

Working With Perceptions Of Abandonment

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"I feel abandoned," is a phrase that commonly comes up in close relationships. However, "abandoned" isn't technically a feeling; it's an expression of your interpretation of what someone is doing to you, and it is a signal that important feelings and needs are up. These feelings often include: hurt, loneliness, fear, sadness, and disappointment. The needs that come up with an interpretation of abandonment are likely: connection, consideration, dependability, reassurance, and love.

If you have a history of experiencing and perceiving abandonment, close relationships may trigger the perception of threat to the needs listed above. As a baby step on the path of healing experiences of abandonment, you can begin by noticing and changing habits of abandoning yourself.

In this context, abandoning yourself means disconnecting from your feelings and needs, and then making decisions from this state of disconnect. When this behavior pattern of self-abandonment becomes chronic, feelings of depletion and depression will be frequent visitors.

Begin examining your habits of abandoning yourself by questioning your interpretations of abandonment from others. When you hear yourself saying that you are being abandoned, check in with what you are telling yourself about your own experience in the moment. Here are some examples of thoughts and beliefs that trigger self-abandonment:

- *I shouldn't be upset, it's not that big of a deal*
- *I agreed to do this so I just have to do it*
- *They will be happy if I just go along with it*
- *No one else is feeling this way, so I shouldn't*
- *I am the bigger person, I don't have to talk about my needs*
- *No one wants to hear my feelings and needs so why bother talking*

Often voices like these live in the background, guiding your decisions little by little. When this pattern of thought goes undetected, you can find yourself suddenly feeling angry and resentful and accusing someone close to you of abandoning you or not caring about what you need.

Anger, resentment, hopelessness, and collapse are all cues that reactivity regarding perceptions of abandonment might be present. Use these cues to pause and notice what you are telling yourself and whether or not your decisions in the moment are authentic. Reach out for support. Support might include: anchoring, self-empathy, journaling, or getting empathy from someone outside of the situation.*

Re-connecting with the needs that were truly alive for you when you abandoned your own experience can help dissolve feelings of reactivity and allow perspective. You are then able to make requests of yourself about what you'd like to do differently in the future to stay connected with honor for your needs when choosing whether or not to participate in something.

Certainly there are times when abandonment is truly happening; when someone agrees to be there for your needs and leaves without notice. However, what is more often likely

happening is fear that someone will turn away from you in a moment of vulnerability, or that you are turning away from your own vulnerability.

Use words like abandonment** as a cue to check in with your interpretations, feelings, and needs.

Practice

This week listen for the voices of abandonment. Each time you hear them, turn toward your experience with compassion and curiosity. You might say something like, "It's okay to feel this feeling, it's okay to have these needs." Or, "What am I telling myself right now?"