

# The 4 Pillars of Recovery

These are the key areas of your life that you'll need to work on in the recovery process after narcissistic abuse. While there are also other areas of your life to strengthen, I call these the pillars because they sustain your recovery. These are the qualities that hold you up through the ups and downs of the process. There will inevitably be ups and downs. That's normal and okay. Keep working on strengthening these 4 areas of your life so you never have to hit rock bottom again.

## 1. Self-worth

Self-worth is about respecting and knowing your value.

Your self-worth is a measure of your value. You are the only one who determines this value and when you have self-worth you don't allow yourself to be defined by outside forces. When you have self-worth, you know what you're worth and you don't allow people in your life who treat you less than that. You define and protect your worth with your standards and boundaries.

**The opposite of self-worth will show up in shame and unworthiness.**

This deep sense of shame and unworthiness is a huge theme after abuse. You'll hear thoughts that tell you some version of, 'I'm not good enough' because that's what the abuser/s taught you to believe.

A lack of self-worth will show up in behaviors like value-compromising. That's when you compromise your value in order to stay in connection with someone. You'd rather have the connection with a toxic person who's actually hurting you, than to risk being alone. When you abandon yourself for someone else, this inevitably lowers your self-worth because you're showing yourself that you don't matter.

A lack of self-worth will show up when you're ashamed to speak up for yourself, to speak out about the trauma and abuse that you went through, or even to just stand up for yourself in the little things like random encounters with strangers.

Maybe you're in the grocery store and someone cuts in front of you but you don't speak up. You just let the person go ahead and then you feel like a victim. Inside you talk down to yourself about how weak and pathetic you are, you tell yourself the story of how everyone treats you like you don't exist or you don't matter so you must not be worthy.

Self-worth is about speaking up for your little rights too. It's about knowing your worth as a human being. In the grocery line you can say something like, "Hi (with a smile, cheerful yet assertive), there's a line here and your spot is right behind me."

A lack of self-worth also shows up in hiding. Maybe you notice that you hide away from life. You just don't really put yourself out there. You hide away at home instead of going after your dreams. You don't want to get out there again because you don't feel worthy of whatever it is that you really want. You feel like you aren't good enough for it so you don't even try.

A lack of self-worth is what's stopping you from meeting your basic self-care needs and hygiene when you're in the early stages of healing.

People would often tell me things like, "I just don't know why I can't even get up and brush my teeth today. I don't know why I can't even get in the shower." That's about shame. Usually that realization causes a person to start crying because they know how true it is. They know how deeply that sense of shame is paralyzing them at that point in their life such that they can't even meet their basic needs.

**The practice for rebuilding your self-worth is about honoring and protecting your values.**

To grow your self-worth, you'll need to identify and live by your values. First, you've got to know what your values are in order to live by them. Take a clear look at your values so you can start setting standards and boundaries to protect those values. As you put those new standards and boundaries into place, that will massively raise your self-worth.

We protect what is valuable. As long as you have standards and boundaries set up in advance then it's a lot easier to count on yourself to enforce those boundaries when you're pushed. As you start to protect your values more, you'll notice how you're feeling more worthy. Once that value protection system is set up, it's going to be easier to have the courage to go after what you want in life and to say no to what's not okay for you.

Your self-worth is naturally restored when you take action in 100% integrity. Integrity is where your values are in alignment with your actions. This means you take action to set and enforce your boundaries. When you are in 100% integrity with yourself, you're going to know that you are worthy and enough, and if anyone doesn't see your worth, that's their loss.

In the course [Raising Your Self-Worth](#), you'll learn how to uplevel and protect your value after abuse. Learn more about it when you [click here](#)!

## 2. Self-trust

Self-trust is about knowing yourself and believing in yourself.

**The opposite of self-trust shows up as self-doubt and fear.**

This can be the kind of fear that plagues you from taking action, from taking risks in life, or even from connecting with other people because you've been through so many horrible experiences and you're afraid those will repeat again. The doubts and fears also show up as indecision, procrastination and second-guessing yourself.

Indecision could be noticeable in the little things but it can also be really paralyzing for the big things. Either way, indecision will lead to procrastination and that will end up robbing you from enjoying your life as well as achieving your goals and dreams.

Indecision will keep you stuck in life. It will cause analysis paralysis and you'll be plagued with fear-based, negative and ruminating thoughts about making the wrong decision or not being able to achieve what you really want in life. When you don't have self-trust, you'll notice a sense of feeling stuck because you don't know what to do and you don't trust yourself enough to commit to something or to go all in toward your goals and dreams, even when opportunities show up.

A lack of self-trust is going to show up in your insecurities about who you are and what you're capable of. Without self-trust, you don't believe that you can figure things out, whatever life throws at you.

Abuse destroys trust: trust in yourself, because how do you trust yourself again after not seeing it sooner?... trust in others, because how can you trust others again after the way the person/people treated you?... and trust in the universe/god/life, because how can you trust in a higher power again after what happened to you and now that you know evil really does exist?

The collapse of trust is one of the key wounds of PTSD. When we are talking about relational trauma (the kind of trauma caused by a relationship with another person, trauma that went on for months or years, even decades), we are talking about even more layers to the wounding of trust. If you were raised by a narcissist or other abuser, you might not even remember a time in your life when you actually trusted yourself. Abusers don't like their targets to have self-trust because then their favorite trick called gaslighting doesn't work. As long as the abuser keeps you in confusion, doubt and fearing that you're going crazy through the gaslighting, they can maintain control over the narrative of reality and keep you under their thumb.

All trust starts with self-trust. In order to trust others again, you first need to work on trusting yourself because when you trust yourself, you know who you can trust outside of yourself. In order to trust in life again, you need to work on trusting yourself because when you believe in yourself, you are able to believe in life again. The restoring of trust is a process that takes time and like everything else in the recovery after narcissistic abuse, it doesn't happen overnight. Be patient with yourself in the process and take moments to measure and celebrate your growth and successes along the way.

**The practice for restoring self-trust is to shift into faith and act on your intuition.**

It's important to connect to your intuition daily, all day long checking in: How do I feel right now? How do I feel about that person? What do I feel about that idea? How does this environment feel? Really let the feeling come to focus in your body, noticing where it is in your body and what it feels like.

One of the easiest ways to connect to your intuition is through the body, at a gut level. That's more tangible because it's more physical than some of the more subtle forms of intuition, which are just as valid, though perhaps more difficult to access and believe in when you're just starting to restore your self-trust. The idea of intuition might sound strange because you can't see it, you can't touch it, you can't prove it other than you feel it. Your body will send you gut feeling intuitions and then it's up to you to act on that intuition.

I often hear people say that something is wrong with their intuition. I encourage you to shift your perspective of that and recognize that nothing is wrong with your intuition. Your intuition is your birthright. It's always there and it's always working. It's an innate part of you. What you need to work on is your relationship with your intuition.

Your intuition is always trying to guide you but after you stuff it down over and over again over time, that inner voice of knowing gets a lot softer. You eventually stop hearing it or rarely hear it, but it never ceases to exist. It wasn't your fault, you were groomed to do that, and you're the only one who can do something about it now?

Why do we stuff down the intuition? We often stuff it down when we don't want to hear the answer. Sometimes we try to force something... a relationship, a situation, something that really isn't in our best interest and the intuition of course lets us know that it's not. So when we don't want to hear that, we silence the inner voice. We turn away from the feeling. We shun our best friend who is always looking out for us!

In the course, [Restoring Self-Trust](#), you'll learn how to heal the wounding of trust after abuse. Learn more about it when you [click here](#)!

### 3. Self-esteem

Your self-esteem is about self-perception, how you see yourself. It's also about the effect that you have on the world around you and how you feel about that.

Your self-esteem grows when you support yourself. It's the natural result of taking control of yourself, your mind, your body, and your behaviors in a positive way in order to have a positive impact on your life and the world around you.

Are you having a positive effect in the world around you, in other words, are you receiving positive feedback from your actions or is it negative?

Do you feel like you don't have an effect on the world around you or that when you do try to do things, it just doesn't go well?

**The opposite of self-esteem will show up as self-sabotage and self-destruction.**

You might notice that you do things to sabotage your own success, your happiness, or even opportunities that you have. This is likely because an abuser taught you how to sabotage yourself through their attempts to sabotage you. This is how you develop self-sabotaging attitudes and defense mechanisms. This is usually happening on a subconscious level without your conscious awareness that you are your worst enemy.

A lack of self-esteem also shows up with giving up. This is a self-sabotage behavior. You might notice that you just give up on yourself, you give up on your hopes and dreams for the future. Maybe you even give up right at the last moment when you're about to take steps forward. Low self-esteem leads you to give up on bringing 100% of the best of you in every moment because deep down you're afraid that you aren't capable of doing it.

You might notice that sometimes, you just don't try. You might give up before you even start. That's the learned helplessness where you sit around complaining and sulking or having a pity party for yourself instead of taking action because you feel like you're going to fail. This belief system was installed in your OS by the narcissist when they provoked you to keep trying to fix the unfixable. You didn't know that trying to have some kind of positive effect on that person will never work. It wasn't your fault but you came to believe that it was through the grooming process. The abuser wanted you to feel helpless and incapable so you would stay and never try to leave. They also didn't want you to shine and be successful because that would threaten their own deep insecurities and jealousies. The abuse programming taught your subconscious to internalize a false story that made you believe nothing you do ever works out so why even bother trying anymore.



Self-destruction is when you're talking horribly to yourself or when you're doing things that aren't good for you because deep down you have some self-hatred. This is a result of internalizing the abuser's hatred of you.

We develop coping mechanisms in childhood that protect us from fear, uncertainty, pain and overwhelming anxiety so we can survive stressful, difficult or negative situations. These coping skills are for the most part unconscious reactions to unpleasant experiences or memories of past experiences that get triggered in present day. Our defense mechanisms are often the self-destructive habits that we use to sabotage ourselves.

Some of our defense mechanisms have short-term advantages but often cause long-term problems in managing our self-esteem, relationships and success in life in general. This affects our ability to thrive because we keep repeating the same dysfunctional patterns that we learned in the past, wondering how we ended up sabotaging ourselves yet again.

The defense mechanisms, or coping mechanisms, that we use are like forms of self-protection for when we feel threatened or overwhelmed. They all involve some level of denial, avoidance or distortion of the uncomfortable aspects of reality or stressful feelings. When you have been in an abusive relationship, and even more so when you were raised in that kind of environment, you likely developed primitive defense mechanisms that served you in a survival situation but are now holding you back from having healthy self-esteem and the life that you want.

**The practice for restoring self-esteem is to upgrade your defense mechanisms and reprogram your limiting beliefs.**

In order to thrive, we need to free ourselves from the old defense mechanisms and limiting beliefs holding us back. We can upgrade them into more mature ways of dealing with difficult situations, stress and discomfort. Life inevitably comes with challenges. We can learn how to become more prepared to deal with those in more constructive ways.

In the course, [Ending Self-Sabotage](#), you'll learn about the defense mechanisms that are sabotaging your life and how to upgrade them into healthy coping strategies that increase your self-esteem and help you thrive in life. Learn more when you [click here](#)!

In the course, [Liberate Yourself from Limiting Beliefs](#), you'll learn how to reprogram your mind like a mental ninja so you can align your beliefs with the life you want and start getting positive results. Learn more when you [click here](#)!

## 4. Self-love

Self-love is about caring and nurturing yourself. It's about prioritizing your self-care, treating yourself well, meeting your needs and accepting yourself.

**The opposite of self-love is self-judgment and self-abandonment.**

When you don't love yourself, you'll notice how you do a lot of people-pleasing behaviors. You'll sacrifice your own needs for someone else. You'll abandon yourself in order to stay in connection with others or because you want them to like you.

You'll notice your lack of self-love through your self-talk, your Inner Dialogue. You'll notice that you're constantly putting yourself down. You're abusing yourself and you probably don't even realize it. Maybe you do something and it doesn't go well so your automatic reaction is your inner voice saying, 'idiot.' Or maybe you hear yourself saying things to yourself all day like, "You're ugly, you're old, you're..." Or maybe it sounds like, 'you're never gonna find true love or have a sense of family.'

If you look at the bigger picture, when you lack self-love, you'll notice that you're treating yourself poorly, not just in the way you talk to yourself, but in your whole relationship with yourself.

When you lack self-love, you don't take care of yourself in a way that would honor yourself. You sacrifice yourself for others. You neglect yourself by denying yourself what you enjoy or even dismissing your needs. Maybe you notice that you don't eat when you're hungry or maybe you eat too much even when you're not hungry because you're trying to stuff your feelings. Maybe you mask your feelings with other addictions and distractions. Maybe you aren't even aware what your feelings and needs are because the abuser taught you that you didn't have a right to have feelings and needs.

Maybe you push yourself too hard, like when you're tired and you need to rest but instead you force yourself to keep going, to get something done that really doesn't need to get done right at that moment. Maybe you hold yourself to impossible standards of perfection. Or maybe you're always compromising what you want to do in favor of what somebody else wants to do, when it really doesn't feel good to you and then you have to deal with the emotional hangover later.

We can make compromises on things that aren't a big deal. But when it is a big deal, when you're compromising your integrity, safety, comfort, health, peace, sanity or wellbeing, then you have to choose you otherwise you'll end up sacrificing your self-love in the process.

After childhood abuse and neglect, our Inner Child feels abandoned, lonely and rejected. This carries through into adulthood when we feel unheard, unseen, and unworthy. When we stop abandoning ourselves, we stop feeling attracted to people who abandon us.

Rebuilding self-love involves rescuing our abandoned Inner Child. When we start reparenting our lost and lonely inner girl or boy, we create a healthy new dynamic of self-reliance, self-care and self-love. When we have self-love, we aren't seeking anything desperately and we can easily recognize what's right for ourselves and what's not. With self-love as the foundation, we have the confidence that we will be able to meet our own needs and feel empowered in the process. Self-love is our primary immunity to abuse.

**The practice to rebuild your self-love comes through radical self-care on the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual levels of your health and well-being.**

If you want to rebuild your self-love, you'll need to work on nurturing what you can change about yourself and focus on self-acceptance for what you can't change.

Work on what you can change in your life. If you want to rescue your Inner Child, lose weight or get your hair back in good condition after all the negative effects of the stress from the abuse, you can work on those things. Get some YouTube tutorials, hire coaches or trainers, read some books, listen to some podcasts, or take some courses. Make a plan of action with your goals in mind and start taking little steps in that direction. Be patient with yourself and remember that lasting changes don't happen overnight. They do happen through consistent work over time. Keep actively taking steps forward.

For the things that you can't change, such as your height, scars or other unchangeable characteristics, that's where you'll need to work on self-acceptance. Self-acceptance is about learning to love yourself, both what you were born with as well as what happened to you and is now part of you. Stop telling your body such awful things that if someone else said such things to you, you would be horrified. Recognize when you have internalized the voice of the abuser. Stop abusing yourself like the abuser talked to you because you're programming your subconscious to tolerate the same treatment from others. Start talking to yourself in loving ways that you would want someone else to talk to you, as you would talk to your best friend.

When you love yourself, you're showing others how to love you. Your growing self-love changes your relationship with yourself as well as your relationships with others.

In the [Self-Care Mastery Course](#), you'll learn how to master the 5 domains of self-care so you can end your people-pleasing and self-abandonment habits. Learn more when you [click here!](#)