.”	1-2-3-4-5
3. “I find it challenging to ask for help or support, even when I really need it.”	1-2-3-4-5
4. “I have a hard time feeling deserving of love and attention from others.”	1-2-3-4-5
5. “I tend to downplay the impact of my experiences and put others' needs before my own.”	1-2-3-4-5
6. “I have difficulty setting boundaries with others and often feel overwhelmed by their demands.”	1-2-3-4-5
7. “I struggle with feelings of emptiness or loneliness, even when I'm surrounded by others.”	1-2-3-4-5
8. “I find it challenging to trust and rely on others, and I often feel like I have to handle everything on my own.”	1-2-3-4-5
9. “I sometimes feel like I'm not sure who I am or what I want in life.”	1-2-3-4-5
10. “I have a tendency to avoid conflict and prioritize keeping the peace, even at the expense of my own well-being.”	1-2-3-4-5

AUTHOR-CREATED REFLECTION: Do not total, apply impact bands, infer a disorder, or conclude a causal childhood history from endorsement.

1. Was there anything about your score that surprised you? If yes, what specifically?

2. Did any of the statements resonate with you more than others?

3. Which of the identified patterns or habits from the questionnaire do you feel most interested in working on changing?

Identify The Emotional Neglect

1. Think about the emotional needs you had as a child. The following are some examples. Reflect on whether these needs were consistently met or if they often went unacknowledged.

- ☐ Unconditional love and acceptance
- ☐ Support in times of distress or vulnerability
- ☐ Reassurance and comfort
- ☐ Encouragement and positive reinforcement
- ☐ Opportunity for emotional expression and communication
- ☐ Respect for individual thoughts and feelings
- ☐ Sense of safety and security
- ☐ Affection and physical touch
- ☐ Stability and consistency in caregiving
- ☐ Feeling heard and valued
- ☐ Connection and belonging within the family unit
- ☐ Opportunities for play, joy, and laughter
- ☐ Encouragement to explore and express creativity
- ☐ Modeling of healthy emotional regulation
- ☐ Opportunities for autonomy and decision-making
- ☐ Acceptance of mistakes and learning opportunities
- ☐ Respect for personal privacy and space
- ☐ Recognition and celebration of accomplishments

2. Consider how the unmet emotional needs may have impacted your sense of self-worth and security. The following are common effects. Check off the ones you relate to and explain more in the space below:

- ☐ Difficulty establishing secure and trusting relationships
- ☐ Low self-esteem and feelings of inadequacy
- ☐ Difficulty regulating emotions and managing stress
- ☐ Lack of confidence in expressing personal thoughts and feelings
- ☐ Tendency to seek validation and approval from others
- ☐ Fear of intimacy and vulnerability
- ☐ Chronic feelings of emptiness or loneliness
- ☐ Inability to effectively communicate emotions and needs
- ☐ Difficulty setting and maintaining healthy boundaries
- ☐ Persistent feelings of shame and self-blame
- ☐ Struggles with self-identity and self-worth
- ☐ Increased risk of engaging in unhealthy coping mechanisms (e.g., substance abuse)
- ☐ Difficulty trusting oneself and making decisions
- ☐ Tendency to repeat patterns of dysfunctional relationships
- ☐ Impaired social skills and challenges in forming friendships
- ☐ Feelings of anger, resentment, or bitterness
- ☐ Perfectionism and fear of failure
- ☐ Impaired empathy and understanding of others' emotions
- ☐ Limited belief in one's own abilities and potential
- ☐ Disconnection between mind and body, leading to somatic symptoms
- ☐ Difficulty finding meaning and purpose in life
- ☐ Challenges in coping with life's inevitable setbacks and disappointments
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Reflect On Your Childhood

1. Early Memories:

Take some time to think about your upbringing and the environment in which you were raised. Consider the behaviors and interactions of your caregivers or family members. Reflect on any instances where your emotional needs may have been overlooked or neglected.

2. Communication and Expression:

Reflect on the communication patterns within your family and how emotions were expressed or suppressed. Consider whether there were opportunities for open dialogue about feelings and concerns. Reflect on how these communication patterns shaped your own ability to express and regulate emotions.

3. Coping Mechanisms:

Think about the ways you coped with any emotional neglect or lack of support during childhood. Reflect on whether these coping mechanisms have persisted into your adult life and how they may be impacting your well-being.

Validate Your Emotions

1. Write down specific situations or memories from your childhood where you felt emotionally neglected:

2. Reflect on how these experiences have influenced your emotional well-being and everyday life:

- How have these experiences affected your self-esteem and self-worth?

- In what ways do you struggle to understand and express your emotions?

- How has childhood emotional neglect impacted your relationships with others?

- How do these experiences affect your ability to trust and rely on others?

3. Identify the emotions you often experience when reflecting on your childhood emotional neglect:

4. Validate your emotions by acknowledging their legitimacy and understanding that they are a natural response to childhood emotional neglect:

- It is completely understandable to feel _____ when reflecting on my childhood emotional neglect.

- My emotions are valid, and it is okay to feel _____ given what I experienced.

- It is normal to struggle with _____ as a result of childhood emotional neglect.

Challenge Self-Critical Thoughts

1. Identify Self-Critical Thoughts:

Identify any self-critical thoughts related to your experiences of childhood emotional neglect. Following are some common examples.

Check off the ones you relate to or add more to the list:

- ☐ "I am unworthy of love and affection."
- ☐ "I don't deserve happiness or success."
- ☐ "I am fundamentally flawed because of my childhood experiences."
- ☐ "I am unlovable and destined to be alone."
- ☐ "I am not good enough for anyone to care about me."
- ☐ "My needs are not important or valid."
- ☐ "I am to blame for not receiving the care I needed."
- ☐ "I am a burden to others because of my emotional needs."
- ☐ "I am unable to form healthy relationships due to my upbringing."
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

2. Examine the Evidence:

Challenge each self-critical thought by examining the evidence against it.

For instance, if the thought is "I'm unworthy of love," consider times when you have been shown love and support by others, or times when you have demonstrated love and compassion towards yourself and others.

Self-critical thought: _____

Evidence against it:

Self-critical thought: _____

Evidence against it:

4. Practice Self-Compassion:

Replace self-critical thoughts with self-compassionate and affirming statements.

For example, counter the thought "It's my fault I didn't receive the care I needed" with "I deserved love, care, and support, and the responsibility for that rests with the adults in my life, not with me."

Self-critical thought: _____

Self-Compassionate Statement:

Challenge Self-Blame

1. Reflect on the Circumstances:

Begin by reflecting on the specific circumstances of the emotional neglect you experienced. Write down the events or situations that contributed to feeling neglected or unimportant.

2. Acknowledge Caregiver Limitations:

Consider the possible reasons why your caregivers may have been unable to meet your emotional needs. Understand that caregivers, like all individuals, have their own limitations, challenges, and past experiences that may have influenced their ability to provide adequate emotional support.

3. Identify Other External Factors:

List external factors that contributed to the emotional neglect, such as family dynamics, societal influences, or other environmental stressors. Recognize that these factors were beyond your control and played a significant role in shaping your experiences.

4. Self-Compassionate Affirmations:

Write down self-compassionate affirmations that emphasize the lack of responsibility you held for the emotional neglect.

For example, "I did not cause the neglect I experienced," "I deserve love and care regardless of past experiences," and "It was not my fault that others were unable to provide the support I needed."

5. Releasing Self-Blame:

Engage in an activity that symbolizes releasing self-blame and embracing self-compassion. This could involve writing a letter to your inner child, or engaging in a visualization exercise or a symbolic gesture like lighting a candle and watching it burn as a symbol of letting go, releasing a balloon into the sky, or creating and then destroying a piece of art that embodies self-blame.

Challenge Perfectionistic Tendencies

1. Identify and write down a recent situation where perfectionistic thinking has caused you distress or anxiety. For example, perhaps you received some constructive criticism at work and found yourself feeling deeply inadequate as a result.

2. Write down the automatic thoughts that arose in response to this situation. These might include self-critical statements such as, "I'm never good enough," or "I should have done better."

3. Challenge these automatic thoughts by asking yourself questions that encourage a more balanced perspective. For example, you might ask, "Is it realistic to expect myself to be perfect all the time?" or "What evidence is there that I'm genuinely inadequate?"

4. Develop an alternative, more balanced thought in response to the situation. This might involve acknowledging your efforts and qualities, recognizing that making mistakes is a natural part of learning and growth, and reminding yourself that no one is flawless.

Write a Letter of Compassion to Yourself

Address yourself with kindness and compassion, acknowledging the pain you've experienced and offering words of comfort and reassurance.

Remind yourself that you deserved love, care, and emotional support as a child, and that you are worthy of compassion and understanding.

[illegible]

Connect With Your Inner Child

1. Find a quiet space: Choose a quiet and comfortable space where you can relax and reflect without distractions.

2. Close your eyes and take deep breaths: Close your eyes, take a few deep breaths, and allow yourself to settle into a calm state.

3. Visualize your younger self: Begin by visualizing yourself as a child, perhaps around the age when you experienced emotional neglect. Try to picture the details of your younger self, such as appearance, clothing, and surroundings.

4. Speak to your inner child: Mentally or verbally, speak to your inner child. Offer words of comfort, support, and understanding. Let them know that you're here for them now and that they are safe.

5. Ask your inner child what they need: In your visualization, ask your inner child what they needed back then. Listen for any thoughts, feelings, or requests that arise. You may hear your inner child saying, "I needed someone to listen to me" or "I needed to feel safe and protected."

6. Provide nurturing and reassurance: Imagine providing the love, care, and understanding that may have been lacking during that time. Say soothing words like, "You are not alone. I am here for you now, and together we'll heal."

7. Journaling: After the visualization exercise, take a moment to write in a journal. Reflect on your experience, any insights gained, and any emotions that emerged. Consider how you can incorporate this connection with your inner child into your daily life.

Self-Care Checkup

Evaluate how effectively you are practicing self-care by rating each statement on a scale from 1-5 (1 being “almost never” and 5 being “often enough”)

1. Physical Self-Care

Activity	Rate (1-5)
1. Exercising regularly	1-2-3-4-5
2. Resting when unwell	1-2-3-4-5
3. Eating healthily	1-2-3-4-5
4. Drinking enough water	1-2-3-4-5
5. Regular health checkups	1-2-3-4-5

Reflection notes - not scored or interpreted as an impact total

2. Emotional Self-Care

Activity	Rate (1-5)
1. Engaging in activities that bring joy	1-2-3-4-5
2. Taking breaks from technology	1-2-3-4-5
3. Journaling/expressing your emotions	1-2-3-4-5
4. Engaging in soothing activities like a warm bath, a massage	1-2-3-4-5
5. Practicing self-compassion by offering yourself kindness and understanding during difficult times.	1-2-3-4-5

Reflection notes - not scored or interpreted as an impact total

NON-DIAGNOSTIC CONTEXT: Describe current experiences without assuming a single origin. Consider trauma/dissociation, mood, anxiety, autism/ADHD, attachment, medical, substance, and cultural factors. Family contact or forgiveness is optional and must be safety-screened.

3. Professional Self-Care

Activity	Rate (1-5)
1. Setting boundaries around workload and time	1-2-3-4-5
2. Asking for help at work when needed	1-2-3-4-5
3. Taking mini-breaks	1-2-3-4-5
4. Having a healthy work-life balance	1-2-3-4-5
5. Pursuing development opportunities	1-2-3-4-5

Reflection notes - not scored or interpreted as an impact total

4. Social Self-Care

Activity	Rate (1-5)
1. Quality time with friends and family	1-2-3-4-5
2. Quality time with partner	1-2-3-4-5
3. Having deep conversations	1-2-3-4-5
4. Engaging in community activities	1-2-3-4-5
5. Setting healthy boundaries in relationships	1-2-3-4-5

Reflection notes - not scored or interpreted as an impact total

5. Spiritual Self-Care

Activity	Rate (1-5)
1. Engaging in regular spiritual or religious practices	1-2-3-4-5
2. Spending time in nature	1-2-3-4-5
3. Practicing gratitude	1-2-3-4-5
4. Having alone time to self-reflect	1-2-3-4-5
5. Engaging in acts of service or kindness to others	1-2-3-4-5

Reflection notes - not scored or interpreted as an impact total

Engage in Self-Soothing Activities

1. Identify Sensory Soothing Activities:

List activities that engage each of your senses (sight, sound, touch, taste, smell) and bring you comfort or calm. For example:

- **Sight:** Watching a sunset, looking at nature scenes, or creating art.
- **Sound:** Listening to calming music, nature sounds, or meditation.
- **Touch:** Hugging a pet, using a stress ball, or taking a warm bath.
- **Taste:** Enjoying a favorite food or beverage, savoring a comforting meal.
- **Smell:** Using essential oils, lighting scented candles, or enjoying fresh flowers.

My Sensory Soothing Activities

- **Sight:** _____

- **Sound:** _____

- **Touch:** _____

- **Taste:** _____

- **Smell:** _____

2. Reflect on Comforting Activities from Childhood:

Recall activities or experiences from your childhood that brought you comfort and peace. These could be simple pleasures such as reading a book, coloring, or spending time in a favorite place.

3. Practice Grounding Techniques:

Deep Breathing:

Take slow, deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body.

Count your breaths, inhaling deeply through your nose for a count of four, holding for a count of four, and exhaling through your mouth for a count of four.

Repeat this several times.

Sensory Awareness:

Pay attention to your senses and engage them to anchor yourself in the present moment.

Notice five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation:

Starting from your toes, tense each muscle group in your body for a few seconds and then release.

Gradually work your way up through your legs, abdomen, chest, arms, and face.

Focus on the sensations of tension and relaxation in each muscle group.

Safe Place Visualization

Close your eyes and imagine a safe and comforting place. It could be a real location or something imaginary.

Visualize the details, colors, sounds, and smells associated with this place.

Spend a few moments fully immersing yourself in this visualization.

Grounding Objects

Select a small object that has meaning for you or brings you comfort.

Hold it in your hand, feeling its texture and weight.

Take a moment to reflect on why this object is important to you and allow it to ground you in the present.

Note: Experiment with each technique and find what works best for you. By incorporating these techniques into your daily routine, you can gradually develop a sense of safety, connection, and emotional regulation.

4. Create a Self-Soothing Toolkit:

- Compile your identified self-soothing activities into a physical or digital toolkit that you can turn to when you need comfort and reassurance. This could be a list on your phone, a box of comforting items, or a designated space for self-soothing activities.

Express Your Needs And Wants Assertively

1. Reflect on Your Emotions:

Take some time to think about the emotions you've been experiencing.

2. Connect Emotions to Needs:

Once you've identified your emotions, consider what needs might be connected to those feelings.

For example, if you're feeling overwhelmed, the need might be for support or a sense of control. If you're feeling lonely, the need might be for connection and companionship.

3. Create an Action Plan:

Once you've identified the needs associated with your feelings, brainstorm potential strategies for fulfilling those needs. This could involve seeking support from others, engaging in self-care activities, or making changes in your environment.

Establish Healthy Boundaries

1. Identify Your Needs:

Reflect on your personal needs and values. This could include emotional support, personal space, or time for self-care.

2. Recognize Boundaries That Were Crossed:

Think back to instances where your boundaries were crossed during childhood. This could involve emotional invasion, neglect, or feelings of intrusion.

3. Understand Your Rights:

Acknowledge that you have the right to set boundaries and prioritize your emotional well-being. Recognize that asserting yourself is not selfish but essential for your overall happiness and mental health.

Here are some examples of rights you might consider incorporating into your personal "Bill of Rights":

- The right to say "no" without feeling guilty or providing an explanation.
- The right to set aside time for self-care and prioritize my mental and emotional well-being.
- The right to establish physical and emotional space when needed, and to ask others to respect those boundaries.
- The right to be treated with respect and consideration in all relationships and interactions.
- The right to remove myself from situations that compromise my emotional safety and well-being.
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. Communicate Assertively:

Practice assertive communication techniques to express your boundaries effectively. Use "I" statements to clearly communicate your needs, such as "I need some alone time right now" or "I would appreciate it if you respected my privacy."

Get To Know Yourself

1. Reflect on your life:

Take a few moments to think about significant experiences, people, and moments that have had a profound impact on you. Consider times when you felt fulfilled, proud, or deeply satisfied. Write down a few of these experiences.

2. Identify feelings and qualities:

For each experience you listed, write down the feelings and qualities associated with it. For example, if you wrote about a volunteering experience, you might include feelings like compassion, fulfillment, and connection.

3. Label your values:

Review the feelings and qualities you identified and try to identify overarching values that align with them. For instance, if you grouped feelings like compassion, empathy, and helping others, you might label the value as "Kindness" or "Service."

4. Prioritize your values:

Assign rankings or importance levels to your identified values. Consider which ones are most fundamental and essential to your sense of self and well-being.

5. Reflect on alignment:

Think about how well your current life aligns with your prioritized values. Are there areas where you feel a disconnect? If so, identify those areas for potential adjustment or growth.

Practice Forgiveness

1. Identify the Hurt:

Take some time to reflect on the specific instances of emotional neglect that occurred during your childhood. Write down the situations or events that still cause you pain or distress.

2. Understand the Impact:

Reflect on how the emotional neglect impacted you. Consider the feelings and beliefs that arose from these experiences and how they have influenced your life and relationships.

3. Empathize with Yourself:

Practice self-compassion by acknowledging the pain you experienced and validating your emotions. Remind yourself that it's okay to feel hurt and that your feelings are valid.

4. Acceptance:

Accept that the emotional neglect happened and recognize that it was not your fault. Understand that you deserved to receive care and attention as a child, and it was not provided to you in the way you needed.

5. Compassion for Others: Consider the circumstances of the individuals who may have contributed to the emotional neglect. Try to understand that they may have had their own struggles and limitations that affected their ability to provide emotional support.

6. Affirmations of Forgiveness:

Write a letter to yourself expressing forgiveness and understanding for any self-blame or guilt you may be carrying. Additionally, consider writing a letter to the individuals involved, even if you don't intend to send it.

Express your feelings and forgiveness, releasing the emotional burden that you've been carrying.

7. Release and Let Go:

Take time to reflect on the act of forgiveness and its potential to unburden you from the weight of past hurt. Consider engaging in a symbolic act of release, such as tearing up the letters you wrote or practicing a mindfulness exercise to let go of lingering emotions.

2026 Clinical Alignment

DSM-5-TR (including Sept. 2025 update) · ICD-11 CDDR / 2026 MMS

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: ·Childhood Emotional Neglect· is not a standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis · non-diagnostic or contextual/quasi-diagnostic construct
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under this title · non-diagnostic or contextual construct
- This workbook is non-diagnostic. A title, checklist, or completed activity never establishes a diagnosis.

Pages requiring the updated interpretation

- The audit identified source pages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 15, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- A symptom checklist or self-rating cannot establish diagnosis. Any diagnostic discussion must address clinically significant distress/impairment, required course or duration where applicable, developmental and cultural context, substance/medication and medical causes, comorbidity, exclusions, and reasonable differentials without reproducing copyrighted criteria.

Document-specific corrections

- Describe Childhood Emotional Neglect as a contextual, functional, occupational, umbrella, or proposed construct-not a confirmed diagnosis-unless a separately recognized disorder is assessed.
- Where Childhood Emotional Neglect discusses symptoms, add the missing diagnostic frame: clinically meaningful distress/impairment, relevant course or duration, exclusions, developmental and cultural context, substance/medication or medical causes, and plausible differentials.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 20, 21]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- Revise trauma/protocol material on pages [1, 3, 15, 19, 24]: distinguish stabilization and reflection from trauma processing, state training/scope requirements, and add dissociation, acute-risk, and destabilization safeguards.
- Replace crisis wording on pages [2] with the current U.S. 988 call/text/chat pathway, 911 or nearest emergency department for immediate danger/medical emergency, and a direction to use verified local services outside the United States.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Pages [1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 20, 21] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content; extracted candidate names include: Self-Assessment, Regular health checkups 1-2-3-4-5 Score, Engaging in acts of service or kindness to others 1-2-3-4-5 Score . These scores are not diagnostic unless the exact instrument, version, validation population, administration, and interpretation are established. Identify provenance for every item set and scoring rule. Obtain publisher permission/license when required; otherwise remove cutoffs and label it as a nonvalidated reflection checklist, or replace it with a properly licensed measure without altering its wording/scoring.

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Pace Childhood Emotional Neglect work within present safety and functioning. Screen acute suicidality, self-harm, mania/psychosis, coercive control, dissociation, and destabilization; defer evocative processing and arrange higher-level care when indicated.

Crisis and current resources

- For Childhood Emotional Neglect, use: ·If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department. In the U.S., call or text 988 or use 988lifeline.org for 24/7 crisis support. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services.· Verify all topic-specific agencies and links at publication.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>

2026 Clinical Alignment

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- <https://www.psychiatry.org/getmedia/b68a5776-f88c-45c7-9535-fd219d7aa5cb/APA-DSM5TR-Update-September-2025.pdf>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>
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- <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/ptsd/>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>