

Chapter 1- Survival Mode: The Invisible Cage

Section 1: Am I in Survival Mode?

So, I ask you to take a moment and ask yourself...

What does my version of survival mode look like?

What does it feel like?

Do I feel like I'm running through each day, just trying to make it on auto pilot?

Is life passing me by?

If so... Please take a moment to give yourself compassion.

Because, how much strength does it take us to be a survivor?

In my personal/professional opinion...A LOT

Therefore, I pose the question to you right here and now...are you in Survival Mode?

Survival mode isn't always as dramatic as it sounds. Sometimes it's subtle, hidden in our everyday routines and behaviors. It could be a constant feeling of anxiety, an inability to relax, disrupted sleep, lack of focus, or emotional exhaustion. Or it might be constantly anticipating the worst, overworking yourself, or neglecting your needs and boundaries. If you're nodding your head,

or if a little voice inside you whispered, “that sounds like me” - then this section is especially for you. Don’t worry, it’s not a life sentence. Understanding is the first step towards change.

Identifying Symptoms and Patterns

Survival mode- is a state in which an individual operates with the primary focus of overcoming immediate danger, in an attempt to secure both their basic needs and safety. While in certain circumstances being in survival mode is both crucial and necessary, such as finding shelter in a natural disaster or being confronted by a dangerous predator or attacker. However, survival mode becomes detrimental when it turns into our default mode of operation.

Simply because our bodies and minds are not designed to endure constant fight, flight, or freeze responses. When in survival mode, our focus narrows, prioritizing immediate safety and immediate needs. While this is an effective short-term response to danger, remaining in this state over an extended period can cause significant strain, often leading us to experience a variety of physical, emotional, and mental health issues.

In survival mode, the central nervous system plays a pivotal role in our body’s reaction to perceived threats. When faced with potential danger, it orchestrates a rapid response to ensure our overall survival. In this state, one of its primary reactions is to release stress hormones like cortisol. Beneficial in small, occasional doses, these hormones prepare our body for action. However, when produced consistently over time, they can wreak havoc and often manifest in a variety of ways, including sleep disturbances, appetite changes, immune system suppression, and increased risk of

numerous health conditions. Armed with these hormones, our body is primed for four primary survival/stress responses: fight, flight, freeze, and fawn.

- **Fight-Confronting the Threat Head-On**
 - Poor Focus and Concentration
 - Aggressive Outbursts
 - Explosive Behaviors
 - Hyperactivity and Irritability

- **Flight-Escaping or avoiding the danger**
 - Running Away
 - Chronic Avoidance
 - Perfectionist
 - Over thinker
 - Anxiety, Panic, Obsessive

- **Freeze-Becoming immobile of ‘playing dead’ to avoid detection or further harm**
 - Numb
 - Difficulty Making Decisions
 - Chronic Procrastination
 - Monotone Voice/Few Facial Expressions

- **Fawn- Appeasing or trying to please the threat in an effort to deflect harm**
 - Poor Boundaries
 - People Pleasing
 - Lack of Identify
 - Denial of Needs

These survival responses can become deeply ingrained, defense mechanisms designed to maximize our chances of survival when encountering dangerous and harmful situations. Over time, our body can come to trigger these reactions based on perceived threats, even if they're not genuinely harmful. Meaning we may sometimes find ourselves responding in a survival response, when in fact, the situation is not logically or factually threatening. Yet, our system interprets it as such.

On an emotional and mental level, being in survival mode can lead to feelings of constant anxiety, hyper-vigilance, emotional numbness or mood swings, and a diminished capacity to think creatively, plan for the future, or enjoy the present. Relationships can suffer, as survival mode often causes individuals to appear self-centered or detached. When in reality, they are simply trying to cope.

But it's important to remember, survival mode is not a life sentence. It's a testament to your strength and resilience, a sign that you have survived. Now, our aim is to shift from merely surviving to truly thriving. Recognizing the signs of survival mode and understanding its impact on your life is the first step towards this transformative journey.

Section 1: Self-Awareness is How We Heal

Being self-aware allows you to recognize these patterns, to understand how you respond to stress, and to identify what triggers your switch into survival mode. It's a crucial step in breaking free from the relentless cycle of mere survival and starting your journey towards thriving.

As you delve deeper with the upcoming journal prompts, remember to approach this exploration with compassion. Self-awareness can be challenging and confronting, but its purpose is to guide healing, not to induce shame. As Brené Brown wisely stated, “Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it”.

Let’s journey forward embracing our truths, understanding that this path to self-discovery is about healing, not self-blame - and always with kindness and compassion to ourselves.

The Following journal prompts will guide you in identifying and reflecting upon your own symptoms of survival mode.

- Can you identify situations or periods in your life when you were operating in survival mode?

- What signs or symptoms of survival mode do you recognize in yourself?

- Think about a time when you experienced one of the stress responses: fight, flight, freeze, or fawn. In a kind and non-judgmental way, describe the situation and how you felt. What would you tell your past self now, knowing what you do about these survival mechanisms?

- What physical, emotional, or mental signs can you recognize in yourself when you're in survival mode?

- What coping mechanisms have you developed to deal with being in survival mode?

- Reflect on a period in your life when you felt constantly in survival mode. What were the external factors or internal beliefs that kept you there? How did it affect your relationships, health, and overall well-being? Now, envision a moment where you felt safe and supported; what can you learn from these two periods?

- Can you identify any relationships or areas of your life that have been impacted by being in survival mode?
- How can you practice self-compassion and patience with yourself as you navigate this transition?
- Consider the tools and resources you've acquired over the years. If you were to give advice to someone else experiencing survival mode, what gentle wisdom would you share? Writing this out can often illuminate our own path to healing and resilience.
- Considering Brené Brown's quote: "Owning our story can be hard but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it." What part of your story have you been avoiding or running from? How can you approach this aspect with

compassion and understanding, rather than judgment or shame?

Section 2: The Impact of Trauma and Stress

Now that we've pulled back the curtain on what survival mode looks like, the real question emerges - where did survival mode come from and why do we sometimes remain in it for years? To answer these questions, we must first understand that trauma and stress, often intertwined, play significant roles in triggering our survival instincts. While initially these responses originally evolved to safeguard us from immediate physical threats, they often morph into unconscious, habitual patterns that can quickly work their way into the structure of our everyday life. Often causing us to mistakenly think of them as just "who we are". Understanding the progression of trauma and stress into survival mode is a vital part of transitioning from an everyday life of merely surviving, to a life of fulfillment and happiness (aka thrive mode!).

As we venture into this next section, we'll unpack the profound impact of these experiences, identify where they come from and liberate them once and for all.

From Shadow to Light-How Survival Mode is Triggered

To understand survival mode, we must be willing to uncover the hidden language of our mind and body. We must be willing to go back and re-discover how our body LEARNED to defend, soothe, run, or freeze itself in times of distress.

One of the ways our body learned this behavior was through trauma - which I call the “T” word. As a therapist of over 10 years, not a day goes by that someone is not taken aback when I refer to it as the “T” Word.

In many sessions, I’ll say, “What do you mean exactly, I’ve never gone through any trauma?” or they’ll say, “You must be mistaken, I grew up with a great family and had no problems, I have no trauma” - and in some cases that could be completely true.

As someone who has personally survived their fair share of traumatic situations and experiences, I am not exactly happy about the word either. But if we are truly serious about taking back control of our lives, stepping out of survival mode, and re-designing a life that is in true alignment with our needs and desires, we must be willing to take a look at where it all began. Only then, when we are able to illuminate the lurking shadows of survival mode within our lives, that we can then begin to take back our power and create a life worth living.

Part A: Echoes from Childhood - Unraveling Early Traumas

For those who’ve experienced events in their early years that have left lasting imprints.

Childhood trauma doesn’t just leave memories, it ingrains survival modes that are often louder than adult voices.

When we first arrive in this world as children, our minds are wide and open, absorbing every whisper, every touch, and every

emotion. It's through these raw, unfiltered moments that we learn the rhythm of speech, the way of life, and the art of connection. As we gather these experiences, they begin to mold us, subtly scripting our reactions and expectations, to how we feel the world should and should not be.

However, for some (myself included) the world wasn't always gentle, and sometimes our experiences don't just become lessons—they become deep seeded wounds. These wounds, if not tended to, can push us into survival mode. It's our mind's way of trying to protect our hearts, even if it means putting up walls or hiding our true selves.

Allowing ourselves, self-awareness and self-recognition of this conditioned response is the first step in healing, thus allowing us to step from the shadows of survival, and into the light of genuine living.

As children, we're tenderhearted explorers, absorbing the world around us with pure, unfiltered wonder. But sometimes, amidst these discoveries, we encounter moments of pain or confusion. These traumatic events, subtle or overt, embed themselves deeply, shaping our beliefs, our behaviors, and our relationships in ways we might not even recognize until years later. It's essential to remember that there's no shame in what we faced as children. These experiences were out of our control and are not reflections of our worth.

It's within these early moments that many of us unknowingly develop our defenses, our survival instincts, to protect that vulnerable child within. The heartbreak that what was once a

protective shield, can over time, become a cage, hindering our ability to form meaningful bonds or respond to life's challenges in healthy ways.

Moreover, when these distressing events become our 'normal', it dims our ability to even recognize them as the traumas they truly are. But here's the beacon of hope: by revisiting and understanding these early shadows, by shining a gentle light of compassion and awareness on them, we begin the empowering journey of healing and reclaiming the joy, connection, and peace that's inherently ours.

Below we will explore and break down some of the profound impacts and lasting imprints of childhood trauma. Through this exploration, you will find a variety of journal prompts designed to guide us through the healing process. As we cultivate a deeper self-awareness, we are able to empower ourselves to reclaim control and make conscious choices that align with the life we truly desire to live.

So...let's take a deep breath and reflect on our early childhood experiences

- **Formative Years:** Childhood is a formative period where our brains are rapidly developing, and our understanding of the world and our place in it is being shaped. Experiences during these years leave a lasting imprint.

- Reflect on some of your earliest memories. How do you think they've influenced your current beliefs or behaviors?

- What positive or challenging experiences from your early years stand out to you, and why?

- **Subconscious Patterns:** Traumatic events in childhood can create subconscious patterns of behavior and belief systems that might not be evident until adulthood. These patterns can become deeply ingrained and automatic.
 - Can you identify any recurring behaviors or beliefs that might have roots in your childhood? Describe them.

 - Think about a time when you reacted strongly to a situation. Do you think this reaction might be connected to a childhood event?

- **Foundation for Coping Mechanisms:** The ways we learn to cope with trauma in childhood often set the precedent for how we deal with stressors in adulthood. For some, this might mean resorting to avoidance, while others might become overly confrontational
 - What were your go-to coping mechanisms as a child when faced with stress or trauma? How have they evolved, or have they remained the same in adulthood?

 - Can you recall a specific childhood event that taught you a particular way to cope? How do you feel about that coping mechanism now?

- **Physical Brain Development:** Childhood trauma can have tangible effects on the developing brain, influencing areas related to stress response, emotional regulation, and decision-making.

- Do you find certain emotions or reactions harder to control than others? Consider if there might be a childhood event linked to this.

- Think about decision-making moments in your life. Are there any you believe might be influenced by childhood traumas?

- **Normalized Responses:** When trauma or chronic stress is a consistent part of a child’s environment, it can become their “normal”. This normalization can make it harder to recognize and address the effects of trauma later in life - as the individual might not even identify their experiences as traumatic.

- Reflect on any behaviors or beliefs you once considered “normal” but now recognize as being linked to trauma. How do you feel about them now?

- Were there events or situations in your childhood that you didn't realize were traumatic until later in life? Describe your feelings when you came to this realization.

Congratulations on reaching this point!

In the shadow of childhood trauma, avoidance often becomes our most honed coping skill, we utilize avoidance in the hopes that our issues will just go away. We instinctively learn to sidestep the darker corners within ourselves and in our lives, hoping to escape further pain.

Yet, by confronting and engaging with the prompts in this journal, you've shown immense bravery. Even if you've simply attempted to answer the questions - know that you've achieved something significant, something that deserves recognition and praise!

Without self-recognition and honest self-appraisal, we risk being perpetually being trapped in survival mode. We might find ourselves waiting, hoping for someone to come and rescue us, longing to hear the words we've been yearning for.

But this is our moment, our opportunity to be our own hero. Even if it's just for a fleeting second, allow yourself to embrace that role. Acknowledge all that you've endured and envision where you wish to journey next. In this story, you're not just a survivor; you're the hero.

Remember, if you've experienced childhood trauma, it doesn't mean you're broken or damaged. It simply means you weren't equipped with the right tools at that time to process and heal. But now, you're on a journey of understanding and healing. Psychological research by Dr. James W. Pennebaker indicates that expressive writing, such as journaling, can lead to significant mental and emotional healing, particularly in individuals who've experienced trauma. His studies suggest that putting our experiences into words can reduce the impact of traumatic events and lead to improved mental well-being.

Therefore, every step you take, even by merely engaging with this journal, is a testament to your resilience and commitment. Know that healing is possible, and as you move forward, you're charting a path to a brighter more empowered future.

Part B: Scars and Stories - Navigating Life's Storms

For those who've faced traumatic experiences in their adolescent or adult years.

Life is a mosaic of experiences, both delightful and daunting. While some moments lift our spirits, others can be jolting, leaving imprints that affect our well-being and worldview. Whether these traumas occurred in our teenage years, adulthood, or recent past, their impact is undeniable.

In life, not all scars are birthed from early childhood. Many of us find ourselves caught in survival mode due to events that arise later in life. Broken hearts, betrayals, job losses, or the profound grief from the loss of a loved one – these can all propel us into a state of constant alertness and defense. Such experiences, while

deeply painful, are part of the human journey. However, remaining stuck in survival mode after these events can hinder our present and future. It's essential to recognize that, while we cannot change the past, we have the power and resilience within us to heal and move forward. By acknowledging our pain and giving it a voice, we can transition from merely surviving to truly thriving, using our scars as stories of strength and perseverance.

Let's take a moment and pause into self-awareness, let these prompts guide you. Allow yourself the space to reflect, to question, and to heal. Embrace each word, each thought, and let your pen flow on the paper.

- **Heartbreak:** Reflect on a time when your heart felt irreparably broken. What lessons have you learned from that pain, and how have they shaped your understanding of love and healing?

- **Loss:** Recall a moment of profound loss in your life. How did you find strength amidst the grief, and what outlets or rituals helped you honor the memory of what or who you lost?

- **Death:** Think about someone significant in your life who has passed away. What memories of them bring you solace, and how do you carry their legacy forward in your daily life?

- **Betrayal:** Remember an instance when you felt deeply betrayed by someone you trusted. How did you rebuild trust, not just in others, but also in yourself after that experience?

- **Challenging Changes:** Consider a sudden, unwelcome change you had to face (like losing a job or moving unexpectedly). How did you adapt and find new purpose or direction amidst the uncertainty?

In the heart of pain, when the weight of trauma hangs heavy on our souls, it's not just the pain that holds us captive. It's the suffocating sound of shame and guilt that often anchors us in place. When trauma strikes, we're not just struggling with the shock and the hurt. We're also wrestling with the whispering thoughts of "Could I have prevented this?" or "Was this somehow my fault?" These feelings come as raw and real as they can be ... often making us feel trapped within our own narratives.

However, remember: Trauma doesn't come with a manual. It doesn't ask for permission. And most of all, it's never a reflection of your worth or your choices. Trauma is an unwelcome intruder, barging into our lives without a warning or guide. Yet, for those grappling with its weight - recognize that it's not a measure of your worth or a testament to your choices, but a chapter in your story that you didn't write - but do have the power to redefine.

However, in order to do so, it's crucial to distinguish the difference between shame and guilt. While shame whispers, "I am bad", it's a reflection of how we see ourselves, casting doubt on our worthiness and existence. Guilt says, "I did something bad." It centers around our actions and choices, urging us to reflect and perhaps make amends. Whereas guilt can guide us to growth, unchecked shame can tether us to pain.

Therefore, I ask you right here, right now, in this very moment: Are you ready to free yourself from the shackles and confines of shame and guilt? No matter how hard it may seem, no matter how dark things may have gotten, no matter the depth of your pain, I challenge you with this: Don't you still deserve to move forward? Don't you deserve happiness? Unchecked, shame and guilt can rob us of these very rights.

Believe me when I say that days, weeks, months, and even years will slip by, leaving us operating as mere shadows, drifting throughout life's motions, deeply-rooted in survival mode. It's only when we courageously illuminate those dark corners that we can regain control, choosing to thrive in the light rather than persisting through the shadows.

As Brené Brown once said, “What we don’t need in the midst of the struggle, is shame for being human”

Let's pause for a moment and delve into the following journal prompts, allowing yourself to be human and release any lingering feelings of guilt or shame within you:

- **Think about a time when you felt deep shame.** What was the situation, and how did it affect your feelings about yourself? How did this shame influence your subsequent actions or reactions?
- **Unpacking Guilt:** Describe an instance where guilt consumed you. What did you learn from that experience, and how has it shaped your decisions going forward?

- **The Intersection of Shame, Guilt, and Survival Mode:** Can you recall a moment when either shame or guilt pushed you into survival mode? What protective mechanisms did you employ? How might you respond differently today?
- **Messages from the Past:** Consider any messages from childhood or significant life events that might have instilled feelings of shame or guilt. How have these messages influenced your behavior in stressful situations?
- **Transformative Acknowledgment:** Write a letter to yourself, acknowledging feelings of shame or guilt, and then offering words of compassion, understanding, and encouragement for the journey ahead. How can you shift from merely surviving to actively thriving?

In recognizing the signs of survival mode stemming from trauma, we take a powerful step toward reclaiming our narrative. It's not just about acknowledging our past, but about reshaping our future. Understand that in every struggle, there's a lesson, and in

every shadow, there's a chance for light. Congratulations and let's continue this journey together, moving from mere survival to truly living and thriving

From Pain to Patterns: The Effects Trauma has on Our Daily Life

Having explored how trauma is triggered, we now transition to exploring its profound effects on our daily lives.

Have you ever been blindsided by a sudden headache, felt an unexplained numbness in your fingers, or faced days drained of energy for no apparent reason? You're not alone. As we delve into the effects trauma has on our daily lives, you'll come to see how often these symptoms might not just be fleeting health concerns. As a therapist with over a decade of experience, I've observed countless individuals attributing these sensations to everyday stress or other health issues, often overlooking the possibility that they could be manifestations of trauma trapped within their bodies, that has lingered for days, weeks, months, and in some cases years.

In the book, "The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma" (highly recommended for anyone healing from trauma), Dr. Bessel van der Kolk - one of the most renowned experts in the field of trauma and its effects on the body, extensively explores how trauma affects the brain and body. He illustrates that trauma is indeed "kept" in the body, often harboring painful memories in ways that can manifest physically over time.

Therefore, I pose the question, what happens when survival mode becomes our default state? When the dangers we face aren't

actual threats like predatory animals, but ongoing stressors like financial insecurity, trauma, relationship problems, or job-related stress? The impact is far-reaching, affecting our physical health, mental and emotional wellbeing, relationships, and overall quality of life. So, let's explore a few of these areas that are often impacted by the effects of lasting trauma and keep us trapped in a state of survival.

Physical Impact

When our bodies are continuously flooded with stress hormones, we may experience sleep disturbances, digestive issues, weakened immune response, and a heightened risk of chronic health conditions like heart disease and diabetes. We may find our appetite fluctuating, leading to weight loss or gain, and our energy levels might plummet, leaving us chronically fatigued.

Emotional and Mental Impact

Surviving in a state of constant stress and vigilance can lead to anxiety disorders, depression, or feelings of numbness and disconnection. We may struggle to focus, our memory might suffer, and we might find it challenging to think creatively or plan for the future. We may also feel stuck in the present, unable to enjoy the simple pleasures life offers.

Relational Impact

In survival mode, our capacity to connect with others can be compromised. We may come across as detached or self-centered, not out of a lack of care, but because our energy is entirely focused on managing our stress. This can strain relationships, leading to isolation or misunderstanding.

Quality of Life

Ultimately, being stuck in survival mode can drastically affect our overall quality of life. Instead of experiencing life's richness and diversity, we may feel as if we're just getting by, trapped in a loop of managing crises and bracing for the next.

Recognizing these signs and understanding the impact of survival mode in your life is the first crucial step towards shifting from surviving to thriving. By becoming aware of these effects, you can begin to make changes, take steps towards healing, and start to build a life defined not by stress and survival, but by wellbeing and resilience.

In the following chapters, we'll delve deeper into tools and strategies to recognize survival mode, address its causes, and guide you on the path from survival to a balanced, fulfilled life.

So delve into some reflection:

- In what ways have you noticed survival mode impacting your physical health?

- How does being in survival mode affect your mental and emotional wellbeing?

- Can you identify any personal strengths or resources that could support you in this transition?

Section 3: The Addiction of Survival Mode

When chaos feels like home

After walking through the shadows and triggers of survival mode, we now enter the world of Addiction.

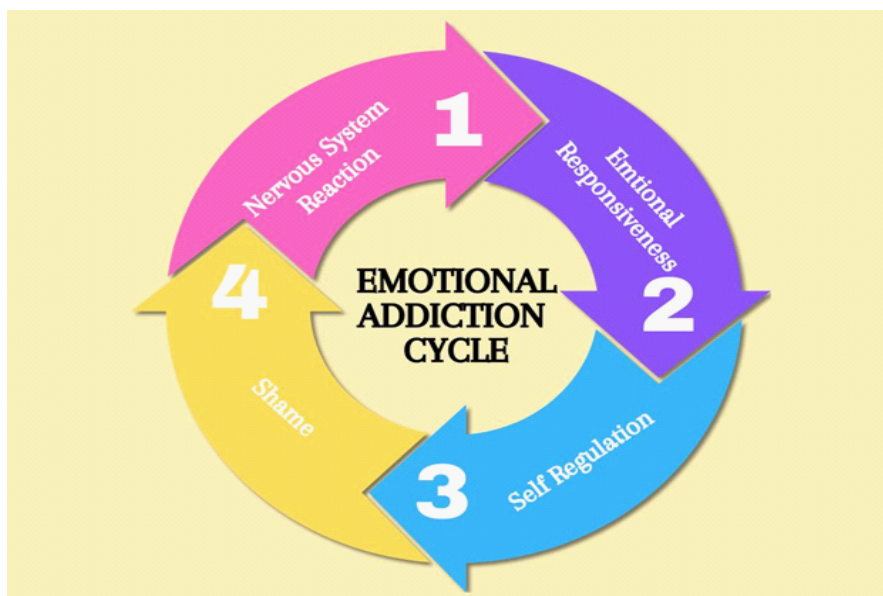
Have you ever found yourself stuck in a loop of overthinking, replaying past situations, endlessly scrolling on your phone, or feelings of emptiness during quiet moments?

Usually when the word addiction is spoken, images of substances like alcohol, cigarettes, or illicit drugs can come to mind. But hidden in the shadows of these well-known culprits is a more elusive and equally binding chain – emotional addiction.

At first glance, these might not seem like your ‘typical’ addictions, but they most certainly can be. They’re patterns we fall into, seeking the familiar, even if it’s detrimental to our overall sense of self and wellbeing. For many of us, the familiarity of survival mode becomes a twisted game of safe haven. While the world might applaud us for being ‘strong’ or ‘resilient’, the truth is, often beneath

that veneer of strength, we're trapped. We're enmeshed in a cycle where chaos feels more like home than calm does. Genuine peace can feel unsettling and stability almost alien.

So, even when the external battles cease, we might find ourselves restless, itching for the next fight or drama. We may continuously and subconsciously gravitate back to what feels familiar even if it's chaotic. It's a startling realization, but survival mode, with its constant rush and alertness, can become an addiction, where we can easily become ensnared in our own cycles of emotional addiction. Emotional addiction isn't about seeking pleasure but a search for the familiar, even if that familiarity is laced with pain.



Addiction... A word that holds immense power yet can be profoundly destructive.

Confession time: I once dubbed myself the ‘self-sabotage queen’, largely due to my pull towards emotional addiction.... And the most surprising part? I was completely oblivious. Emotional addiction sneaks in when we begin a relationship and suddenly doubt our worthiness of love. It’s present when we push ourselves to the brink at work, when we delay tasks endlessly, or when we mindlessly scroll online, chasing brief bursts of dopamine.

But let’s be clear: emotional addiction can steal our chances at enduring joy. It ensnares us, holding us hostage in perpetual survival mode, making us believe we’re only entitled to fleeting happiness. It’s imperative to break free from this cycle.

If this journal is in your hands, really grasp this truth: You are deserving of happiness. You’re worth more than temporary highs. You are deserving of a life worth living. Your moment is now

Now, as we delve deeper, I invite you to engage with the following journal prompts. Through these reflections, you might unveil patterns, recognizing signs of emotional addiction that perhaps have been lurking beneath the surface.

- Reflect on a recent moment when you felt a rush of happiness or relief. Was it tied to a behavior you repeat

often? Describe the scenario. Think about the times that you delay tasks or procrastinate. What emotions or feelings are you trying to avoid facing in those moments?

- Think about the times that you delay tasks or procrastinate. What emotions or feelings are you trying to avoid facing in those moments?

- Do you ever find yourself revisiting past events or conversations, reliving them in your head? What emotions do these memories evoke? Why do you think they keep resurfacing?

These hormones prepare us to either stand our ground or make a quick escape – the classic “fight or flight” response. Over time, if we’re frequently exposed to stress, our body becomes accustomed to these hormone levels, almost like developing a taste for a certain kind of music. Without even realizing it, we might start to crave the familiarity of that ‘tune,’ seeking out situations or patterns that evoke those familiar feelings. It’s not that we enjoy stress, but our body has become so used to it that a calm state might feel alien. This is the addictive nature of our biology at play. It’s essential to remember that it’s not a sign of weakness but rather that our body is trying to make sense of its environment. With awareness and understanding, we can retune our internal orchestra, aiming for a melody of balance and calm.

Keep in mind, the cycle of emotional addiction is deeply rooted in our biology. When our threat-based nervous system is activated, it paves the way for intense emotional reactivity. In response, we instinctively try to self-regulate, seeking equilibrium. Yet, often this leads to feelings of shame or self-betrayal, perpetuating the cycle and deepening the entanglement in the addictive loop

Unlocking Awareness: The Key Role of Personal Triggers

Each of us carries a unique set of triggers; these are deeply personal and often rooted in past experiences. Think of them as sensitive buttons that, when pushed, send us spiraling back into the familiar territory of survival mode (Hello Fight, Flight, Freeze, and Fawn). Whether these triggers arise from past traumas, negative patterns learned in childhood, or deeply held beliefs about ourselves, they play a pivotal role in how we respond to life’s challenges. It’s

essential to understand and recognize these triggers as they often fuel the cycle of emotional addiction, keeping us locked in repetitive and unhelpful patterns.

Take a Moment to deeply consider the list below. Which of these resonates with you? Identifying your personal triggers is the first step towards understanding ultimately mastering your reactions and taking back control-PLEASE TAKE NOTE- Identifying OUR personal triggers takes time...so please have compassion and patience with yourself as you experience this journey 😊

TRIGGER LIST

- I Felt Lonely
- I Felt Powerless
- I Felt Stuck
- I Felt Unheard
- I Felt Misunderstood
- I Felt Blamed
- I Felt Abandoned
- I Felt Judged
- I Felt a Lack of Affection
- I Felt Lied To
- I Felt Helpless

Now that you've pinpointed your Triggers, let's delve into the journal prompts below to gain even deeper insight

- Recall a recent event where you felt an unexpected intense emotional reaction.

Getting stuck in survival mode isn't an overnight occurrence. It's a gradual process, driven by patterns we might not even be aware of. For many of us, true peace and stability can feel foreign and out of reach. Being in survival mode becomes ingrained, so much so that we allow it to define our habits and behaviors and slowly it becomes second nature.

These habits and behaviors become deeply ingrained, often serving as a protective mechanism against perceived threats. While they might have been beneficial in the past, holding onto them now might be what's keeping us from truly living. It's time to illuminate these patterns, understand their origins, and determine how they keep us tethered to a constant state of survival.

But we must ask ourselves: is this truly who we are or has the storm passed? Perhaps it's time to step out of survival mode and discover the depths of who we can truly become?

Let's Delve into some Journal Prompts for Analyzing our Personal Habits and Patterns

- Think about your daily routines. Are there any behaviors you repeatedly do that don't serve your well-being?

- Reflect on relationships where you feel constantly on guard. What patterns of interaction contribute to this feeling?

- Identify moments when you felt unnecessarily defensive or guarded. What provoked this response, and how did you handle it?

- In times of stress, what are your go-to coping mechanisms? Do they provide genuine relief or just a temporary escape?

Remember, each entry is a step closer to understanding yourself better, breaking the cycle, and paving the way for genuine healing and growth. Embrace this journey with an open heart.

