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Estrangement 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 · Estrangement Story

2 · Identifying and Naming Emotions

3 · Identifying Triggers

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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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Estrangement Story

1. Telling Your Story

- Describe the beginning of estrangement. What were the key events or issues that led to the distance? Try to recall how you felt at the beginning stages.

- Identify factors that contributed to the estrangement. Consider misunderstandings, differing values or lifestyles, communication issues, or external pressures.

- Reflect on how the estrangement has impacted your life. Consider your emotional well-being, changes in family dynamics, and effects on mutual relationships or social circles.

2. The Other's Perspective:

- Attempt to understand the perspective of the estranged individual(s). What might have been their feelings, needs, or motivations? This step is not about justification but about empathy and understanding.

- Acknowledge any misunderstandings or regrets. Are there aspects of the situation that could have been misinterpreted? Do you have regrets about how things were handled?

Identifying and Naming Emotions

1. Emotional Awareness

- Describe your initial emotional reaction to the estrangement. Try to capture the first feelings that surfaced when you realized the estrangement was happening.

- Below are broad emotional categories. For each, note if you have felt emotions belonging to these categories in relation to the estrangement and provide examples.

Sadness:

- Examples:

Anger:

- Examples:

Fear:

- Examples:

Confusion:

- Examples:

Relief:

- Examples:

Other: _____

- Examples:

Identifying Triggers

1. Recognizing Emotional Triggers

- List events, situations, dates, or interactions that have triggered strong emotional reactions related to the estrangement. Note the emotions you felt.

Examples:

- *Anniversaries of significant shared events (weddings, engagements, etc.).*
- *Holidays and family gatherings without their presence.*
- *Birthdays, both yours and the estranged person's.*
- *Finding old photos or mementos from times spent together.*
- *Important life milestones (graduations, promotions) where their absence is felt.*
- *Dealing with family questions or comments about the estrangement.*
- *Discovering they have moved on with significant life changes (new relationships, relocation).*
- *Witnessing others having a good relationship with their family/friends and feeling the loss.*
- *Dreams involving the estranged person or situation.*

Trigger	Emotion Felt
<i>e.g., Coming across old photographs while cleaning the house.</i>	<i>Nostalgia mixed with grief. The photographs sparked memories of happier times before the conflict that led to estrangement, causing a wave of sadness and a longing for resolution.</i>

Trigger	Emotion Felt

- Evaluate the context in which each trigger occurs. Are there common themes, locations, or people involved?

2. Coping Strategies for Triggers

- For each trigger identified, brainstorm potential coping strategies or ways to lessen their impact.

Examples:

- *Write down your thoughts and feelings to process emotions safely.*
- *Allocate a specific time to think about concerns, so they don't overwhelm your day.*
- *Recite affirmations that reinforce your worth and resilience.*
- *Connect with others who have similar experiences to feel less isolated.*
- *Set boundaries around information or environments that trigger pain.*

Trigger	Coping Strategies
<i>e.g., Encountering mutual acquaintances who ask about the estranged person.</i>	<i>Practice a simple response that feels authentic but also sets a boundary, such as, "We're currently taking some time apart. It's been a challenging period, but I'm focusing on healing." Redirect the conversation to a topic you're comfortable discussing.</i>

Trigger	Coping Strategies

Letter to the Estranged

1. Setting the Intention

- Before you begin writing, clarify your intentions for this letter. What do you hope to achieve by writing it? Possible intentions include expressing feelings, seeking understanding, or envisioning reconciliation.

2. Express Your Feelings:

- Start by expressing the emotions you've experienced due to the estrangement. Be honest and allow yourself to fully articulate your feelings without judgment.

3. Share Your Perspective:

- Describe your perspective on the events or issues leading to the estrangement. Aim for clarity and honesty, focusing on expressing your own experience rather than assigning blame.

4. Acknowledging Their Perspective

- If you can, acknowledge that the estranged person(s) may have their own perspective on the situation. This is not about agreeing with them but showing a willingness to see things from more than one viewpoint.

5. Expressing Needs and Wishes

- Clearly articulate any needs or wishes you have regarding the future of your relationship. This could include a desire for reconciliation, a need for closure, or setting specific boundaries.

6. Forgiveness:

- If it feels right, you might choose to offer forgiveness for any hurt caused or seek forgiveness for your own actions. Remember, forgiveness is a process that can take time and may or may not be part of your healing journey.

7. Closing Your Letter:

- Conclude your letter with a statement that reflects your current state of heart or any final thoughts you wish to express. It could be a wish for their well-being, a statement of hope for the future, or simply a goodbye.

Letter to Self

1. Validate Your Experience:

- Write about the validity of your feelings and experiences. Remind yourself that it's okay to feel this way and that your emotions are a natural response to your situation.

2. Recognizing Your Strengths

- Reflect on the strengths and resilience you've shown during this challenging time. Highlight specific instances where you demonstrated courage, growth, or perseverance.

3. Expressing Self-Compassion

- Write words of compassion and kindness to yourself. Think about what you might say to a friend in a similar situation and offer yourself the same level of care and understanding.

4. Envision Your Future Self:

- Describe how you hope to see yourself in the future, beyond the pain of estrangement. Focus on qualities you wish to cultivate, how you want to feel, and what you hope to achieve.

Healing Visualization

1. Create a Safe Space

- Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be disturbed. Consider dimming the lights or playing soft, calming music to create a tranquil environment.

2. Grounding Exercise

- Take several deep breaths, focusing on the sensation of air entering and leaving your body. With each exhale, imagine releasing tension and stress.

3. Visualization

- Close your eyes and imagine a path in front of you. This path represents your journey through estrangement and towards healing. Notice the details of the path, the surroundings, and how you feel as you start walking.

- As you walk, envision encountering representations of your emotions related to estrangement (such as sadness, anger, or hope). Observe these emotions without judgment, allowing yourself to acknowledge and understand them.

- Continue your journey until you discover a space that feels healing and safe. This could be a garden, a forest clearing, or any place that brings you peace. Spend a moment here, absorbing the healing energy.

- In this healing space, allow yourself to envision a future where you have found peace with the estrangement, whether it includes reconciliation or finding closure. What does this peace look like, and how does it feel?

- When you're ready, slowly begin to walk back along the path, carrying with you the feelings of peace and insights you've gained. Notice any changes in the path or in your feelings as you return.
- As you come back to the present, take a few deep breaths. Feel the ground beneath you and the air around you, bringing yourself back to the here and now.

Reflection

How did it feel to confront and understand your emotions? What insights did you gain about your journey of estrangement and healing? How can you use the peace and closure you envisioned to support your real-life healing process?

Estrangement and Identity

1. Reflecting on Identity Pre-Estrangement

- Describe your sense of identity before the estrangement occurred.

Consider roles, beliefs, values, and how you related to others.

- Reflect on how your relationship(s) with the estranged individual(s) influenced your identity. Did these relationships affirm or challenge your sense of self?

2. Impact of Estrangement on Identity

- Describe the immediate impact of the estrangement on your sense of identity. How did your roles, self-view, or values shift?

3. Rediscovering Identity

- Reevaluate your personal values and beliefs in the context of the estrangement. Have any values become more significant or changed altogether?

- Consider new roles you have taken on or existing ones that have evolved since the estrangement. How have these roles influenced your identity?

- Describe your vision for your identity moving forward. How do you wish to see yourself, independent of the estrangement?

- Outline action steps to reinforce and explore your identity. Consider new experiences, relationships, or personal projects that align with your true self.

Needs Assessment

1. Emotional Needs

- Identify what forms of emotional support are most helpful to you.
Consider whether you prefer listening, advice, distraction, or just silent companionship.

- Reflect on how you best express your emotions. Some people find talking helpful, while others prefer writing, art, or physical activity.

2. Social Needs

- Assess your need for social interaction. Consider both the quantity and quality of social interactions that feel nourishing versus overwhelming.

- Identify the key people in your support network. Think about who provides understanding, who offers practical help, and who makes you feel safe.

3. Physical and Practical Needs

- Assess your physical self-care needs. Consider exercise, nutrition, rest, and any medical care you might be neglecting.

- Identify any practical support you need to navigate the estrangement. This might include legal advice, financial planning, or help with daily tasks.

4. Setting Priorities

- From the needs identified above, prioritize them according to what will most significantly impact your healing and well-being.

- For your top three priorities, outline specific actions you can take to meet these needs. Consider who can help, what steps you can take yourself, and any resources you may need.

Self-Compassion Exercises

1. Acknowledgment

- Take a moment to acknowledge your feelings about the estrangement. Simply notice and name your emotions without judgment.

2. Loving-Kindness for Yourself

- Repeat the following phrases silently to yourself, focusing on directing compassion and goodwill towards yourself.

- May I be happy.
- May I be healthy.
- May I be safe.
- May I live with ease.

3. Loving-Kindness for Others

- Now, think of someone you love. Repeat the phrases, directing your compassionate wishes towards them.

- May you be happy.
- May you be healthy.
- May you be safe.
- May you live with ease.

4. Writing to Yourself

- Write a letter to yourself from the perspective of a compassionate friend. What would they say to you about the estrangement and your feelings?

5. Compassionate Body Scan

- Lie down and slowly scan your body from head to toe, noticing areas of tension or discomfort.
- For each area of tension, pause and imagine sending compassion and warmth to that area. Visualize the tension dissolving with your compassionate attention.

6. Gratitude for Self:

- List three qualities or actions you're grateful for in yourself. These can be related to how you've handled the estrangement or more general aspects of your character.

Coping Strategies Inventory

1. Current Coping Strategies

- List the coping strategies you currently use to deal with the estrangement. These can include both positive and negative strategies.
- For each strategy listed above, evaluate its effectiveness. Consider whether it provides temporary relief, long-term healing, or potentially exacerbates the issue.

Strategy	Effectiveness
<i>e.g., Avoiding social gatherings and interactions, especially with mutual friends of the estranged individual.</i>	<i>This has provided temporary relief from the fear of facing questions or discussions about the estrangement. However, in the long term, it exacerbates feelings of isolation and loneliness.</i>

2. Developing New Strategies

- Based on your evaluations, identify areas where new, healthier coping strategies could be beneficial. Outline potential strategies you're interested in trying. The following are some suggestions. Check off the ones that may be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ Writing about your feelings to process emotions.
- ☐ Practicing mindfulness to stay present and reduce anxiety.
- ☐ Engaging in physical activities to decrease stress.
- ☐ Seeking counseling to navigate complex emotions.
- ☐ Joining groups of people who are experiencing similar issues.
- ☐ Using breathing techniques to calm the nervous system.
- ☐ Channeling emotions through art, music, or writing.
- ☐ Reading self-help books.
- ☐ Spending time with supportive friends to feel connected.
- ☐ Spending time in nature to clear your mind and boost mood.
- ☐ Learning new skills.
- ☐ Watching inspirational talks.
- ☐ Working towards forgiving yourself and others.
- ☐ Keeping a daily routine to provide structure.
- ☐ Watching comedies or spending time with funny friends.
- ☐ Repeating positive statements to boost self-esteem.
- ☐ Spending time with animals to reduce stress.
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Forgiveness Exploration

1. Forgiving the Estranged Person

- Reflect on your current feelings towards the estranged individual(s). Are there feelings of anger, sadness, betrayal, or something else?

- Reflect on the potential benefits and challenges of forgiving the estranged person(s) and yourself. How might forgiveness impact your healing journey?

- List specific actions or words from the estranged person that caused you hurt or pain.

- Attempt to consider the possible reasons behind the estranged person's actions or words, not as justification, but to understand the complexity of human behavior.

- Reflect on your readiness to forgive the estranged person. Consider what forgiveness would mean for you emotionally and psychologically.

- Identify negative emotions you're holding onto (anger, resentment, bitterness) and write a commitment to yourself to release them, focusing on your well-being.

- Commitment to Letting Go:

- Imagine how your life might be different without the burden of these negative emotions. Describe how forgiveness might open new paths for emotional healing and growth.

- Outline practical steps you can take to cultivate forgiveness in your heart, such as meditation on forgiveness, writing a letter of forgiveness (not necessarily to be sent), or speaking affirmations of forgiveness.

2. Forgiving Yourself

- Reflect on any feelings of guilt, regret, or self-blame you have regarding the estrangement. List specific instances where you have been harsh on yourself.

- For each instance listed above, write a compassionate response to yourself, acknowledging your human imperfections and the efforts you made.

- Create a statement of forgiveness towards yourself, affirming your worth and your right to move forward from past mistakes.

- Self-Forgiveness Statement:

Reconciliation Considerations

1. Evaluating Your Feelings

- Describe your current feelings about the possibility of reconciliation. Are you hopeful, ambivalent, resistant, or something else?

2. Understanding Motivations

- Reflect on why you are considering reconciliation. What are your motivations? Are they driven by external pressures, a desire for closure, love, or something else?

3. Assessing the Estrangement's Impact

- Consider how the estrangement has impacted you and the other party. How has it affected your emotional well-being, relationships, and daily life?

- Impact on You:

- Perceived Impact on Them:

4. Readiness for Reconciliation

- Assess your readiness and the other person's presumed readiness for reconciliation. What changes (if any) have occurred that might make reconciliation possible now?

- Your Readiness:

- Their Presumed Readiness:

5. Desired Outcomes:

- Envision the best-case scenario for reconciliation. What does a successful reconciliation look like to you?

- Best-Case Scenario:

6. Potential Risks and Challenges:

- Consider the potential risks and challenges of attempting reconciliation. How might you and the other person handle these challenges?

7. Conditions for Reconciliation

- Outline any conditions or boundaries that would need to be in place for reconciliation to occur. Consider communication needs, behaviors that would need to change, and any non-negotiable aspects.

8. Preparing for All Outcomes:

- Reflect on how you might emotionally prepare for various outcomes of a reconciliation attempt, including positive, negative, or no change in the relationship.

Communication Wish List

1. Reflecting on Past Communication

- Describe the quality and patterns of communication before the estrangement occurred. Identify aspects that were helpful or harmful.

Helpful aspects	Harmful aspects
e.g., Our ability to share daily updates and maintain a connection despite physical distance.	Avoiding difficult conversations, which contributed to misunderstandings and resentment.

2. Desired Future Communication

- List the qualities or attributes you wish for in future communications with the estranged individual(s). Consider honesty, openness, respect, and empathy.

- Outline specific goals you have for future communication. This might include resolving misunderstandings, expressing feelings, or establishing boundaries.

- Identify specific topics or issues you wish to address or discuss. These could range from clarifying events leading to estrangement to discussing changes in your relationship.

- Describe the best-case outcomes you hope for from future communications. Consider both emotional resolutions and practical arrangements.

3. Preparation for Communication

- Consider what preparation you might need to achieve the communication you desire. This could include emotional preparation, seeking advice or counseling, or writing down thoughts and feelings beforehand.

- List the support systems and resources you can access to help facilitate healthy communication. This may include friends, family, therapists, or mediation services.

Conflict Resolution Skills

1. Identifying Past Conflicts

- Think about a specific conflict that contributed to the estrangement. Describe the situation, including the key issues and emotions involved.

2. Understanding Your Conflict Style

- Reflect on how you typically respond to conflict (e.g., avoidance, confrontation, accommodation, compromise, collaboration). How did your conflict style affect the outcome of the past conflict?

- Conflict Style:

- Impact on Outcome:

3. Communication Techniques

- Identify communication techniques that could have positively altered the course of the conflict. The following are some examples:

- **Active Listening:** Fully concentrating on what is being said rather than just passively hearing the message. This involves listening with all senses and giving full attention to the speaker.
- **Reflective Listening:** Paraphrasing or summarizing what the speaker has said to demonstrate understanding and validation of their perspective.
- **I-Statements:** Using statements that start with "I" to express feelings or thoughts without blaming the other person (e.g., "I feel hurt when...").
- **Open-Ended Questions:** Asking questions that cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no" to encourage deeper conversation and understanding.
- **Avoiding Assumptions:** Not jumping to conclusions about the other person's thoughts, feelings, or motivations.
- **Expressing Appreciation:** Recognizing and vocalizing the positive aspects or contributions of the other person, even in conflict.
- **Timing:** Choosing an appropriate time for discussions, avoiding sensitive conversations when one party is stressed or tired.
- **Focusing on Solutions:** Steering the conversation towards finding mutual solutions rather than dwelling on the problem.
- **Empathy Expression:** Demonstrating understanding and compassion for the other person's feelings and experiences.
- **Staying on Topic:** Avoiding bringing up unrelated issues that can sidetrack the discussion.

- **Acknowledging Differences:** Recognizing and accepting differences in opinion or perspective without judgment.
- **Compromise:** Finding middle ground where both parties can agree, even if it means both making concessions.
- **De-escalation Techniques:** Recognizing when emotions are high and taking steps to calm the situation before continuing the conversation.
- **Breaking Down Barriers:** Actively working to remove physical or emotional barriers to communication (e.g., sitting face to face without distractions).
- **Seeking External Support:** Consulting a mediator, counselor, or trusted third party to facilitate difficult conversations.
- **Self-Regulation:** Monitoring one's own emotional responses and keeping reactions in check to maintain a constructive dialogue.
- **Leaving the Door Open:** Ending conversations with the possibility of revisiting issues later, indicating a willingness to continue dialogue and work through issues.
- **Limit Catastrophizing:** Avoid blowing the situation out of proportion. Focus on the issue at hand rather than worst-case scenarios.
- **Choose Your Battles:** Recognize when to let go. Not every disagreement needs to be won for a resolution to be reached.

4. Emotional Regulation

- Identify emotional regulation strategies you could use to manage the conflict more effectively. The following are some suggestions. Check off the ones that may be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Pause and Breathe:** Take a moment to breathe deeply. This simple act can help slow down your physiological response and give you time to think before reacting.
- ☐ **Acknowledge Your Feelings:** Recognize what you're feeling without judgment. Identifying emotions can reduce their intensity and prevent them from controlling your actions.
- ☐ **Use I-Statements:** Communicate your feelings and needs using "I" statements. This helps express your perspective without blaming the other person, reducing defensiveness.
- ☐ **Implement a Timeout:** If emotions are too high, suggest a brief break from the conversation. Use this time to cool down and gather your thoughts.
- ☐ **Physical Grounding Techniques:** Use physical sensations to stay grounded. Press your feet firmly on the ground, or hold a cool object in your hand.
- ☐ **Positive Self-Talk:** Remind yourself of your ability to handle conflict and stay calm. Affirmations like "I can manage this" can be empowering.

5. Lessons Learned:

- Reflect on what you have learned from revisiting this conflict. How can these insights improve your conflict resolution skills in the future?

- Based on what you've learned, outline a plan for how you might approach conflicts differently in the future, considering the skills and insights you've identified.

Navigating Holidays

1. Anticipating Emotions

- Reflect on the upcoming holiday(s) and write down the emotions you anticipate feeling due to the estrangement. Consider both negative and positive emotions.

2. Identifying Triggers

- Identify specific holiday triggers that may intensify feelings related to the estrangement, such as certain traditions, places, or even specific dates.

3. Creating New Traditions

- Brainstorm ideas for new traditions or activities that can help make the holidays meaningful for you. Consider activities that reflect your current needs and values.

4. Holiday Self-Care Plan

- Outline a self-care plan for the holiday period. Include activities that promote relaxation, joy, and connection with supportive people or communities.

5. Social Support

- Identify individuals or groups you can rely on for support during the holidays. Consider friends, family members who are not part of the estrangement, support groups, or online communities.

6. Boundaries for Holiday Interactions

- Consider any boundaries you need to set for yourself or with others during the holidays to protect your well-being. This may include limits on discussions about the estrangement, attending certain gatherings, or engaging in social media.

7. Finding Meaning and Gratitude:

- Despite the challenges, reflect on aspects of the holiday season for which you can feel grateful. Consider also how this period might offer opportunities for personal growth or deeper connections with others.

2026 Clinical Alignment

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

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No standalone DSM-5-TR diagnosis under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless a separately assessed disorder applies
- ICD-11 CDDR: No dedicated ICD-11 CDDR mental-disorder code under the workbook title · educational/contextual topic unless another coded condition is established
- 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, 23, 26, 40, 42. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Use Estrangement material to support assessment or intervention planning, not to assign a diagnosis. Evaluate duration, severity, clinically significant distress or impairment, developmental and cultural context, medical/substance causes, exclusions, and relevant differentials.

Document-specific corrections

- Keep Estrangement explicitly non-diagnostic; its exercises organize experience and goals but do not establish a mental disorder or causal explanation.
- Supersede diagnostic-sounding scoring on pages [1, 2, 3, 26]: disclose whether each tool is validated or author-created, remove unsupported thresholds, and separate symptom monitoring from diagnosis.
- 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, 26] contain named, implied, or author-created screening/rating content; extracted candidate names include: Needs Assessment, Coping Strategies Inventory, Strategies Inventory . 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

- Use Estrangement activities as psychoeducation and structured reflection, not diagnosis or a stand-alone treatment plan. Adapt or stop any exercise that worsens distress, functioning, conflict, pain, or dissociation, and escalate care according to the actual presentation.

Crisis and current resources

- For Estrangement, 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>
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- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/988>
- <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/national-behavioral-health-crisis-care>

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- <https://988lifeline.org/>