

Who Is the Inner Teenager

While the inner child only represents our core needs and emotions, the inner teenager is the part of your personality responsible for acting on those needs and emotions.

The inner teenager is typically immature, rebellious, moody, awkward, reacting without thinking, etc.

Without the interference of the inner adult in choice-making, we use the drive of the inner teenager in a self-defeating way.

The inner teenager is responsible for attracting the wrong people, maxing out your credit card, procrastinating, emotional eating, addictions, and other self-sabotaging behaviors.

By attributing the self-sabotaging behavior to something outside of the Self— namely, the inner teenager, you can direct your fix-it energy toward the inner teenager and spare the inner child from the toxic subtext.

Notes

Assessing The Inner Teenager

Read through the list of self-sabotaging behaviors and check off the ones you relate to:

- Overspending
- Addictions
- Binge eating
- Overreacting when you feel even slightly rejected, dismissed, or abandoned
- Playing the victim
- Playing the martyr
- Holding onto resentments
- Blaming others
- Procrastination and using distractions
- Using defense mechanisms, like projection, denial, narcissism, perfectionism, people-pleasing, control, avoidance and withdrawal, etc.

If so, your inner teenager might be at the wheel, preventing your from taking mature, empowered action.

Notes

Inner Teenager Healing Exercises

#1. Find Inner Supporters

Begin by finding your own inner supporters on your healing journey.

It might be a single person, or a group of people. They might be supportive people living with you or people who passed away.

They might even be imaginary characters, such as a fairy godmother or a superhero.

You might use different supporters, depending on the situation.

Imagine these supporters accompanying you and offering support and encouragement.

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#2. Find Your Inner Child: Uncover Your Wounded Child's Beliefs

1. Think of a least one experience from your childhood with one of your parents where you felt hurt or neglected.

2. Brainstorm keywords based on this experience. How did your parents treat you?

The following are some examples:

Mean, cold, indifferent, domineering, overprotective, very strict, inconsistent, unpredictable, self-centered, moody, pretentious, arrogant, not very empathetic, loud, aggressive, sadistic.

3. Consider some of the things your parents would usually say, like “It’s your fault I’m so overwhelmed,” or, “Just wait till Dad gets home,” or, “Why can’t you be like your cousin Jack,” or, “You’ll never amount to anything.”

4. Consider the relationship your parents had and what the more difficult aspects of their relationship were, like “They fought a lot,” or, “Mom was weak, and Dad made every major decision by himself.”

5. Once finished, try to establish contact with your wounded child by examining what negative beliefs your parents’ behaviors stir up in you.

A parent who acts overwhelmed may give the child the feeling that they’re a burden.

To uncover your negative beliefs you can use the following formula:

“I am _____” or “I’m not _____,”

“I can _____” or “I can’t _____,”

“I’m allowed to _____” or “I’m not allowed to _____.”

What follows are some examples of beliefs:

- I’m worthless
- I’m not important
- I’m unwanted
- I’m unlovable
- I’m inadequate
- I’m always to blame
- I’m powerless
- I’m so small

- I'm so dumb
- I can't do anything
- I'm not allowed to feel
- I'm a burden
- I'm inferior
- I need to look after you
- I'm not allowed to defend myself
- I have to do everything right
- I can't show any weakness

#3. Accept the Inner Teenager and The Wounded Inner Child

There is a psychological law that states that the more we fight against ourselves, the more suffering we experience.

But self-acceptance doesn't mean you have to like everything about yourself.

Self-acceptance means acknowledging what's there—the good and the bad, the strengths and the limitations.

It's only when you acknowledge these limitations that you can work on them if you choose to do so.

Try This

Close your eyes and try to recite your negative beliefs or it may be easier to recall an incident where your inner teenager was very reactive.

Feel what you're feeling (fear, rage, insecurity, or sorrow.)

Take a deep breath and say to yourself "Yes, that's my dear wounded inner child. You're allowed to be here, just as you are. I welcome you."

The more your wounded inner child feels seen, accepted, and understood, the quieter the inner teenager will become.

Notes

#4. Strengthen Your Adult-Self

To tame your inner teenager and heal your wounded inner child, you'll need a strong, resilient inner adult who understands that the negative beliefs are simply the result of childhood influences and who can challenge these negative beliefs.

Here is a list of arguments or facts that you can use along the way:

- No child is born bad. Children can be exhausting, but this doesn't affect their value. It is the parents' responsibility to consider whether they want to take on the stress of parenthood before deciding to become parents.
- Children are more or less powerless. If parents are overwhelmed by the task of fulfilling their children's needs, they should seek assistance.
- Children have the right to have their emotional and physical needs met and it is the parents' duty to understand their children's needs and fulfill them.
- It is the parents' responsibility to love their children and make them feel welcome and accepted. Children should not feel they have to behave in a certain way to earn that love and acceptance.

As you examine your negative beliefs, try to create a distance between the belief and yourself:

Instead of saying, “I’m afraid of being rejected,” say to yourself, “The wounded child within me is afraid of being rejected.” Notice the thought without labeling it as right or wrong, good or bad.

This will prevent you from giving yourself a false identity and convincing yourself that your thoughts or beliefs are facts.

#5. Recognize When Your Inner Teenager Is Reacting

This, in turn, will help you identify your inner child’s needs.

When does the inner teenager come out?

What types of self-sabotaging behaviors do you find yourself engaged in?

What is the inner teenager protecting me from feeling?

The messages your inner teenager gives you are valuable and worth listening to.

#6. Show Compassion to The Inner Teenager

In what ways did you not feel supported or safe as a teenager?

What self-defense behaviors did you engage in to cope with these feelings?

How is the inner teenager showing up in your life right now as an adult?

How to talk to your inner teenager?

The inner teenager is typically immature, rebellious, and moody.

This can make it challenging to access your inner teenager and to refrain from becoming critical and impatient.

Take time to appreciate how the inner teenager is trying to protect the inner child. Validate the inner teenager's experience and show him understanding and compassion

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Reassure the inner teenager that you are in control now and correct the mistaken conclusions behind the inner teenager's self-sabotaging behaviors.

Explain to the inner teenager that defense mechanisms, such as avoidance won't make the problem go away and that unlike what the inner teenager believes, as an adult, you are capable of facing whatever comes your way.

#7. Understand Your Wounded Inner Child's Perspective

Understanding your wounded inner child's perspective will help you separate your inner adult from the wounded inner child's perception, allowing you more freedom in your decisions and actions.

1. Choose a problem you're struggling with. Place two chairs facing each other. Sit down on one chair and try to channel your wounded inner child. Allow it to describe the problem and express its feelings and thoughts about this problem.
2. Then sit down on the other chair to summon your inner adult and try to analyze the problem using your own critical, rational mind.

If you have a problem saying no to someone, you may discover that the inner teenager is not trying to be polite but it's the wounded inner child's fear of rejection that's preventing you from asserting yourself.

You can do this exercise in writing, using different pens for the wounded inner child and the inner adult.

Notes

#8. Nurture Your Inner Child

To change your negative beliefs, you need to help your wounded inner child understand that these beliefs are the result of flawed programming.

To do this, your inner adult will need to adopt a very sympathetic, parental attitude. It might help to look at your childhood pictures of yourself or imagine you are speaking to a scared little kid. Imagine how you'd comfort him.

1. Explain to the wounded inner child how things were back then at home, using details from your own childhood. For example, you might say "Mom was always stressed. You tried not to be a burden on her. You thought 'I am not good enough,' 'I am a burden.'" But you could never, nor was it your responsibility to make Mom happy."

Addressing your wounded inner child, try using a child’s vocabulary, as if you’re talking to a real child. Words like “depressed” could be replaced with words like “sad,” or, “upset.”

2. Explain to the wounded inner child that none of this was its fault and things would have been so different had Mom and Dad not been so overwhelmed. You can say something like “Mom and Dad had made mistakes and had they not been so stressed, you have realized that you’re enough and loved just the way you are. It is okay if you were a burden sometimes – it’s the way children are. It’s the parents’ responsibility to take care of their children’s needs.”

#9. Allow The Inner Adult To Take Control

It is important to stop allowing the inner teenager to take control of your actions and let the inner adult take charge.

When a child is afraid to go to the doctor, the adult won't let the child cancel the appointment and will instead hold their hand and help them through the visit.

You can approach your wounded inner child in the same way: allow it to express itself, but ultimately, you're the one making the rational decisions.

Try This

When you catch yourself governed by your wounded inner child, believing everything you think and feel, try to switch back to your adult self and work on comforting the wounded inner child with soothing words and touch.

Return to your current reality, in which you are an independent adult dealing with people who are not your mom and dad.

The more you practice being attentive to yourself, the faster you'll become at catching yourself when you retreat to your inner teenager.

Notes

#10. Amplify The Positive, Bonding Moments

In the same way that you can reduce painful memories, you can also use your imagination to amplify the positive, bonding ones.

Recall memories from your childhood that were really nice, close, and loving – moments you experienced with your parents.

Allow yourself to feel that sense of connection and security.

If you can't think of positive moments you've shared with your parents, you can pick out imaginary parents.

Imagine the parents you wished you had, whether they are real people or imaginary figures. Close your eyes and visualize the child you were back then being cared for and loved.

Allow yourself to feel the happiness and security with your new parents.

#11. Discover Your Positive Beliefs

Write down positive traits they had and things they did right.

If you'd rather not include your parents because your relationship with them is or was difficult, you may skip this part of the exercise.

Try to think of positive beliefs you adopted from your parents.

You can also think of other adults in your life: a loving grandma, a kind teacher, or a neighbor who showed you understanding and support as a child.

Here's a list of some positive beliefs:

- I am welcome
- I'm allowed to be me
- I am loved
- I am valuable
- I have a right to be happy
- I'm allowed to feel
- I'm allowed to defend myself
- I'm allowed to have my own opinions
- I'm allowed to make mistakes
- I'm allowed to be a burden sometimes
- I'm allowed to set boundaries

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Once you identified a set of positive beliefs, go back to your list of negative beliefs and try to turn these into positives.

For example, the belief that “I’m a burden,” can become, “I’m allowed to be a burden sometimes.” The belief that “I’m worthless,” becomes, “I’m valuable.”

Make sure you don’t include a negative like “not,” in your positive beliefs.

This is mainly because our subconscious isn’t able to tell the difference between “I’m worthless,” and “I’m not worthless,” for example. It is hard not to think of something. When I say to you, “Please don’t think of a pink elephant,” you’ll automatically start thinking of one.

Also, make sure your positive beliefs are formulated in a reasonable way by adding words like “enough” or narrowing the belief down:

A belief like “I’m ugly,” is better turned into, “I’m attractive enough,” or, “I’m good enough.”

A belief like “I’m not important,” is better turned into, “I’m important to my partner/children.”

#12. Rewrite Old Memories

Our early childhood memories can deeply affect our lives. All it takes is a small trigger to quickly and repeatedly fall back on old patterns.

The good news is that our mind does not differentiate clearly between reality and imagination.

For instance, imagining a fearful situation, such as an upcoming interview can be as anxiety-provoking as going for the real interview.

You can use imagination to rewrite painful memories.

Try This

1. Think of an incident from your childhood that reflects the beliefs of your wounded inner child. Try to remember an incident that doesn't trigger debilitating feelings, or try not to immerse yourself fully in it.

For example, if your father abused you physically, it's enough to imagine them raising their hand, without replaying the entire scene.

2. Try to experience the memory through the eyes of the child you were at the time, rather than viewing it from the outside. Feel what the child you were felt, but don't fully immerse yourself in the feelings.

Use an anchor to help you stay present, such as your breath, or simply leave your eyes open and focus on an object in front of you while you recall the memory.

3. Imagine being rescued from that scene. Imagine a helper who shows up to intervene in the situation. It can be a real person or a fictional character.

#13. Write Your Wounded Inner Child a Letter

Imagine the child you were back then, standing in front of you, and think about all the loving things you wish to tell him or her.

You might find it helpful to look at a childhood picture of yourself.

#14. Achieve Your Goals

Using your journal, write a note to your Self.

1. Start by identifying what you want and need in your life to feel better about yourself. This might be a goal you have been trying to reach or a need you're trying to fulfill.

E.g. Making more money.

2. Next, list the things the inner teenager does that interfere with you achieving your goal.

E.g. My inner teenager interferes by:

- Procrastinating
- Overspending
- Coming home and watching TV instead of researching jobs and opportunities online
- Avoiding making phone calls to promote myself and network

3. List productive behaviors that would help you reach this goal, even if they seem to you unrealistic right now.

E.g. Things that would help me reach my goals:

- Read more about how other people make money.
- Take a small step every day toward finding a better job or venture.
- Pursue a degree or training if needed.

What Does A Secure Inner Teenager Look Like?

When the inner teenager becomes healthy and secure, his energy can manifest in beneficial ways:

- Becomes a force for justice
- Easily detects power-over and manipulation
- Becomes authentic
- Finds belonging and interconnectedness in a way that honors everyone's rights and boundaries equally
- Exudes originality and innovation
- Becomes a force that acts on one's intuition
- Enjoys life and brings spontaneity and fun

Pro Tip. Work With a Therapist

There is a lot that you can do to support your healing journey.

But healing your inner child and inner teenager alone can be an overwhelming thing to do on your own, especially when the emotional turmoil has been repressed for a long time.

Consider working with a therapist to support you on your healing journey.

To find a mental health care provider near you, call 1-800-662-HELP (4357) or you can use online therapy.

Online therapy is much affordable than in-person therapy, but can be equally effective. ([source](#))

I recommend [Online-Therapy.com](https://www.online-therapy.com) for affordable online therapy. (Disclaimer: This is an affiliate link. You get 20% off your first month using this link)