



Abandonment

Abandonment, whether physical, emotional, or perceived, can deeply shape how we see ourselves, trust others, and cope with emotional pain. If not addressed, abandonment wounds can lead to unhealthy behaviors, including drinking, substance use, or sabotaging relationships. Below is a comprehensive breakdown to help you understand these effects with actionable steps to help you unlearn patterns and start healing.

How Abandonment Affects Life and Relationships

1. Core Beliefs Formed from Abandonment

- *"I'm not good enough."*
- *"People always leave."*
- *"Love has to be earned."*
- *"If I show weakness, I'll be hurt or left."*

These beliefs influence how you:

- Pick partners (often emotionally unavailable).
- React to conflict (panic, cling, or shut down).
- Handle boundaries (over give or people-please).
- View your own needs (neglect or suppress them).

2. Abandonment and Substance Use

People with abandonment wounds may use alcohol or substances to:

- **Numb rejection, shame, or loneliness.**
- **Escape self-critical thoughts.**
- **Cope with fear of intimacy or loss.**
- **Feel temporarily connected or "whole."**

♦ **Example:** A man who was emotionally neglected as a child may drink to suppress the panic he feels when his partner pulls away emotionally. He doesn't realize the real fear isn't her silence, it's the echo of childhood abandonment being triggered.

Stopping Abandonment Wounds from Controlling Life

Step 1: Identify the Root Wound

Journal Prompts:

- What is your first memory of feeling emotionally or physically abandoned?
- What beliefs about yourself or others did you form in that moment?
- What did I learn about love, safety, or trust from people who left or neglected me?
- Was I ever made to feel that my needs were a burden?
- What did I wish someone had done or said to me during that painful moment?

You may uncover patterns such as: “I must be perfect to be loved” or “People always leave if I need too much.”

These prompts help identify and challenge the *false stories* that abandonment planted in you:

- What do I believe about myself because I was abandoned or neglected?
- What evidence do I have that challenges the belief that I’m not lovable or worth staying for?
- What would I say to a child who believed the same things I do about themselves?
- How have I proven to myself (even in small ways) that I am worthy of love and connection?
- What needs to be unlearned in order for me to feel emotionally safe?

Step 2: Build Emotional Safety Within

When abandonment comes up, the nervous system gets dysregulated—often shifting into fight, flight, or freeze.

Practice:

- Self-talk reset:
“I am safe right now. This is a trigger, not the truth.”
- Somatic grounding (DBT skill):
 - Place your hand on your heart and breathe deeply.
 - Say: “I am here. I am not that child anymore.”

Step 3: Challenge Abandonment-Fueled Thinking

CBT Reframe Exercise:

Triggering Thought	Evidence For	Evidence Against	Healthier Thought
"They're going to leave me."	They're acting distant.	They've always come back and care for me.	"I feel scared, but I don't know the full story. I'll ask instead of assuming."

Step 4: Break the Link Between Abandonment and Coping Habits

Abandonment pain often becomes a cycle:

Trigger (e.g. silence, rejection) → Emotion (panic, shame) → Coping (drink, detach, over give)
→ Reinforced wound

DBT Skill: “*Opposite Action*”

When you feel the urge to drink or use:

- Call a trusted person
- Journal your feelings and triggers
- Go for a walk or do cold water grounding
- Delay the urge by 20 minutes with an alternate behavior

Discipline rewires the nervous system—not just insight.

Step 5: Relearn Relationships Through Healthy Boundaries

Abandonment creates one of two responses:

- Cling tightly to avoid rejection
- Push others away to avoid being hurt again

Healing Practices:

- Learn to say no without guilt
- Practice emotional exposure in safe doses (“I feel scared when I don’t hear from you”)
- Let people prove their reliability over time instead of idealizing or distrusting them too quickly

Step 6: Begin Reparenting Work

Abandonment leaves a hole where nurturing and attunement should’ve been.

Ways to Reparent:

- Offer yourself daily affirmations:
“You are not alone. I choose you today.”
- Care for your basic needs intentionally—eat well, sleep regularly, create safety.
- Visualize your inner child and write letters to them.

The following are 3 grounding skills you can use when emotionally triggered, especially when abandonment fears or painful emotions take over:

1. 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding (Sensory Awareness Tool)

Purpose: Brings you back to the present moment when your mind is spinning or you're emotionally overwhelmed.

How to Do It:

- 5 things you can SEE (name them: light, floor, phone...)
- 4 things you can TOUCH (your hands, chair, fabric...)
- 3 things you can HEAR (traffic, birds, your breath...)
- 2 things you can SMELL (or name favorite scents if you can't smell anything)
- 1 thing you can TASTE (or imagine something pleasant like mint or tea)

Repeat slowly. Focus on each sensation. It helps anchor you when your thoughts spiral into fear or abandonment panic.

2. Cold Water or Ice Grounding (Shock Reset)

Purpose: Interrupts intense emotional reactions by giving your body a safe but strong signal that brings your nervous system back online.

How to Do It:

- Hold an ice cube or splash cold water on your face.
- Submerge your hands or face in a bowl of cold water for 30 seconds.
- If no water is available, rub a cool object (metal, bottle, stone) on your skin.

This is especially useful for moments of panic, emotional flashbacks, or addictive urges linked to abandonment.

3. Box Breathing (Calm Body = Calm Mind)

Purpose: Slows down your heart rate and restores a sense of internal control when you feel unsafe or abandoned.

How to Do It:

1. Inhale for 4 seconds
2. Hold your breath for 4 seconds
3. Exhale for 4 seconds
4. Hold again for 4 seconds
5. Repeat for 2–3 minutes

You can imagine drawing a square in your mind as you breathe—one side for each step of the breath.

Use Them Together

You can combine these methods for deeper grounding:

- Do Box Breathing while holding ice and finishing with the 5-4-3-2-1 exercise.

Journaling is an emotional processing tool, especially for those dealing with abandonment wounds, trauma, or overwhelming emotions. It gives your inner world a safe, structured space to express what you often suppress or avoid. Here's how journaling helps you get through your feelings, plus some science-backed insight and practical journaling prompts to guide your process.

How Journaling Helps You Get Through Your Feelings

1. It Slows Down Emotional Overload

When you're emotionally triggered, your thoughts race, and your nervous system reacts automatically (fight, flight, freeze). Journaling **slows down your thinking** so you can process rather than react.

Writing helps shift the brain from the emotional (limbic) system to the rational (prefrontal cortex) part of the brain.

2. It Gives Language to What Feels Vague or Overwhelming

Abandonment pain often feels raw, confusing, and hard to name. Journaling helps you translate body sensations and blurry emotions into clear, understandable thoughts.

“I feel tight in my chest and want to run” → becomes → “I feel afraid of being left again like I was as a child.”

3. It Creates Emotional Distance and Clarity

Writing your thoughts down puts them outside of you on paper. This helps you observe your feelings without being consumed by them, much like talking to a therapist.

You can see patterns, challenge distortions, or even realize: “This isn't about my partner not texting back—this is about me fearing abandonment.”

4. It Validates and Releases Trapped Emotions

If you were abandoned or neglected emotionally, you may carry beliefs like:

- “My feelings are too much.”

- “No one cares what I feel.”
- “I have to hide my hurt to be loved.”

Journaling validates your experience. It's a form of reparenting that says:

“Your feelings matter. I care enough to listen.”

5. It Helps Track Progress and Patterns

Over time, journaling reveals:

- Recurring triggers (e.g., rejection, silence, criticism)
- Core beliefs (e.g., “I’m unlovable unless I earn it”)
- Signs of healing (e.g., setting boundaries, reduced urges)

Journaling Prompts to Process Abandonment and Emotional Triggers

Here are some carefully designed prompts to help you **work through your feelings** instead of getting stuck in them:

To Explore Triggers and Emotions

- What emotion am I feeling most strongly right now? What might be beneath it?
- What just happened that triggered this response? What does it remind me of?
- What part of me feels abandoned or unloved in this moment?

To Challenge Unhelpful Thoughts

- Is the pain I feel right now more about the present, or does it remind me of something in the past?
- What is the story I’m telling myself? Is it 100% true?
- If I could comfort my inner child right now, what would I say to them?

To Reframe and Heal

- What would it feel like to believe I am enough as I am?
- How do I want to show up for myself right now, instead of seeking someone else to fix it?
- Who do I want to become through this healing process?

To Express the Feelings, You Couldn’t Say Before

- Write a letter to someone who abandoned you (you don’t have to send it). Say everything you never got to say.

- Write a letter from your future self, comforting you in this hard moment.
- Write a letter to your inner child, promising the safety, love, and care you always needed.

Journaling = Emotional Regulation

"Feelings buried alive never die."
— Karol Truman

Journaling helps feel, name, express, and release emotions in a way that breaks harmful patterns (like emotional avoidance, drinking, or lashing out) and replaces them with self-awareness and growth.

A Short Story of Healing

Elena grew up with an absent father and a mother who worked constantly. She learned to suppress her needs and feared being “too much.” As an adult, she chose partners who were emotionally unavailable. When her fiancé broke off their engagement unexpectedly, she spiraled into depression and heavy drinking.

Through therapy, Elena traced her abandonment back to childhood. She began writing letters to her younger self, joined a recovery group, and used DBT grounding to regulate panic attacks. She practiced saying what she needed in relationships, even when it terrified her. Over time, she began choosing partners based on emotional safety rather than intensity.

She now says: *“I no longer chase people to prove I’m lovable. I create connection from within, and let love come to me.”*

One-Week Action Plan to Heal Abandonment Wounds

Day	Focus	Practice
Day 1	Awareness	Journal your first abandonment memory + what beliefs it formed
Day 2	Nervous System Safety	Practice 3 grounding skills when emotionally triggered
Day 3	Inner Voice Shift	Identify and rewrite 3 self-critical thoughts
Day 4	Behavior Disruption	Use opposite action when an urge to drink or isolate appears
Day 5	Emotional Exposure	Share a feeling you normally hide from someone safe
Day 6	Reparenting	Write a letter to your inner child + affirm their worth

Day	Focus	Practice
Day 7	Reflection	Reflect on how far you've come and what you're learning about your needs

Affirmations can be a powerful tool in healing abandonment issues because they help retrain your inner voice, rewrite limiting beliefs, and build emotional safety from within—especially if you grew up feeling unseen, unwanted, or unloved.

Let's explore how affirmations work in this context and how you can use them effectively:

Why Affirmations Help Heal Abandonment Issues

1. They Replace the Critical Inner Voice with Compassion

Abandonment often leaves you with an inner critic that says:

- “You’re not enough.”
- “Everyone leaves.”
- “If I mess up, no one will love me.”

Affirmations offer a new voice that says:

“You matter.”
 “You are worth staying for.”
 “You can survive loss and still feel whole.”

2. They Challenge and Rewire Core Beliefs

Emotional abandonment leads to deep, unconscious beliefs such as:

- “I must earn love.”
- “I’m too much for people.”
- “Being vulnerable gets me hurt.”

Repeating affirmations disrupts these patterns by sending new signals to the brain:

Neuroplasticity research shows that repeating new thoughts alters brain pathways. You can literally “rewire” the way you see yourself over time.

3. They Build a New Foundation of Self-Trust

Abandonment often causes **self-abandonment**: you stop trusting your feelings, suppress your needs, and overextend for others. Affirmations help you:

- Reconnect with your worth

- Normalize your emotions
- Stand by yourself even when others don't

Affirmations anchor you when you're tempted to chase, over-apologize, or sabotage a healthy relationship out of fear.

How to Use Affirmations Effectively

1. Repetition + Emotion

- Say them **aloud daily**, especially when you're emotionally triggered.
- **Feel** the words as you say them. Imagine talking to your younger self.

2. Write Them Out

- Write 3–5 affirmations every morning or evening in a journal.
- Use them as **journal openers**: “I am safe now. I choose to trust myself.” → Reflect.

3. Place Visual Reminders

- Sticky notes on mirrors, phones, or fridge.
- Use an affirmation phone wallpaper or reminder app.

4. Use When Triggered

In moments of fear, rejection, or silence from others:

- Stop.
- Breathe.
- Say: “*This is an old wound speaking. I do not abandon myself anymore.*”

Affirmations for Healing Abandonment

For Emotional Safety and Security

- “I am safe to feel. I am safe to be.”
- “My presence is not a burden—it is a gift.”
- “I no longer fear being left, because I stand by myself.”

For Self-Worth and Belonging

- “I am worthy of love without needing to prove it.”
- “Even if others leave, I am never alone within.”
- “I belong here, exactly as I am.”

For Trust and Relationship Healing

- “Not all distance means danger. I can stay grounded.”
- “I release the need to chase love. I let love come to me.”
- “I can trust that some people stay—and so can I.”

For Inner Child Healing

- “You did nothing wrong. You were never too much.”
- “I’m here now, and I’m not going anywhere.”
- “I will be the one who always shows up for you.”

Healing from abandonment is essential for developing healthy thoughts, habits, and relationships because unresolved abandonment wounds can distort how you see yourself, others, and the world. When you carry the fear of being left or unloved, it often leads to self-sabotage, emotional withdrawal, people-pleasing, or unhealthy coping mechanisms like substance use or perfectionism. By facing and healing these wounds, you begin to rebuild trust in yourself, create emotional safety, and form more secure and fulfilling connections. This healing shifts your perspective from fear and scarcity to confidence and emotional resilience, allowing you to live with greater peace, purpose, and the ability to both give and receive love freely.