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SLOW& STEADY STRATEGIES FOR NARCISSISTIC ABUSE RECOVERY

© Heather Gray, LICSW, MSW
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Hi, It's Heather.

Welcome to the Slow & Steady Strategies Tool Kit.

Consider this a work in progress. I'll add to it as we continue the show.

Keep the link handy so you can come back to it when you need it or to grab new skills.

These are the strategies I teach as you are learning to heal and work through different situations.

When you get stuck in a feeling, thought, or situation, come by here, check out the list and see if you can find some inspiration for something you can try.

In it with you. Thanks for supporting the show.

CHECK IN WITH YOURSELF

- Don't expect yourself to know what you're thinking and feeling the exact moment you want to know.
- Take a second to get curious.
- What are you thinking? What are you feeling? How does it feel in your body right now?
- What do you need to feel calmer? You're not going to want to make any big decisions until you are calm and your body is regulated.
- What might you be reacting to? What might you want to do about it?

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PRACTICE SELF-VALIDATION

- When you feel clear on what you're feeling, describe for yourself why it makes sense that you feel that way.
- If you find yourself judging yourself. ask yourself if it would make sense to you if someone else was feeling the way you are in that same situation. Allow yourself the same grace you show others.
- Challenge your inner critic in the same way you would challenge a friend who was talking poorly of themselves.

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PRACTICE SELF-COMPASSION

- In moments when you are finding that the inner critic is winning and you're caught in a cycle of beating yourself up, acknowledge for yourself that you are suffering. Stop trying to push those feelings aside.

- Identify when you are experiencing pain, stress, or discomfort. This could be emotional, physical, or psychological suffering. Self-compassion is about recognizing your own struggle.

- Develop a practice of self-kindness. Offer yourself words of comfort and support, as you would to a close friend. Replace self-criticism and self-judgment with compassionate and understanding self-talk.

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PRACTICE SELF-ACCEPTANCE

- Accept yourself as you are, with all your strengths and weaknesses.
- Embrace your imperfections and understand that they do not define your worth.
- Cultivate a non-judgmental attitude toward yourself, allowing room for growth and learning from your experiences.

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OTHERS' FEELINGS ARE NOT YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

- When you catch yourself blaming yourself, beating yourself up, and thinking critically of yourself, replace those words with more positive affirmations.
- Focus on the things you like about yourself and if you can't think of any, ask a trusted friend who loves you to remind you.
- Remind yourself that you are a work in progress. It took you this long to have internalized these things so deeply, it’s going to take a while to get out but look at your thoughts and beliefs of yourself with a highly critical eye.
- Practice not believing everything you think.

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PAY ATTENTION TO THE 5 PEOPLE YOU SPEND THE MOST TIME WITH

- Look critically at who you spend your time with and how much time you spend with them. Are you surrounded by supportive and validating people?

- Just as you internalized negative messaging, you can internalize positive messaging. Ultimately, we want to voice you hear the loudest to be yours and we want your voice to be accepting, validating, compassionate, and understanding.

- If you’re not there yet, we can get you there faster by ensuring you are surrounded by people who consider you, validate you, and encourage you

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**REMEMBER: BOUNDARIES ARE THE GREATEST ACT OF SELF-CARE

- Check in with yourself about your boundaries.
- Ensure that you are paying attention to them and that you are responding to things when they don't feel good.
- Watching yourself set and hold boundaries will reinforce for you that you are worthy of and deserving of that protection.

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VALIDATE YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES

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- Trust your perception: Recognize that your perception of past events is valid and influenced by your unique perspective. Trust that your memories are your own and reflect your subjective experience.

- Be aware of gaslighting behaviors from others and from yourself. Refrain from questioning or invalidating your memories based on others' opinions or attempts to discredit you.

- Seek corroborating evidence: If you find yourself doubting a particular memory, look for any supporting evidence that can validate your recollection. This could include photographs, journals, letters, or testimonies from others who were present during the event.

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VALIDATE YOUR GROWTH

- Recognize the growth and change you have experienced as a result of your past experiences.
- Validate the resilience and strength it took to overcome challenges or difficult circumstances.
- Acknowledge your progress and the wisdom gained from your past.

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START JOURNALING

- Create a safe space for yourself and a secure place for your journal. It's not very warm and fuzzy but remember journals can be digital and password protected.
- Set intentions, if that idea moves you
- Write freely, if moved to do so
- Seek prompts that inspire you if you are stuck for ideas
- Name, list, and describe emotions, experiences, questions, and curiosities without naming, blaming, or shaming yourself.
- Don't let the inner critic hold the pen but you can dump her words out so you can stop holding them.
- Celebrate progress and wins so you are putting a stamp on them and making them all the more real.

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PRACTICE TRUSTING YOURSELF

- Tune into your body: Your body often provides signals and cues that can guide your decision-making. Pay attention to physical sensations, such as tightness, relaxation, or unease, when you're considering different options. Notice how your body reacts to different situations and people.

- Reflect on your decision-making process: After making a decision, take the time to reflect on how it felt to follow your intuition.

- Learn from mistakes: Understand that mistakes are a natural part of the learning process. If you make a decision based on your intuition that doesn't turn out as expected, use it as an opportunity for growth and learning.

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REMEMBER TO DEEP BREATHE

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- Find a comfortable position: Sit or lie down in a comfortable position. Close your eyes if it feels comfortable for you, or maintain a soft gaze.
- Bring your attention to your toes:
- Inhale sloly and deeply:
- Continue breathing up your
- body: With each deep inhalation, let the breath move up through your lower body, pelvis, abdomen, chest, and into your upper body.

**Will make this its own document in the future. Just use this for now to get you through!

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REMEMBER TO DEEP BREATHE (PAGE 2)

04

- Pause at your head: As you reach your head, briefly hold the breath for a moment, feeling the fullness and presence of the breath in this space. Allow yourself to experience a sense of calm and clarity in this pause.

- Exhale slowly and fully: Begin exhaling, imagining the breath flowing down your back, starting from your head and moving down through your neck, shoulders, spine, and all the way down to your tailbone. Visualize the breath carrying away any tension or stress from your body.

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REMEMBER TO DEEP BREATHE (PAGE 3)

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- Repeat the cycle: Focus on the rhythmic flow of the breath, allowing yourself to relax deeper with each cycle.
- Practice for a desired duration
- Observe sensations and let go: As you practice, notice any sensations or thoughts that arise without judgment. If any tension or stress comes up, imagine it being released
- Remember that deep breathing is a tool you can use anytime you feel the need to center yourself or find a moment of tranquility throughout your day.

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IDENTIFY YOUR NEEDS

- I have a whole set of journaling prompts for this. Find it in the show notes in Episode 6 of the show or here.

- Some quick things to consider if you can't access the document now: Start with self-reflection. "What do I need right now?" Pay attention to your emotions, physical sensations, and desires. Tune into your thoughts and notice any patterns or recurring themes.

- Start with basic needs: Begin by focusing on your basic needs, such as physical well-being, safety, and emotional support. Ask yourself, "What do I need to feel physically comfortable and safe? What emotional support would be helpful to me?" Identifying and addressing these foundational needs is an essential starting point.

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CHALLENGE FEELINGS OF GUILT OR OBLIGATION

- Recognize the guilt or obligation: Start by becoming aware of the specific situations, thoughts, or relationships that trigger feelings of guilt or obligation within you. Notice when these emotions arise and how they impact your behavior and decision-making.
- Question the origin
- Examine the impact on your well-being
- Challenge irrational beliefs
- When in doubt, remember that boundaries are the greatest act of self-care

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TRANSPARENT COMMUNICATION

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- Communicating so clearly and directly that you are telling the person everything they need to know. You are telling them what they need to know so you can stop worrying about what they think.

- Express yourself assertively without apology, unless you're genuinely apologizing

- Listen actively, using caution when considering backing down from your stated intent and message

- Consider feedback that is delivered respectfully and with care

- Remember you can always come back to it later.

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BEGIN TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND CELEBRATE WINS & PROGRESS

- Reflect on your achievements: Take time to reflect on your past accomplishments, no matter how big or small they may seem. Make a list of achievements, milestones, and positive experiences you've had.

- Recognize that celebrating wins and progress is not self-indulgent or boastful; it is an essential part of acknowledging your efforts and growth.

- Celebrate in your own way. Make acknowledgement observsable, something you can see. Don't just think it. significant milestones with a momento. Put smaller ones in writing.

- Share with your safe people

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STOP IGNORING RED FLAGS

- A red flag refers to a warning sign or indicator that someone may be problematic or potentially harmful to or for you. The red flag refers to that intuitive feeling that someone isn’t treating you right or isn’t representing themselves honestly.
- Practice trusting your gut and paying attention to warning signs. Use caution when tempted to give the benefit of the doubt.
- Hold yourself accountable to who you let into your life. Do a self examination of who you’ve been letting in and why. Check in with yourself on whether or not they deserve to stay.
- Remember that boundaries are the greatest act of self-care and use them.
- Ignore your pain tolerance. It's probably too high. Just because you can handle someone's toxicity doesn't mean you should.

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INTRODUCTION TO INNER CHILD WORK

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- Inner child work is about reparenting the little girl within you. When you are reacting to something or feeling dysregulated by something, it is often because it feels in your body like a place you have been before when you weren't kept safe.

- To re-regulate your body and nervous system, you begin to visualize yourself as a little girl. You then visualize yourself in the present day holding that little girl's hand, taking care of her, and assuring her of her safety.

- You're meeting the needs of the little girl in you that were never met at the time.

- You watch the little girl in the situation you are currently in. What do you want for her? What do you wish for her? What didn't she get that she always deserved? You watch yourself reparent that little girl by offering her that support and validation.

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INTRODUCTION TO INNER CHILD WORK (2)

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04

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INTRODUCTION TO INNER CHILD WORK (3)

- A good way to make this process tangible and concrete for yourself is to carry a picture of yourself when you were younger, between 7-10. I like the idea of carrying it on your person at all times but you can also have a digital version as your homescreen on your phone and computer.

- Think about your inner child as you move through the day. What does she need? If she were experiencing what you are in that moment, what would you wish for for her? Allow yourself that same grace, that same validation, that same support, and that same safety.

- We're all just grown up kids and what those little girls in us deserve, we in our present day deserve, too.

INTRODUCTION TO INNER CHILD WORK (4)

- Consider writing your younger self a letter. You can fill it with compassion, support, understanding, and encouragement. You can remind her that it isn't her fault, that you are going to keep her safe.

- This will likely make you feel raw, exposed, and vulnerable but it's also giving yourself permission to heal. You're giving yourself permission to let in love, healing, and acceptance. These are things you were denied as a child. Allowing yourself them now opens you up to a world of healing.

- Inner child work is a whole thing unto itself. There's no way I am covering it all in a few slides but it gives you some insight into how this approach might work for you and your recovery.

In it with you. Bye for now.

I hope you found this helpful.

If you haven't already, please do consider leaving a review for the show on your podcast app. It'll help the show be found by other women who need to hear what we're talking about.

Have a question for the show?

Send in a recorded voice memo or email to:

Heather@DaughtersNPD.com

I'll feature your story and question anonymously on an upcoming episode.

Heather