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Healing from Unrequited Love 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 · Exploring Why You Fell for This Person

2 · Defining What Love Means to You

3 · Analyzing the Unrealistic Expectations You May Have Had

4 · Differentiating Between Rejection and Incompatibility

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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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Exploring Why You Fell for This Person

1. What emotions do you associate with this person?

(e.g., happiness, longing, admiration, sadness, excitement)

2. How did these emotions develop over time? (e.g., spending time together, feeling understood, being attracted to their qualities)

3. What unmet emotional needs might you feel this person fulfills?

(e.g., feeling valued, being seen, a sense of belonging)

4. What specific moments with this person stand out to you emotionally?

(e.g., a shared laugh, a moment of vulnerability, their attention toward you)

5. What qualities about this person initially attracted you?
(e.g., kindness, sense of humor, physical appearance, intelligence)

6. How do these qualities align with your values or desires in a partner?
(e.g., shared interests, mutual goals, similar outlook on life)

7. Are there qualities you idealized about this person that might not match reality? (e.g., assuming they are always confident, believing they are perfect)

8. What shared experiences made you feel close to this person?
(e.g., working on a project together, a deep conversation, mutual hobbies)

9. How did their actions or words make you feel valued or special?
(e.g., complimenting you, being attentive, showing support)

10. Did they ever behave in ways that gave mixed signals? How did that affect you? (e.g., showing interest and then pulling away, being kind but distant)

11. How does the idea of being with this person align with your dreams or fantasies? (e.g., envisioning a perfect relationship, imagining shared milestones)

12. How much of your feelings for this person are based on reality versus imagination? (e.g., wishing they could be someone they're not, focusing only on their positive traits)

13. Have you fallen for similar types of people in the past? Why or why not? (e.g., recurring attraction to emotionally unavailable people, seeking validation)

Defining What Love Means to You

1. What does the word "love" mean to you? (e.g., "Love is mutual care and understanding," "Love is putting someone else's happiness before your own.")

2. How has your definition of love been shaped by your experiences? (e.g., "I learned about love from watching my parents' relationship," "Past relationships taught me that love should feel secure.")

3. What are the key qualities or behaviors you associate with love? (e.g., trust, respect, empathy, kindness, patience.)

4. What myths or societal expectations about love might influence your views? (e.g., "You need to find 'the one' to be happy.")

5. How has this unrequited love experience changed your perspective on love? (e.g., "I've learned that love isn't enough without mutual respect.")

6. What lessons about love did you take away from this unrequited relationship? (e.g., “Love should be balanced,” “Loving someone doesn’t mean they owe you the same in return.”)

7. What does healthy love look like to you? (e.g., open communication, mutual support, respect for boundaries, shared growth.)

8. What does unhealthy or unbalanced love look like to you?
(e.g., codependency, control, lack of mutual effort, emotional unavailability.)

9. What actions or behaviors make you feel loved?
(e.g., words of affirmation, acts of service, quality time, physical affection.)

Analyzing the Unrealistic Expectations You May Have Had

1. What expectations did you have about how this person would feel about you? (e.g., “I thought they would realize how perfect we were for each other,” “I expected them to fall for me after all the time we spent together.”)

2. What did you expect the relationship with this person to look like? (e.g., “I envisioned us as a couple, traveling and building a life together.”)

3. Did you expect this person to fulfill any specific emotional needs? (e.g., “I thought they would make me feel complete,” “I expected them to give me the attention I’ve been missing.”)

4. What expectations did you have about how they would respond to your feelings? (e.g., “I believed they would be flattered and reciprocate,” “I thought they’d see how much I cared and change their mind.”)

5. How did your past relationships or experiences influence these expectations? (e.g., “In my last relationship, my partner always put me first,” “I’ve always felt like I need someone else to feel happy.”)

6. How realistic were the expectations you had about this person’s feelings? (e.g., “They never gave signs of romantic interest,” “I was hoping for something they didn’t feel.”)

7. Were there any red flags or signs that your expectations might not align with reality? (e.g., “They mentioned they weren’t ready for a relationship,” “They treated me more like a friend.”)

8. What realistic expectations could you set in future relationships? (e.g., “Expecting mutual effort and interest,” “Recognizing that no one can fulfill all my emotional needs.”)

9. What healthy boundaries can you establish to manage your expectations in the future? (e.g., “Not overinvesting emotionally without reciprocity,” “Being clear about my needs and listening to theirs.”)

Differentiating Between Rejection and Incompatibility

1. What reasons did this person give (if any) for not reciprocating your feelings? (e.g., “They said they weren’t ready for a relationship,” “They only saw me as a friend.”)

2. Based on their actions and words, do you believe this was more about rejection or incompatibility? Why? (e.g., “They valued different things than I did,” “They weren’t interested in a romantic relationship.”)

3. Were there any signs that you and this person had significant differences in values, goals, or priorities? (e.g., “We had different long-term plans,” “They didn’t want the same level of commitment.”)

4. What are the most important qualities or values you seek in a partner? (e.g., trust, shared goals, emotional availability, kindness.)

5. Which of these qualities or values did this person embody? Which of these qualities or values did they lack? (e.g., “They were kind but emotionally unavailable,” “They weren’t ready for a committed relationship.”)

6. What specific instances or behaviors demonstrated incompatibility in your connection? (e.g., “They valued different things in a partner,” “Our goals didn’t align.”)

7. How can you focus on the mismatch between your needs and theirs rather than taking it personally? (e.g., “By reminding myself that compatibility is mutual,” “By reflecting on our differences objectively.”)

Accepting Your Emotions Without Judgment

1. What emotions are you currently experiencing as you think about your unrequited love? (e.g., sadness, anger, jealousy, longing, confusion, relief.)

2. How do these emotions feel in your body? (e.g., heaviness in the chest, a lump in the throat, restlessness, tightness in the stomach.)

3. What thoughts accompany these emotions? (e.g., “I wasn’t good enough,” “Why didn’t they choose me?” “I’ll never feel this way about anyone else.”)

4. What emotions have you been avoiding or suppressing about this experience? (e.g., shame, guilt, resentment, hope.)

5. How can you remind yourself that these emotions are valid and natural? (e.g., “It’s okay to feel hurt when your feelings aren’t reciprocated,” “My emotions are part of being human.”)

6. What compassionate statement can you tell yourself about feeling these emotions? (e.g., “It’s okay to feel this way; I’m processing something difficult,” “These emotions don’t define me—they are temporary.”)

7. What thoughts or beliefs arise when you try to sit with uncomfortable emotions? (e.g., “This will never go away,” “I can’t handle this.”)

8. How can you challenge these thoughts with kindness and curiosity? (e.g., “Emotions are temporary,” “I’ve handled hard feelings before, and I can do it again.”)

9. What are some ways you’ve successfully processed emotions in the past? (e.g., journaling, talking to a friend, engaging in creative activities.)

10. What new tools or practices can you explore to process emotions healthily? The following are some suggestions. Check off the ones that may be helpful or add more to the list:

- ☐ **Exercise Regularly:** Engage in activities like running, swimming, or dancing to release pent-up energy.

- **Draw or Paint:** Express emotions visually through art.
- **Write Poetry or Stories:** Use writing to explore and process your inner world.
- **Visualization:** Imagine a safe, calming place to soothe your emotions.
- **Make a Comfort Kit:** Include items that help you self-soothe during emotional highs.
- **Decatastrophizing:** Ask yourself, "What's the worst that could happen? How likely is it? How would I cope?"
- **Weighted Objects:** Use a weighted blanket or lap pad to soothe the nervous system during emotional overwhelm.
- **Engage in a Hobby:** Dedicate time to activities you enjoy, like crafting, gardening, or reading.
- **Volunteer:** Helping others can give you a sense of purpose and shift focus.
- _____
- _____

Empty Chair Technique for Unrequited Love

The Empty Chair Technique is a therapeutic exercise where individuals role-play a dialogue with an absent person, part of themselves, or an emotion by imagining it seated in an empty chair.

1. Place two chairs facing each other. One represents you, and the other represents the person you have unrequited feelings for.

2. Define the purpose of the exercise. For unrequited love, this might include:

- Expressing unspoken emotions.
- Gaining closure.
- Understanding and releasing unrealistic expectations.

3. Imagine the person sitting in the opposite chair. Picture them as vividly as possible, including their posture, expressions, and typical demeanor.

4. Begin by addressing the person directly, as if they were present. Express your thoughts and emotions, such as:

- “I feel hurt because you didn’t return my feelings.”
- “I thought we could be something special, and it’s hard to let that dream go.”
- “I need to understand why I’m holding onto hope.”

5. Move to the other chair and take on the role of the person. Respond to yourself as if you were them. Consider their point of view or possible reasons for their actions. For example:

- “I value you as a person, but I don’t feel the same way romantically.”
- “I didn’t mean to lead you on, but I didn’t know how to express my boundaries clearly.”

6. Switch back to your original chair and reflect on their imagined response. Acknowledge how it makes you feel and what you want to do with those feelings.

7. Journal or meditate on what you’ve learned during the exercise.

Writing a Letter You'll Never Send

This exercise helps you express and process your emotions about unrequited love in a safe, cathartic way. Writing a letter you'll never send allows you to articulate feelings you may not be able to share directly with the other person, giving you emotional clarity and a sense of closure.

Remind yourself that this letter is for your healing, not for confrontation or reconciliation.

Open up about your unrequited love, including your hopes, disappointments, and pain.

Be specific about what you wanted from the relationship and why it mattered to you.

If applicable, express forgiveness—for yourself and the other person.

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Practicing Self-Compassion Daily

1. What triggers your feelings of overwhelm in this situation?

(e.g., “Thinking about them being with someone else,” “Remembering moments we shared,” “Feeling stuck in my emotions.”)

2. What self-critical thoughts arise when you feel overwhelmed, and how can you challenge them? (e.g., “I’m too sensitive” → “It’s okay to feel this way; emotions are part of healing.”)

3. What compassionate words can you offer yourself when you feel overwhelmed? (e.g., “Take it one moment at a time,” “It’s okay to pause and breathe,” “You’re doing your best.”)

4. What daily habits can you build to prevent or reduce emotional overwhelm? (e.g., setting aside time for self-care, journaling.)

Dealing with Rumination and Overthinking

1. What thoughts do you find yourself repeatedly going over about this person or situation? (e.g., “What could I have done differently? ”)

2. What habits or routines unintentionally encourage rumination? (e.g., scrolling through their social media, replaying conversations in your head, avoiding social interactions.)

3. What evidence do you have to challenge the negative thoughts you’re ruminating on? (e.g., “There’s nothing I could’ve done to change their mind.”)

4. What would you say to a friend who was stuck in similar repetitive thoughts? (e.g., “You can’t change the past,” “Be kind to yourself—it’s not your fault.”)

5. What activities or distractions help you break the cycle of overthinking?
(e.g., going for a walk, watching a favorite show, working on a hobby.)

6. What lessons can you take from this experience instead of focusing on what went wrong? (e.g., “I’ve learned more about what I need in a relationship,” “I’m stronger than I thought.”)

7. How can you turn your focus from analyzing the past to creating a better future? (e.g., setting new personal goals, working on self-improvement, building new relationships.)

8. What boundaries can you set with yourself or others to limit triggers for overthinking? (e.g., avoiding certain social media accounts, limiting conversations about the past.)

Setting Boundaries with the Object of Your Affection

1. How has your current relationship or interaction with this person affected your emotions? (e.g., “I feel drained after seeing them,” “It keeps me stuck in false hope,” “It’s hard to focus on myself.”)

2. What fears or concerns arise when you think about setting boundaries? (e.g., “They might be upset,” “It could create distance,” “I worry they’ll think I don’t care.”)

3. What interactions with this person cause you the most emotional distress? (e.g., “Hearing about their relationships,” “Spending too much time hoping for more,” “Feeling like I’m always the one reaching out.”)

4. What actions or topics would you like to avoid to protect your emotional well-being? (e.g., “Talking about their romantic life,” “Hanging out in ways that feel like a date,” “Seeing them too frequently.”)

5. What boundary is your top priority to establish with this person?
(e.g., “Limiting one-on-one time,” “Not responding to late-night messages,”
“Avoiding social media interactions.”)

6. How can you handle potential pushback or misunderstandings when
setting boundaries? (e.g., “I’ll calmly restate my needs,” “I’ll remind myself
that their reaction doesn’t define the validity of my boundaries.”)

Rebuilding Your Identity Outside the Relationship

1. What aspects of yourself have you prioritized less because of your focus on this relationship or attachment? (e.g., hobbies, career goals, friendships, personal growth.)

2. What would you like to change about the way you see yourself moving forward? (e.g., “I want to feel confident on my own,” “I want to reconnect with the parts of myself I’ve neglected.”)

3. What are three qualities you value most about yourself? (e.g., kindness, creativity, resilience.)

4. What are your biggest passions or interests, and how much time have you dedicated to them recently? (e.g., art, fitness, learning new skills, spending time with friends.)

5. What goals or dreams did you have before this relationship or attachment? (e.g., pursuing a career, traveling, learning a new language, starting a business.)

6. What new skills or hobbies would you like to explore to expand your identity? (e.g., learning to play an instrument, trying a new sport, volunteering for a cause you care about.)

7. What steps can you take to strengthen your relationships with people who support you? (e.g., scheduling regular meetups, having deeper conversations, showing appreciation for their presence.)

8. What short-term goals can you set to focus on your personal growth? (e.g., completing a course, starting a fitness routine, reading more books.)

Identifying and Rewriting Limiting Beliefs

1. What negative thoughts about yourself have surfaced since experiencing unrequited love? (e.g., “I’m not attractive enough,” “I’m not worthy of love.”)

2. How have these beliefs influenced your behavior or feelings? (e.g., “I avoid meeting new people,” “I constantly doubt myself.”)

3. What evidence supports these beliefs, and is it based on fact or perception? (e.g., “They didn’t choose me, so I assume I’m not good enough” → “This is just one person’s choice, not a reflection of my worth.”)

4. What evidence contradicts each limiting belief? (e.g., “I think I’m not lovable, but I have friends and family who love me,” “I assume I’m not good enough, but I’ve achieved meaningful goals.”)

5. What past experiences show that these beliefs aren’t entirely true? (e.g., “I’ve been successful in other areas of my life,” “I’ve been appreciated and valued by others before.”)

6. How would someone who loves and supports you challenge these beliefs?
(e.g., “They’d remind me of my strengths and accomplishments.”)

7. What empowering beliefs can you replace each limiting belief with?

Examples:

- Limiting belief: “I’ll never be loved.”
- Empowering belief: “Love is possible, and I am worthy of it.”

8. What evidence can you collect to reinforce your new beliefs?
(e.g., “I’ll note times when I feel valued or appreciated,” “I’ll reflect on compliments or achievements.”)

9. What actions can you take to support your new empowering beliefs?
(e.g., setting boundaries, pursuing hobbies, expressing your feelings confidently.)

Forgiving Yourself

1. What emotions come up when you think about staying in the situation too long? (e.g., guilt, regret, sadness, anger at yourself.)

2. What self-critical thoughts arise when you reflect on this experience? (e.g., “I should have known better,” “I wasted so much time.”)

3. What would you tell a friend who was feeling the same guilt or regret? (e.g., “You did the best you could with the knowledge you had,” “You’re not defined by one decision.”)

4. What needs or hopes kept you in the situation for as long as you stayed? (e.g., “I hoped they would love me back,” “I felt that leaving would be too painful.”)

5. What fears or insecurities made it difficult to walk away sooner? (e.g., “I was afraid of being alone,” “I doubted my ability to move on.”)

6. How can you show compassion to the version of yourself that chose to stay? (e.g., “They were trying their best to navigate a difficult situation,” “They were acting out of love and hope.”)

7. What lessons have you learned about yourself from this experience? (e.g., “I’m more resilient than I thought,” “I’ve learned to prioritize my own needs.”)

8. What small acts of kindness can you do for yourself to show self-compassion? (e.g., taking breaks when needed, speaking kindly to yourself, engaging in activities you enjoy.)

9. What specific steps can you take to let go of guilt and embrace forgiveness? (e.g., writing a forgiveness letter to yourself, focusing on what you’ve learned, practicing gratitude.)

Releasing Blame and Resentment

1. Who or what do you blame for your experience of unrequited love?
(e.g., “I blame the other person for leading me on,” “I blame myself for staying too long.”)

2. What specific actions or events have fueled your feelings of resentment?
(e.g., “They didn’t communicate their feelings clearly,” “I ignored the red flags.”)

3. What unmet expectations or unfulfilled desires are at the root of your resentment? (e.g., “I expected them to feel the same,” “I wanted the relationship to progress differently.”)

4. What evidence challenges the validity of your blame and resentment?
(e.g., “They never promised anything to me,” “I did the best I could with what I knew at the time.”)

5. How can you reframe the situation to focus on understanding rather than blame? (e.g., “They had their own limitations and struggles,” “I stayed because I hoped for the best.”)

6. What role did circumstances beyond anyone’s control play in the outcome? (e.g., “We weren’t compatible in the long run,” “They couldn’t offer the emotional connection I needed.”)

7. How can you separate your worth from the actions or feelings of the other person? (e.g., “Their feelings don’t define my value,” “I am deserving of love, regardless of this experience.”)

8. How can you begin to forgive the other person for their role in the situation? (e.g., “I’ll remind myself that they acted based on their own limitations,” “I’ll focus on the good that came from this experience.”)

9. What boundaries can you set to protect yourself from similar situations? (e.g., “I’ll walk away when I feel unvalued,” “I’ll prioritize mutual effort in relationships.”)

Reflecting on Lessons Learned

1. What was the most challenging part of experiencing unrequited love?
(e.g., “Feeling rejected,” “Letting go of the future I imagined,” “Accepting they didn’t feel the same way.”)

2. What aspects of this relationship or connection are you most grateful for?
(e.g., “It taught me to open up,” “I learned what I value in a partner.”)

3. What insecurities or fears might have been amplified by this experience?
(e.g., “Fear of being alone,” “Insecurity about being good enough for someone.”)

4. What role did boundaries play in this experience, and what did you learn about setting them? (e.g., “I learned I need to set limits on how much I give without receiving,” “I realized I didn’t prioritize my emotional well-being.”)

5. How has this experience changed your understanding of love and relationships? (e.g., “Love isn’t just about feelings; it’s about mutual respect and commitment,” “I can’t make someone love me, and that’s okay.”)

6. What beliefs or hopes were hardest to let go of in this experience? (e.g., “That they would eventually love me back,” “That they were the only person for me.”)

7. What lingering pain or resentment might you still need to process? (e.g., “I feel upset they didn’t see my value,” “I regret holding on for so long.”)

8. What would closure look like for you in this situation? (e.g., “Accepting their feelings,” “Finding peace with what happened.”)

2026 Clinical Alignment

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

Classification status

- DSM-5-TR: No diagnosis under this title · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- ICD-11 CDDR: · No diagnosis is established by the title.
- 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, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 21, 24, 28, 31, 33. The statements below supersede incompatible diagnostic, scoring, safety, or resource wording on those pages.

Diagnostic and differential limits

- Assess duration, distress/functional impairment, cultural and medical context, substance/medication effects, and relevant differential diagnoses before assigning any diagnosis.

Document-specific corrections

- Pages [2, 24] · Frame ·Healing from Unrequited Love· using the DSM/ICD status below; add duration, impairment, exclusions, and differentials without reproducing criteria. The title alone must never be treated as a diagnosis.
- Pages [1, 2, 31] · Treat the Healing from Unrequited Love ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly.
- Pages [1, 2, 3, 15, 18, 19, 21] · Avoid pathologizing expected grief or imposing forgiveness, closure, exposure, or relationship contact. Escalate for suicide risk, severe functional decline, trauma symptoms, coercion, or persistent disabling grief requiring diagnostic assessment. Apply this specifically to the workbook-s Exploring Why You Fell for This Person, Defining What Love Means to You, Analyzing the Unrealistic Expectations You May Have Had, Differentiating Between Rejection and Incompatibility sections.
- Pages [1, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 28, 33] · Review all medical assertions in Healing from Unrequited Love with a qualified medical professional; distinguish psychoeducation from individualized advice and add referral thresholds, contraindications, and medication/procedure cautions appropriate to this population.

Measures, scoring, and permissions

- Treat the Healing from Unrequited Love ratings/checklists as author-created reflection tools only. Remove unsupported severity bands, cutoffs, totals, or language suggesting diagnostic validity; label response anchors and recall period explicitly. custom/unvalidated unless evidence is supplied confirm no third-party item wording was adapted

Intervention scope and contraindications

- Avoid pathologizing expected grief or imposing forgiveness, closure, exposure, or relationship contact. Escalate for suicide risk, severe functional decline, trauma symptoms, coercion, or persistent disabling grief requiring diagnostic assessment.

Crisis and current resources

- For 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. Outside the U.S., use verified local emergency and crisis services. A workbook is not a crisis service or safety plan.

Authoritative references

- <https://www.psychiatry.org/psychiatrists/practice/dsm/updates-to-dsm/updates-to-dsm-5-tr-criteria-text>
- <https://icd.who.int/browse/2026-01/mms/en>
- <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240077263>
- <https://988lifeline.org/>