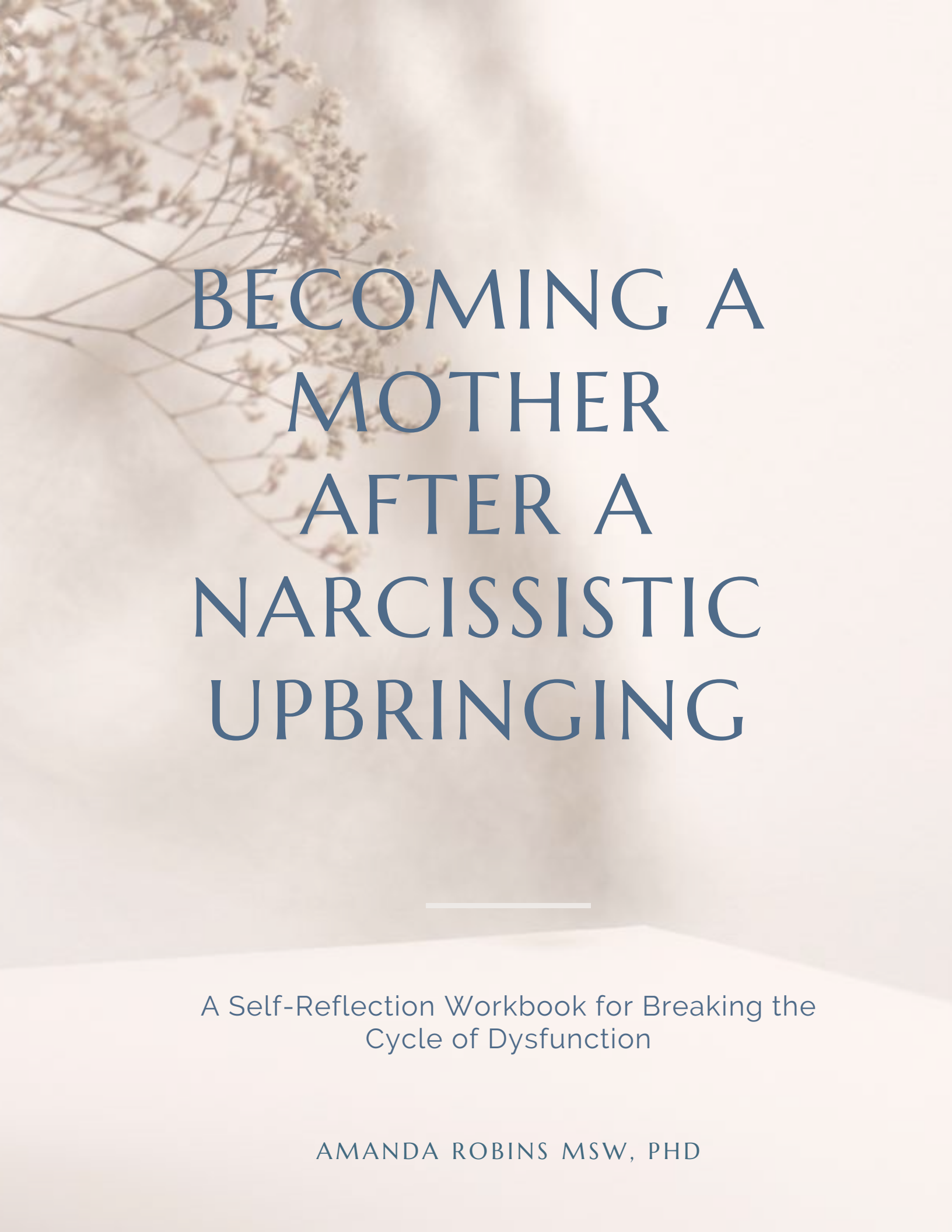




BECOMING A MOTHER AFTER A NARCISSISTIC UPBRINGING

A Self-Reflection Workbook for Breaking the
Cycle of Dysfunction

AMANDA ROBINS MSW, PHD

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Breaking the Cycle of Dysfunction

AMANDA ROBINS MSW PHD

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MEET AMANDA

AMANDA ROBINS

Psychotherapist, author and
artist



WELCOME TO MY EBOOK

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Becoming a mother is one of life's most profound and transformative experiences. But when we carry the unhealed wounds of our own childhood—especially from being raised by a narcissistic or emotionally unavailable mother—this transition can feel confusing, overwhelming, or even lonely.

This eBook is here to support you. It's a gentle workbook and reflective guide, designed to help you make sense of your experiences, reduce guilt and self-doubt, and consciously break intergenerational cycles.

Through this journey, I hope you will begin to nurture yourself the way you always deserved—and offer your child the grounded love that was missing for you.

With warmth and solidarity,

Amanda Robins, MSW, PHD

Psychotherapist | Artist | Specialist in Narcissistic Mother Wounds

EBOOK OVERVIEW

Each section includes gentle psychoeducation, space for reflection, and healing prompts.

01

Understanding the Legacy of Narcissistic Mothering

Learn how narcissistic dynamics shape our inner world. Explore the traits of narcissistic parenting and begin to name the unspoken rules and emotional imprints left behind.

02

Fears of Repeating the Cycle

Address the deep fear many daughters carry: "What if I become my mother?" Learn how this fear actually signals empathy — and how to reframe it as a strength.

03

Do the Inner Work First

Before we can parent differently, we must gently face the emotional residue of our own childhood. This chapter explores how early experiences shape our inner world and why healing the past is essential groundwork for becoming the parent we want to be.

04

The Guilt Trap

Parenting after narcissistic abuse often comes with deep, misplaced guilt. This chapter explores how daughters of narcissistic mothers internalise guilt, the difference between guilt and shame, and how to begin disentangling from inherited emotional burdens.

05

Boundaries & the Fear of Rejection

Setting boundaries can feel dangerous when love was conditional. This chapter explores why asserting your needs may trigger fear, how early experiences shaped your boundary struggles, and what healthy separation looks like in parenting.

06

The Perfect Mother Myth

Unrealistic ideals of motherhood can become internalised standards that fuel shame. This chapter looks at how the myth of the perfect mother intersects with early unmet needs and explores what it means to mother with authenticity instead of perfection.

07

Navigating Triggers and Emotional Flashbacks

Motherhood can reopen old wounds. Learn to recognise when you're triggered, soothe your nervous system, and respond to your child instead of reacting from pain.

08

Setting Boundaries with Your Own Mother

If your mother is still in your life, you may face difficult decisions. Explore how to set compassionate, firm boundaries that protect your child and support your healing.

09

Letting Go of Perfectionism in Parenting

The pressure to be a "perfect" parent is often rooted in shame. Discover how to embrace "good enough" parenting, where mistakes become moments of repair and connection.

10

Becoming the Mother You Needed

This final section integrates the work. With clarity and intention, begin to embody the safe, attuned, and loving parent your child — and your younger self — always needed.

C H A P T E R

01

UNDERSTANDING THE
LEGACY OF NARCISSISTIC
MOTHERING

Many of us were shaped by the emotional patterns of narcissistic parenting long before we understood them. This chapter invites you to gently name what happened — and begin the courageous work of breaking the cycle. Your awareness is the beginning of healing.

UNDERSTANDING THE LEGACY OF NARCISSISTIC MOTHERING

For those of us raised by narcissistic mothers, the thought of becoming a parent can stir up deep, complex emotions.

You may feel fear, confusion, or doubt about your ability to parent in a healthy way. You might worry about turning into your mother — or hurting your children in the same ways you were hurt.

In my practice, I've worked with many women who carry this fear. For some, therapy is the only safe place where they can speak it aloud. Some delay or avoid becoming parents altogether, not out of lack of desire, but from a fear of repeating the past.

Awareness is the first and most powerful step in breaking generational patterns.

It means you're already doing the work that will help you parent more consciously. You're not alone — and you're not doomed to repeat your upbringing.

What Does Narcissistic Mothering Look Like?

Before you can break a pattern, you need to recognise it.

Narcissistic mothers often:

- Use their child for emotional support or validation
- Are critical, controlling, or jealous of their daughter, especially during puberty
- Offer love conditionally — based on performance or obedience
- Struggle to see their child as separate and unique
- Enmesh their children, leading to blurred boundaries and identity confusion

These patterns can shape your sense of self in lasting ways. Many daughters grow up feeling that their worth depends on being useful, obedient, attractive, or emotionally accommodating.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- What patterns from the list above did I experience in my relationship with my mother

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- What would a nurturing, safe mother feel like?

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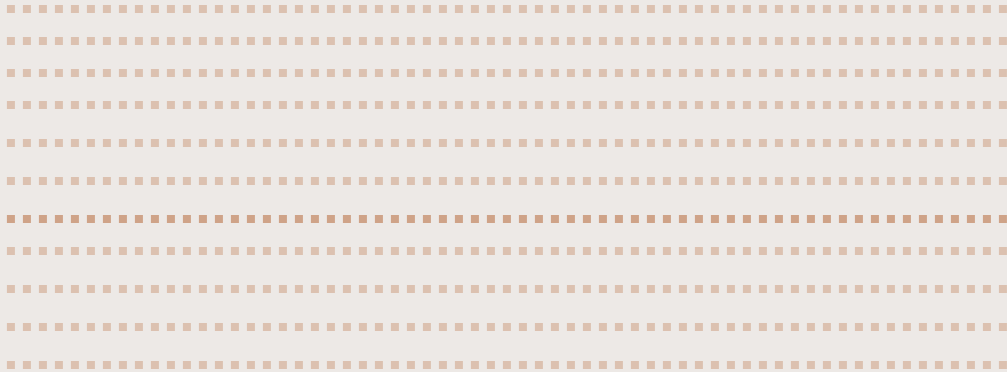
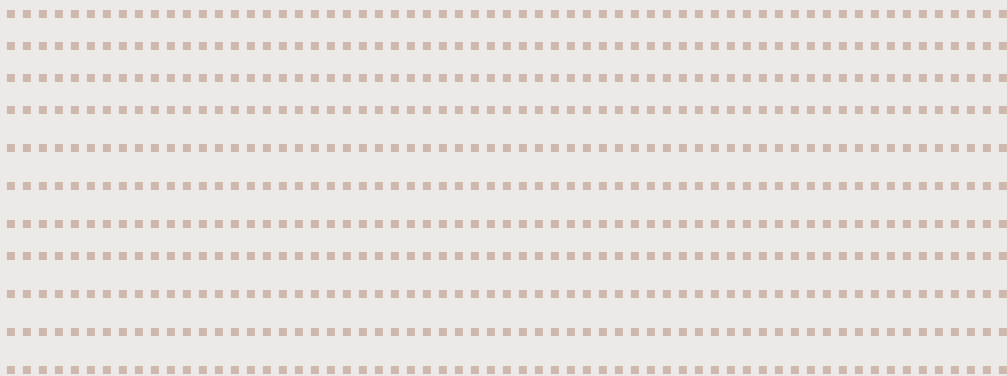
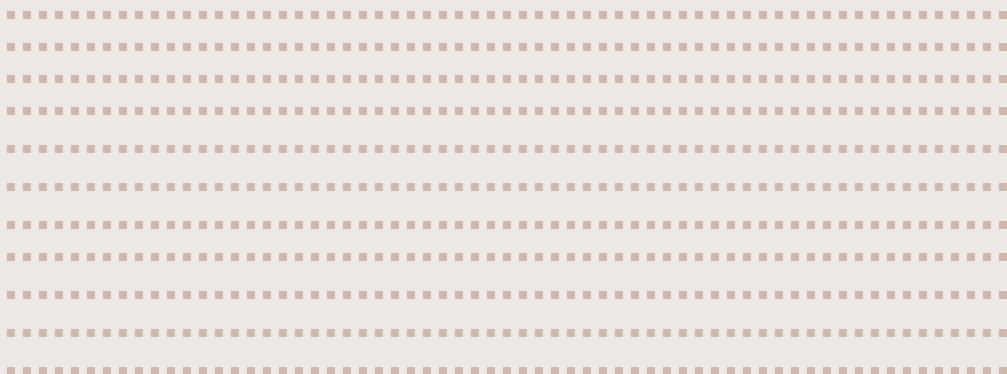
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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- What messages from my mother still echo in my head?

A series of horizontal dotted lines for journaling, consisting of 15 lines. The first 10 lines are light gray, and the next 5 lines are a slightly darker shade of gray.A series of horizontal dotted lines for journaling, consisting of 15 lines. The first 10 lines are light gray, and the next 5 lines are a slightly darker shade of gray.A series of horizontal dotted lines for journaling, consisting of 15 lines. The first 10 lines are light gray, and the next 5 lines are a slightly darker shade of gray.

WHY THERAPY CAN HELP

Many daughters of narcissistic mothers struggle with chronic low self-worth, self-doubt, or anxiety. The trauma is relational — and so is the healing.

Therapy provides a space to explore your early experience with care and clarity. You can begin to connect with the parts of yourself that were never fully seen, valued, or held. This process is sometimes called reparenting — the act of learning to meet your own emotional needs with consistency and compassion.

You can begin to hold the “unheld parts” of yourself — with gentleness and strength.

Healing doesn't mean having it all figured out before you become a parent. It means being aware, curious, and willing to grow.



C H A P T E R

02

FACING THE FEAR OF REPEATING THE PATTERN

A quiet, persistent fear many daughters of narcissistic mothers carry: What if I become like her? This chapter explores that fear and shows why it's actually a sign of self-awareness and empathy, not danger.

**Many daughters of narcissistic mothers carry a quiet but persistent fear:
What if I become like her?**

Often, my clients voice deep concerns: Am I narcissistic? Will I hurt my child the way I was hurt? This fear, though painful, is a good sign. It means you're paying attention. You care. You're not in denial — and that can make all the difference.



Why the Fear is Valid — But Not a Prophecy:

Narcissistic mothers often act without reflection. They lack empathy, rarely apologise, and usually don't consider their children's emotional needs. But your trajectory can be different — because you're asking these questions. You're already breaking the cycle.

💡 Reframe the Fear:

- Your concern shows emotional insight — something narcissistic parents lack.
- Fear of repeating the pattern means you're already interrupting it.

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HEALING DOESN'T MEAN
HAVING IT ALL FIGURED
OUT BEFORE YOU
BECOME A PARENT. IT
MEANS BEING AWARE,
CURIOUS, AND WILLING
TO GROW.

Amanda Robins



02



01

BREAKING THE CYCLE
DOESN'T ALWAYS FEEL
LIKE STRENGTH —
SOMETIMES, IT FEELS LIKE
FEAR AND GRIEF, BUT
THERE IS A WAY
THROUGH.

Amanda Robins

BREAKING THE PATTERN

**How one woman found her voice — and her strength
— as a new mother**

Case Study: Aviva

When Aviva walked into my office, she didn't seem typical of the clients I see. Intelligent, softly spoken and creative, she hid her wounds under a facade of strength and tolerance. She was undoubtedly both of those things, but she was also intensely vulnerable and wounded.

Aviva's mother was narcissistic. Growing up in a large dysfunctional family, she had to run the gamut of managing her own sensitive temperament whilst also providing ongoing emotional support for her needy and fragile mother.

Once she allowed herself to feel, there seemed to be an endless well of sadness and grief. Not just for the mother she wished she could have had, but also for the loss of beloved friends and relatives who had died too early. As the losses accumulated, she coped by burying her grief. She had no internalised mother to help her feel safe. She often felt overwhelmed by sadness.



BREAKING THE PATTERN

**How one woman found her voice — and her strength
— as a new mother**

Case Study: Aviva

Now she had her own baby and was scared of her own early experiences. Was she worthy of this gift? Would she turn into her mother and wound her son? In therapy, we worked together to process some of her trauma. To allow her to see both her good side and the inevitability of imperfection in parenting. I reassured her with the obvious truth. She had already broken the cycle through empathy. I knew instinctively that she was a good mother. I just had to convince her.

The therapy helped her heal and become a better parent, but we also worked on managing her relationship with her mother in the present. I supported her in setting boundaries and understanding her mother's behaviour. Underneath their fraught interactions lay the reality that Aviva was continually irritated by her mother. Although justified, Aviva's irritation got in the way of them enjoying the relationship for what it was. In turn, her mother was often scared of her, feeling like she had to tread on eggshells around her adult daughter.

As Aviva came to accept her mother's limitations, she relaxed and became much more comfortable around setting limits and saying no to her mother's demands. That included not allowing unsupervised access to her son, because she just couldn't trust her mother to provide an emotionally safe environment for him. This was a big step, but helped Aviva feel better about her mother as a grandparent. Overall, their relationship improved. Aviva's mother hadn't changed, but she had.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- Where do you see yourself in Aviva's experience?

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"YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE
PERFECT. YOU JUST HAVE TO
STAY CONSCIOUS AND
COMPASSIONATE."



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"SELF-AWARENESS IS THE
ANTIDOTE TO UNCONSCIOUS
REPETITION."

Amanda Robins

CHAPTER

03

DO THE INNER WORK FIRST

Before we can parent with clarity and compassion, we need to understand the patterns we've inherited. This chapter explores how our unmet childhood needs affect our parenting — and how healing ourselves is the foundation for showing up fully for our children.

Why the Past Resurfaces When We Parent

Motherhood has a way of opening emotional doors we thought were long closed.

For daughters of narcissistic mothers, becoming a parent can trigger unresolved grief, fear, and shame. Even when we've built functional adult lives, having a child often brings us face-to-face with the parts of ourselves that still feel small, scared, or unworthy.

We may worry that we'll repeat the same harmful patterns — or overcorrect in a way that leaves us feeling depleted and uncertain. These fears can be overwhelming. But they are also signposts, pointing us toward the work that still needs attention.

The Unseen Influence of Unmet Needs

When our own childhood needs went unmet — for love, safety, comfort, and attunement — we carry those gaps into adulthood.

Without realising it, we might:

- Seek external validation in our parenting choices
- Struggle to set boundaries with others, including our children
- Feel guilt or shame for needing space or making mistakes
- React defensively to perceived criticism or emotional needs

This isn't because we're bad parents — it's because we're parenting with an emotional map we never got to draw for ourselves.



What “Doing the Work” Really Means

Healing begins by turning inward — not to blame ourselves, but to understand the inner patterns driving our reactions.

This includes:

- Noticing triggers: When your child's behaviour evokes a strong emotional response, what part of you is being touched?
- Exploring your self-talk: Are you speaking to yourself the way your mother spoke to you — or the way you wish she had?
- Making space for grief: Grieving the mother you didn't have is a necessary and often painful step in becoming the mother you want to be.

Therapy, journaling, meditation, and creative expression can help process this material gently over time.

The Gift of Reparenting Yourself

Reparenting means offering yourself the emotional support, kindness, and boundaries you never received.

When you learn to meet your own needs — with consistency and care — you reduce the emotional burden on your child to be your source of comfort or worth.

This is one of the most powerful shifts we can make. Instead of unconsciously seeking healing through our children, we take responsibility for our inner lives — and this frees our children to be themselves.

You're Not Starting from Scratch

Doing the inner work doesn't mean you've failed. It means you're brave enough to stop the cycle. Even acknowledging that healing is needed is a profound act of mothering — not just for your child, but for yourself.



GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO TAKE UP SPACE.
YOU'RE ALLOWED TO HEAL ON YOUR OWN
TERMS.



||

THE MOST POWERFUL THING A
DAUGHTER OF A NARCISSISTIC
MOTHER CAN DO IS BEGIN TO
MOTHER HERSELF WITH
TENDERNESS AND TRUTH.

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **When I think about becoming a mother, what emotions surface most strongly?**

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **In what ways did my mother respond to my emotions when I was growing up?**

How might that shape the way I respond to my own children?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **In what ways am I learning to reparent myself? What's still difficult?**

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CHAPTER

04

THE GUILT TRAP

Many daughters of narcissistic mothers are plagued by guilt — especially when they try to parent differently. This chapter explores the roots of that guilt, how it distorts your sense of self, and how you can begin to release it.

THE GUILT TRAP



The Invisible Burden of Guilt

When you've been raised by a narcissistic mother, guilt often becomes your default setting. You feel guilty for having needs. Guilty for setting boundaries. Guilty for not being perfect. Guilty, even, for thinking about your even, for thinking about your own pain.

This kind of guilt isn't healthy — it's a learned response, born of emotional manipulation and role reversal. As a child, you may have felt responsible for your mother's emotional state. You learned that your job was to make her feel better, to avoid upsetting her, and to anticipate her moods.

Now, as a parent, that guilt can resurface in new and painful ways.

Why Guilt Feels So Real

Even when you rationally know you're doing your best, guilt has a way of worming its way in. That's because it's not always about the present moment. It's old. It's ancient. It's rooted in your nervous system, in your body's memory of what happened when you expressed anger, sadness, or even joy. You might feel guilty for parenting differently than your mother did — even though you know it's healthier. Or guilty for creating distance from her now — even though contact harms you. Guilt becomes a reflex.

But this guilt often masks something deeper: grief. Grief for the childhood you didn't have. Grief for the love and attunement you needed but never received. Grief for the mother you longed for but never got.

THE GUILT TRAP



Learning to Discern False Guilt

Not all guilt is harmful. Some guilt helps guide our moral compass. But the kind you inherited from narcissistic parenting is different. It's not based on your values — it's based on your mother's rules.

Begin to ask:

- Is this guilt based on a real transgression?
- Or is it the echo of a rule I learned to survive?

This kind of questioning can be a powerful first step in separating your authentic self from the internalized voice of your mother.

Releasing the Guilt That Was Never Yours

Healing this guilt involves recognizing that you were conditioned to feel it — and that doesn't mean it's valid. You were taught to feel bad for being a person with boundaries, needs, and emotions. That doesn't mean those things are wrong.

Through therapy, reflection, and self-compassion, it's possible to soften guilt's grip. You can start to feel — and believe — that you're not bad for protecting your peace. You're not selfish for parenting with love. You're not ungrateful for needing distance. You are allowed to live a life that feels good, safe, and nourishing — even if it looks nothing like the one you were raised in.

GUILT & SHAME



Beyond Guilt: The Deep Roots of Shame

While guilt can be agonising, it's often just the surface layer. Underneath it lies something even more insidious: shame. Shame doesn't say "I did something wrong."

It says "There is something wrong with me."

This kind of shame is toxic and it can also be chronic - a corrosive belief that you are somehow broken, bad, or unworthy of love. It's not based on facts. It's the residue of a childhood in which you were shamed, criticised, compared, or made to feel invisible.

You may have been punished for expressing anger or sadness. You may have been praised only when you were perfect — quiet, helpful, high-achieving. Slowly, you learned to contort yourself into the version your mother could tolerate. Your authentic self — messy, emotional, creative, needy, flawed — had to be hidden away.

The internalised shame associated with the rejected real self can follow you into adulthood and into motherhood. It can whisper that you're not a "good enough" parent, that your children will be harmed by your imperfections, that you are failing even as you try your hardest. Shame thrives in secrecy and silence — and it can be incredibly difficult to challenge alone.

GUILT & SHAME



Shame Was Never Yours to Begin With

Here's the truth: this shame was never yours. It was projected onto you by someone who couldn't bear her own vulnerability. It was passed down like a family heirloom — not out of malice, but because it hadn't been processed or healed by those who came before you.

Recognising that this shame was given to you — and does not belong to you — is a powerful step in reclaiming your authentic self.

Therapy, reflective journaling, self-compassion, and creative expression can all help untangle the roots of shame. So can connecting with others who carry similar wounds. In the light of empathy and understanding, shame begins to lose its grip.

I generally recommend ongoing therapy for those who suffer from chronic shame. Although it can be ameliorated, it's not a quick fix, nor is it something that can be erased completely.

But you don't have to carry this legacy forward. You can pause, reflect, and choose a different path — for yourself and for the next generation.

LETTING GO OF SHAME



“SHAME CORRODES THE VERY PART OF US THAT BELIEVES WE ARE CAPABLE OF CHANGE.”

— BRENÉ BROWN

“YOU WERE NEVER TOO MUCH.
YOU WERE JUST TOO MUCH FOR
SOMEONE WHO WAS NOT
ENOUGH.”

— DR. THEMA BRYANT

“THE MOST POWERFUL THING A DAUGHTER OF A NARCISSISTIC MOTHER CAN DO IS BEGIN TO MOTHER HERSELF WITH TENDERNESS AND TRUTH.”

— AMANDA ROBINS

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **Where did your earliest feelings of shame come from?**
Can you remember a time when you felt fundamentally "not enough"?
Who was present? What happened?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **Whose voice is behind your inner critic?**
Is the shame you carry truly your own — or does it echo someone else's expectations or judgments?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **How do you typically respond to shame?**
Do you hide, strive, lash out, withdraw, or numb out? What would it feel like to meet shame with compassion?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **What would you say to a younger version of yourself who was made to feel ashamed?**

Write her a letter. Be gentle, truthful, and kind.

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

- **How might your life change if you didn't feel ruled by shame?**
What parts of you would emerge? What risks might you take?

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C H A P T E R

05

BOUNDARIES AND THE FEAR OF REJECTION

Many daughters of narcissistic mothers struggle with boundaries — not because they're weak, but because they were punished for having them. In this section, we explore how fear of rejection and conflict can make boundary-setting feel unsafe, and how to rebuild a sense of agency and safety in relationships.

BOUNDARIES AND THE FEAR OF REJECTION



When Boundaries Feel Dangerous

For daughters of narcissistic mothers, the concept of boundaries can feel threatening. Not to others — but to themselves. That's because, early in life, they learned that asserting needs or saying "no" could lead to punishment, withdrawal, emotional manipulation, or rage.

Boundaries weren't just discouraged — they were unsafe.

So, as adults, many find themselves overextending, avoiding conflict, or becoming overly accommodating in relationships. They fear being seen as selfish, difficult, or "too much."

How the Fear of Rejection Is Rooted in Early Experience

A child raised by a narcissistic parent is often required to suppress their own emotions, needs, or preferences in order to maintain attachment. Being compliant — even invisible — becomes a survival strategy.

When boundaries are met with criticism or silence, the child internalises the belief:

"If I assert myself, I'll be rejected."

This creates a deep conflict between the need for self-expression and the need for connection — a conflict that often continues into adulthood.

BOUNDARIES AND THE FEAR OF REJECTION



The Boundary-Rejection Cycle

Even as adults, these daughters may continue to feel this tension:

- They sense when a relationship is draining them.
- They want to say no — to rest, to disconnect, to protect themselves.
- But the old fear arises: rejection, disapproval, or abandonment.
- So they stay quiet, override their needs, and feel resentment or shame.

This cycle can repeat endlessly — reinforcing the false belief that boundaries harm relationships.

Reframing Boundaries as Self-Compassion

Part of the healing journey is learning that boundaries are not rejection — they are connection with the self. Healthy boundaries honour our needs, protect our energy, and allow space for authentic relating. They are not a wall, but a doorway — one that we get to open and close, based on what's healthy for us.

Setting boundaries does not make us unkind. It makes us honest.

BOUNDARIES AND THE FEAR OF REJECTION



Small Steps Toward Safety

For many daughters, boundary-setting begins with very small steps. For example:

- Pausing before agreeing to a request.
- Noticing how their body feels in certain situations.
- Practicing saying no to small, low-risk things.
- Identifying moments when they override their own needs.

Therapy and creative practice can offer safe spaces to explore boundaries.

Visual journaling, role-play, or expressive art can help clients begin to imagine what boundaries might look and feel like — before they try them in the real world.

Rejection Isn't Always a Threat

One painful but liberating truth is this: some people will reject our boundaries. But when we allow that possibility — and survive it — we grow stronger. We learn that rejection, while painful, is not a reflection of our worth. It is information.

Some people can't tolerate our authenticity — but those are not our people.

Setting boundaries isn't selfish, its a vital step
to creating sustainable relationships.



“IF YOU WERE SHAMED FOR HAVING
BOUNDARIES AS A CHILD, SETTING THEM NOW
MAY FEEL UNFAMILIAR OR UNCOMFORTABLE.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE DOING
SOMETHING WRONG — IT MEANS YOU'RE
HEALING.”

— AMANDA ROBINS

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS



Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- When have I said “yes” to something I didn’t truly want — and how did it feel in my body?

(Notice any tension, guilt, or shutdown that followed.)

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

- **What messages did I receive growing up about setting limits or saying “no”?**
(Were boundaries respected, ignored, punished, or guilted?)

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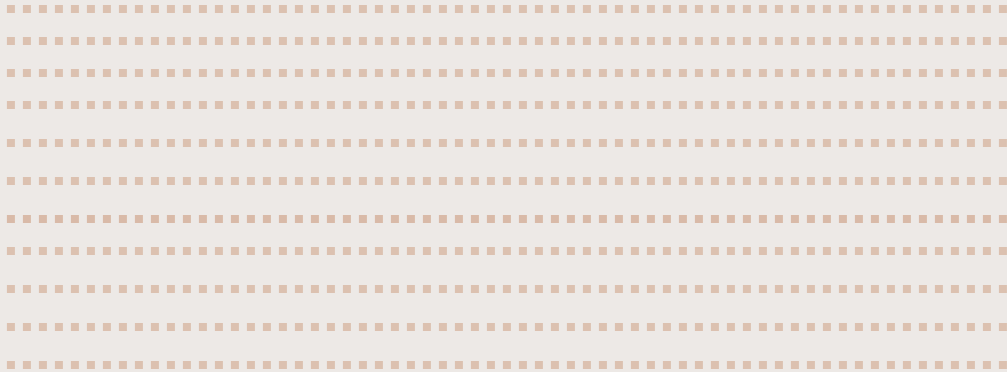
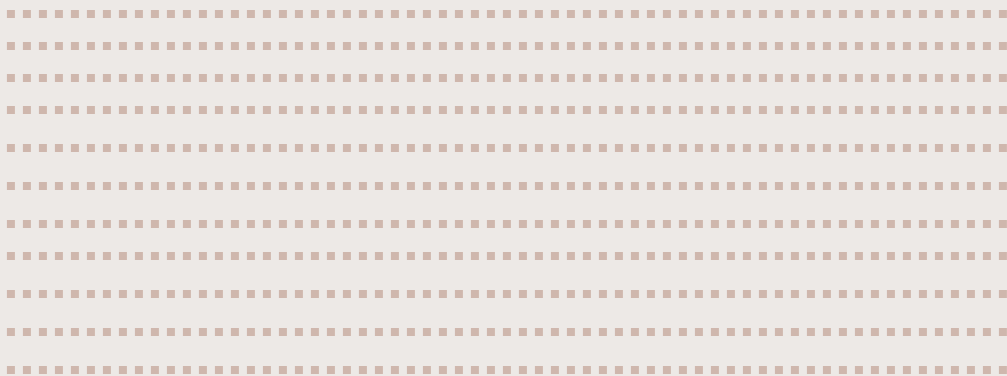
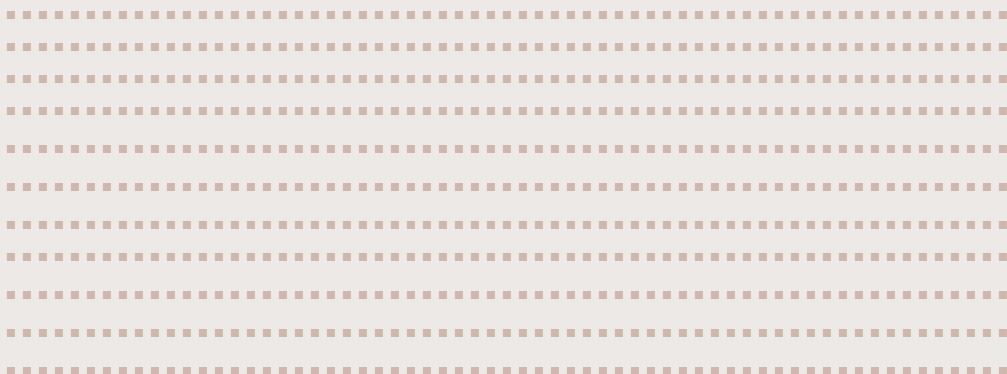
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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What kinds of boundaries feel hardest for me to set — emotional, physical, time-related, or something else? Why might that be?

A series of 12 horizontal dotted lines in a light brown color, intended for handwritten journaling.A second series of 12 horizontal dotted lines in a light brown color, intended for handwritten journaling.A third series of 12 horizontal dotted lines in a light brown color, intended for handwritten journaling.

C H A P T E R

06

THE PERFECT MOTHER MYTH

"I thought being a good mother meant never making a mistake."

THE PERFECT MOTHER MYTH



The Myth We Inherit

Many daughters of narcissistic mothers enter motherhood with an invisible rulebook: always be calm, always be patient, always be perfect. This myth of the “good mother” is often internalized deeply — not because we believe we’re perfect, but because we’re terrified of being “bad.”

For those raised by narcissistic parents, the stakes feel especially high. We know what it’s like to be shamed, blamed, and abandoned. We fear replicating the pain — so we try to avoid making any mistakes at all.

Narcissistic Mothers and the Split View

Narcissistic mothers often cast themselves as either the martyr or the villain — rarely a nuanced, complex human being. They may expect praise for minimal parenting effort, or conversely, paint themselves as victims of their children’s needs. In either role, they fail to model real, vulnerable, human mothering.

This black-and-white lens often becomes part of our own narrative: “If I get angry, I’m just like her.”

But anger isn’t abuse. Frustration isn’t narcissism. The goal is not perfection — it’s presence.

THE PERFECT MOTHER MYTH



You Are Not Your Mother

The fear of becoming like her is common — but it's important to name it for what it is: fear, not fact.

If you're reflecting, pausing, and making space for your child's experience — you are already parenting differently.

Children don't need perfect mothers — they need attuned, present, repairing ones. Mistakes are inevitable in parenting, but what matters is how we repair. When we acknowledge our missteps, offer apologies, and reconnect with our children, we show them what it means to be safe, loved, and human.

This is the opposite of narcissistic parenting.

Letting Go of Idealisation

One of the quiet burdens daughters of narcissists carry is the pressure to redeem the past by being flawless mothers in the present.

But this "perfect mother" standard isn't just impossible — it's harmful. It keeps us performing rather than connecting. It keeps us anxious rather than attuned. Letting go of the myth means embracing the full truth of who we are: mothers who love deeply, sometimes lose our patience, sometimes get it wrong — and who return, repair, and grow.

THE PERFECT MOTHER MYTH



The Good Enough Mother

The concept of the "good enough mother" (coined by psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott) can be profoundly healing for daughters of narcissistic mothers. It reminds us that we do not need to be perfect to be safe, loving, and impactful parents. Being "good enough" means allowing our children to be themselves — and allowing ourselves to be ourselves too.

This is a relationship, not a performance.



”

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO BE A PERFECT MOTHER
TO BREAK THE CYCLE. YOU JUST HAVE TO BE
PRESENT, HONEST, AND WILLING TO GROW.”

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS



Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

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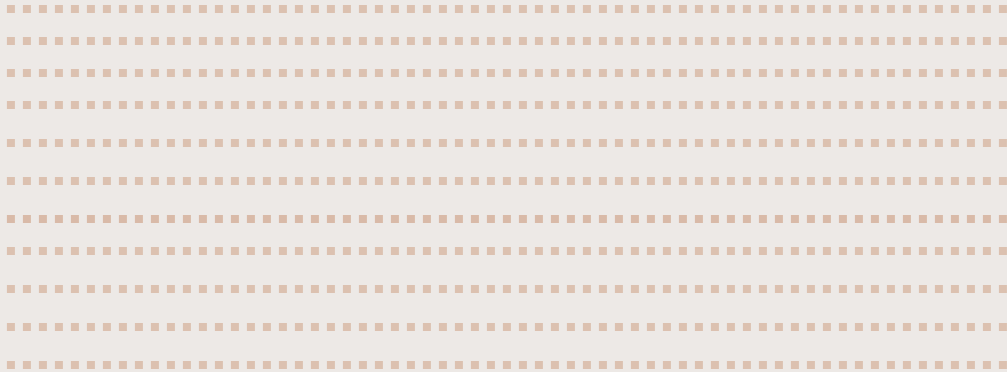
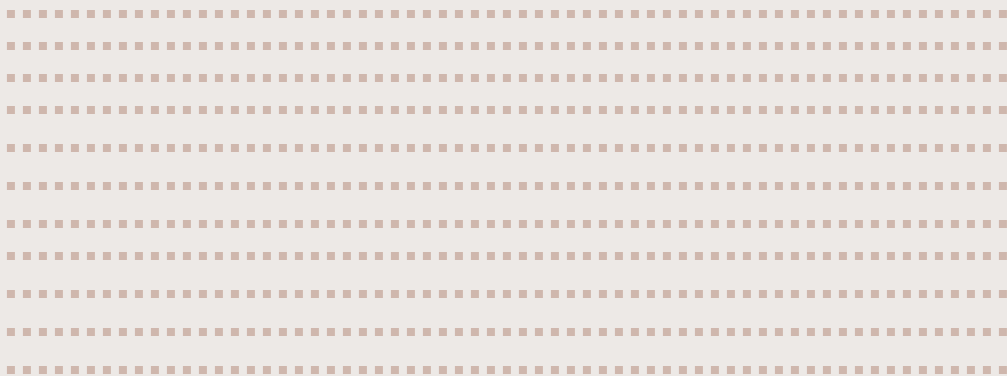
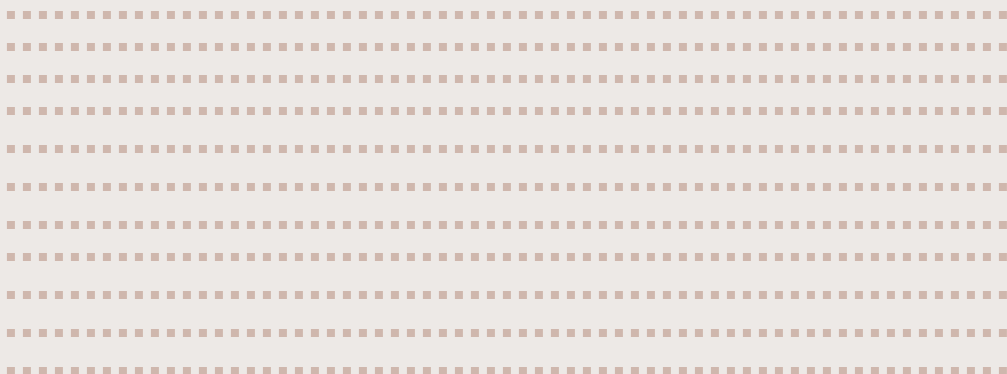
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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

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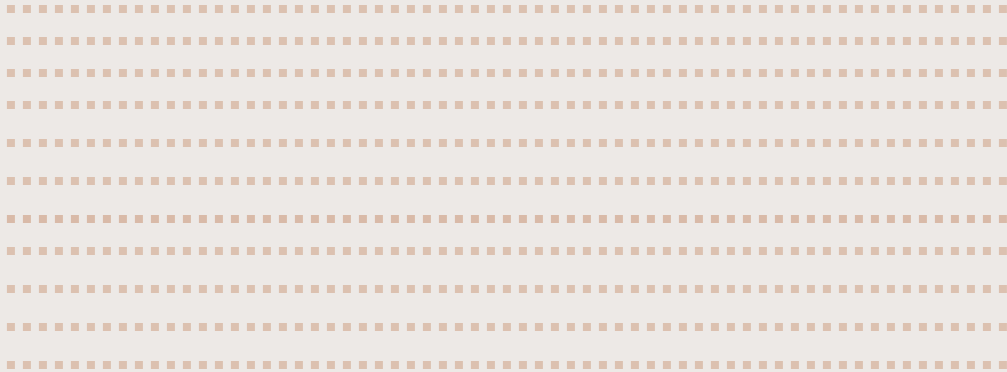
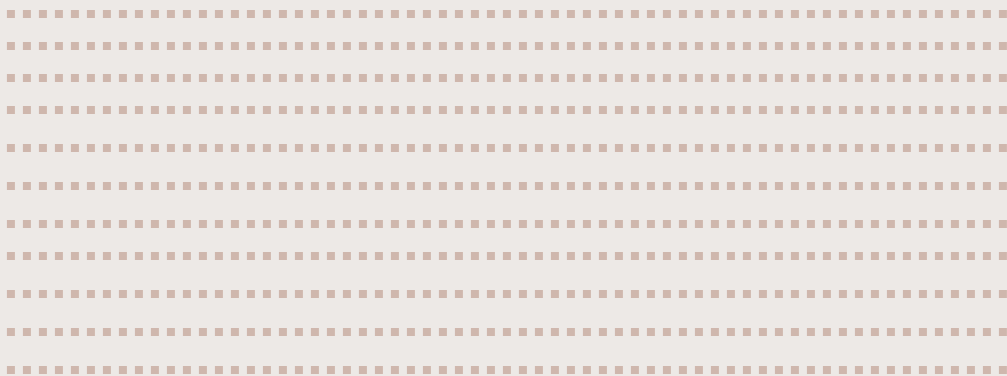
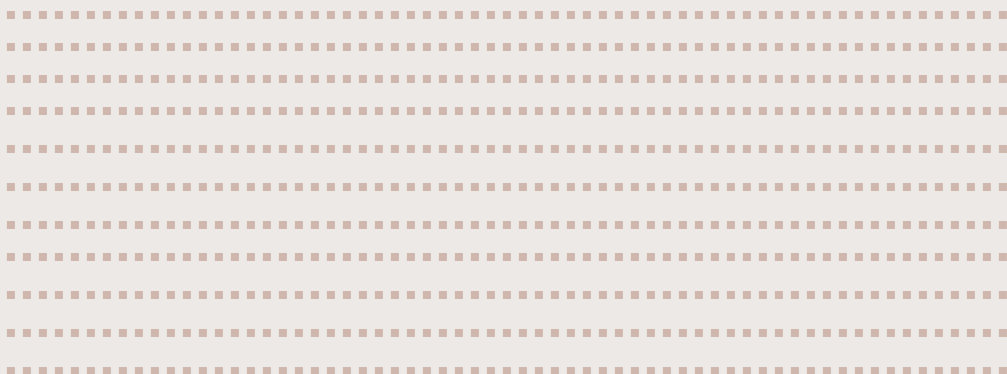
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C H A P T E R

07

NAVIGATING TRIGGERS AND EMOTIONAL FLASHBACKS

A gentle guide to recognising and responding to emotional triggers and flashbacks
that arise during parenting.

NAVIGATING TRIGGERS AND EMOTIONAL FLASHBACKS



Understanding Emotional Triggers

When you've grown up with a narcissistic mother, it's common to feel blindsided by emotional triggers as a parent. Your child's needs, behaviours, or emotional expressions may stir unresolved feelings from your own childhood. These reactions often feel out of proportion to the situation and can cause guilt, confusion, or even shame.

Triggers aren't signs of failure — they are messengers. They offer insight into your own unmet needs, wounds, or fears. Learning to pause and respond with curiosity instead of judgment is an important step toward healing.

Flashbacks Without Visuals

Emotional flashbacks — a hallmark of complex trauma — don't always involve visual memories. Instead, they can be sudden waves of despair, fear, or panic with no obvious cause. You may feel small, powerless, or overwhelmed. These states reflect your body remembering what your mind cannot access with words.

As a parent, this can be deeply unsettling. You may be caring for your child while simultaneously feeling as if you need to be rescued. Recognising these states for what they are is key to managing them.

NAVIGATING TRIGGERS AND EMOTIONAL FLASHBACKS



What to Do When You're Triggered

Instead of criticising yourself when you're triggered, try saying:
"This is old pain. I am not in danger. I am safe now."

Ground yourself with sensory input — feel your feet on the ground, hold something comforting, or name five things you can see. Reassure your inner child. Then, return to your child with greater presence and compassion. You might even acknowledge aloud, "Mummy's feeling a bit overwhelmed, but she's working on calming herself down." This models emotional regulation and self-awareness.

Post-Trigger Reflection

After the moment has passed, reflect with gentle curiosity:

- What was the trigger?
- What did I feel?
- What memory or unmet need was stirred?
- How did I cope? What could I try next time?

This is not about perfection. It's about building awareness and self-compassion.

NAVIGATING TRIGGERS AND EMOTIONAL FLASHBACKS



Triggers as Portals

Each trigger holds the potential for deeper healing. It offers an invitation to revisit the past — not to dwell, but to understand, integrate, and move forward. With practice, you will learn to hold your younger self with tenderness, even in the middle of a parenting storm.



“YOUR TRIGGERS ARE MESSENGERS — THEY
SHOW YOU WHERE THE HURT STILL LIVES.
RESPONDING WITH COMPASSION RATHER
THAN JUDGMENT IS THE BEGINNING OF
HEALING.”

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What kinds of situations or behaviours tend to trigger strong emotional reactions in you when parenting?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

When you feel emotionally overwhelmed, how do you usually respond
— internally and externally?

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C H A P T E R

08

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR OWN MOTHER

Protecting Your Peace While Honouring Your Growth

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR OWN MOTHER



Why Boundaries Are So Difficult for Daughters of Narcissistic Mothers

For many daughters of narcissistic mothers, the idea of setting boundaries can feel terrifying. You're not just saying "no"—you're breaking a deeply embedded family rule. Maybe you were taught, either directly or indirectly, that your mother's needs came first, or that expressing your own discomfort was selfish or disloyal. Setting boundaries may feel like betrayal, rejection, or even abandonment—emotions that are especially intense if you've experienced emotional enmeshment. But boundaries are not about rejection. They are an act of self-respect, and a way to protect the growth and healing you've worked so hard to cultivate.

Recognising the Signs of Enmeshment and Guilt Traps

You may have grown up feeling responsible for your mother's happiness, caretaking her emotional needs while suppressing your own. Even as an adult, your mother may subtly (or overtly) demand loyalty, obedience, or emotional caretaking. She may guilt you for needing space, or label your autonomy as selfish. Common signs you need firmer boundaries:

- You feel anxious before or after interacting with her.
- You downplay your needs or experiences to avoid conflict.
- You feel like a "bad daughter" when you try to assert yourself.

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR OWN MOTHER



Types of Boundaries You Might Need

Boundaries can be emotional, physical, digital, conversational, or time-based.

Examples might include:

- Not answering calls or texts immediately.
- Ending conversations when they become manipulative or shaming.
- Choosing not to share personal details.
- Creating limits around visits or caregiving responsibilities.

Your boundaries might evolve over time. Start small if you need to—but be clear with yourself about why they matter.

You Don't Need Her Permission

You don't have to wait for your mother to understand, agree with, or accept your boundaries. She may react with anger, guilt trips, or cold withdrawal. This doesn't mean you're wrong. It means the boundary is working—and threatening a dynamic that was never fair to begin with.

SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR OWN MOTHER



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SETTING BOUNDARIES WITH YOUR OWN MOTHER



Reframing Boundaries as Protection, Not Punishment

It can help to remind yourself that boundaries are not about punishing your mother—they're about protecting your energy, your healing, and your role as a parent yourself. You're choosing a different path. You're creating safety for your child and breaking cycles that never served you.



”

“BOUNDARIES AREN’T WALLS TO KEEP PEOPLE
OUT—THEY’RE BRIDGES TO SELF-RESPECT.”

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What boundary (emotional, physical, or practical) do you most wish you could establish with your mother?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What fears or beliefs come up when you imagine setting that boundary?

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C H A P T E R

09

LETTING GO OF PERFECTIONISM IN PARENTING

The Pressure to Get It Right

LETTING GO OF PERFECTIONISM IN PARENTING



The Pressure to Get It Right

Perfectionism in parenting often stems from early shame. When your own needs or feelings were dismissed or ridiculed, you learned to hide parts of yourself. You might have become hyper-aware of others' reactions, constantly striving to manage their perception of you. Parenting under this pressure becomes less about connection and more about control — of yourself, your child, or how others see you. It's exhausting. And it's not necessary.

Understanding Where It Comes From

Perfectionism in parenting often stems from early shame. When your own needs or feelings were dismissed or ridiculed, you learned to hide parts of yourself. You may have become hyper-aware of others' reactions, constantly striving to manage their perception of you. Parenting under this pressure becomes less about connection and more about control — of yourself, your child, or how others see you.

LETTING GO OF PERFECTIONISM IN PARENTING



The Myth of the “Good Mother”

Perfectionism in parenting often stems from early shame. When your own needs or feelings were dismissed or ridiculed, you learned to hide parts of yourself. You might have become hyper-aware of others' reactions, constantly striving to manage their perception of you. Parenting under this pressure becomes less about connection and more about control — of yourself, your child, or how others see you. It's exhausting. And it's not necessary.

Understanding Where It Comes From

Our culture idealizes mothers who are endlessly giving, emotionally attuned, and self-sacrificing. But the real “good enough mother,” as Donald Winnicott described, isn't perfect — and that's exactly the point. She misattunes sometimes. She gets it wrong.

But crucially, she repairs the rupture. She returns with love, curiosity, and care. And it's that process of getting it wrong and reconnecting that builds resilience, emotional safety, and trust in children.

The fantasy of the perfect mother can feel comforting because it promises control — “If I do everything right, nothing bad will happen.” But real relationships don't work like that. Children don't need perfection. They need attunement, warmth, and a parent who is emotionally available enough to reflect and reconnect.

LETTING GO OF PERFECTIONISM IN PARENTING



What Your Child Actually Needs

Children thrive when they feel seen, accepted, and safe to be themselves. This doesn't require constant joy, perfectly worded responses, or endlessly patient parenting. It simply requires presence — and a willingness to repair when things go off track. Your child learns from how you relate to your own imperfections. When you model self-compassion, accountability, and flexibility, they absorb those skills, too.

Letting Yourself Be Enough

Letting go of perfectionism means letting yourself be human. You are allowed to be tired, confused, triggered, uncertain — and still be a wonderful parent. In fact, embracing your real self — with all its messiness — is one of the greatest gifts you can offer your child.

Perfectionism is often a defense against shame. But shame thrives in secrecy. When you allow yourself to be seen, to be imperfect and open and real, you begin to dissolve the shame you inherited — and you interrupt the cycle for the next generation.

“There is no such thing as a perfect parent.
So just be a real one.”
— Sue Atkins



“YOUR CHILD DOESN’T NEED YOU TO BE
PERFECT — JUST EMOTIONALLY PRESENT
ENOUGH TO RECONNECT AFTER RUPTURE.
THAT’S WHERE TRUST IS BUILT.”

Amanda Robins

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS



Take a few deep breaths. Settle into a quiet space. These questions are here to guide, not pressure. Write whatever feels true for you.

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

When do I feel the most pressure to be a “perfect” parent? Where do I think this pressure comes from — my family, society, or myself?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

How did my own upbringing shape my ideas of what a 'good' or 'perfect' mother should be?

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What would parenting look like if I focused on connection and presence instead of perfection?

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C H A P T E R

10

BECOMING THE MOTHER YOU NEEDED

"Healing the Past While Nurturing the Future"

BECOMING THE MOTHER YOU NEEDED

Introduction

Becoming the mother you needed is not about achieving perfection — it's about intention, reflection, and healing. For daughters of narcissistic mothers, this journey is both beautiful and complex. You're not just raising a child — you're breaking cycles, building new foundations, and offering a kind of love you may never have received. This chapter explores how we can step into that role with authenticity, warmth, and courage, while continuing to care for our own inner child along the way.



BECOMING THE MOTHER YOU NEEDED



Loving Without Losing Yourself

Becoming a nurturing, attuned mother doesn't mean self-sacrifice. It means offering love and care while maintaining a sense of self — something your own mother may not have managed or permitted. You are allowed to have needs. You are allowed to rest. You are allowed to set limits. This chapter invites you to challenge the belief that being a good mother means disappearing.

Letting Yourself Be Enough

Enoughness isn't about never raising your voice, never feeling overwhelmed, or always having the perfect response. It's about being present. Being real. And being willing to repair when things go wrong — as they inevitably will. If you were raised to believe that love had to be earned — through compliance, perfection, or silence — letting yourself be enough will feel unfamiliar, even unsafe. You might feel compelled to push harder, do more, prove something. But parenting from that place only deepens exhaustion and disconnect.

BECOMING THE MOTHER YOU NEEDED



Letting Yourself Be Enough

Letting yourself be enough also means accepting your limits — not as flaws, but as truths. Some days you will not have the capacity for a deep conversation, an art project, or even much eye contact. That doesn't make you a bad parent. It makes you a human being with needs of your own.

Your child does not need you to be endlessly giving. They need you to be available. To be able to pause. To show them how to navigate imperfection — not avoid it. When you begin to soften around the edges of your own expectations, you begin to offer your child a different model. One where love isn't conditional. One where mistakes are survivable. One where tenderness is not just directed outward, but inward too.

Enough doesn't mean finished or perfected. It means real, growing, and worthy — as is.



!!

“THERE IS NO WAY TO BE A PERFECT MOTHER,
AND A MILLION WAYS TO BE A GOOD ONE.”

– Jill Churchill

REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

What does "being enough" as a mother mean to you personally?
Reflect on how this differs from the messages you may have
internalised from your own upbringing.

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

In what ways have you shown love to your child without losing yourself? Describe moments where you felt both connected to your child and true to who you are.

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REFLECTIVE JOURNAL PROMPTS

How might you continue breaking the cycle in small, imperfect, but meaningful ways? What are some practices or boundaries that help you honour your growth while parenting

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Amanda Robins is a psychotherapist, art therapist, and writer based in Australia. She specialises in working with adult daughters of narcissistic mothers and others recovering from complex trauma, grief, and emotional neglect.

With a deep understanding of attachment, identity, and mothering wounds, Amanda's work is grounded in compassion, clinical experience, and creative exploration.

Amanda offers individual therapy (in person and online), guided courses, and self-reflective resources that gently support healing and integration.

www.amandarobinspsychotherapy.com.au

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My free ebook will guide you through the steps needed to heal from narcissistic parenting.



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THANK YOU!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

"Healing isn't linear. Be kind to yourself along the way."
Thank you for being here. Your healing journey matters.



Best
Wishes
for Your
Recovery
Journey

Amanda