

Chapter 1

THE JOURNEY TO THE WOMAN I WANT TO BE

WHAT DOES THE JOURNEY TO BECOMING THE WOMAN I WANT TO BE LOOK LIKE?

There are many ways to become the person you want to be. You will know you are on the right path when:

Your everyday life is the way you want it to be

AND

you no longer hurt other people.

The purpose of this workbook is to help you live your life in a way that is good for you and good for others. To achieve that goal you will learn to:

Build on your strengths

AND

overcome obstacles.

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In this workbook you will:

1. Think about things that are important in your life.
2. Understand how you got them in the past and plan how you will get them in the future.
3. Understand the obstacles that have stopped you from getting those things that are important in your life and from being the person you want to be.
4. Develop a plan for overcoming obstacles and becoming the person you want to be.
5. Put your plan to work in your daily life.

The last point is very important: Simply doing the exercises in this workbook isn't enough. What matters are the choices and changes you make every day. Completing exercises in a workbook is one thing—becoming the person you want to be is a journey that takes effort every single day.

Talking to your counselor when you are in counseling is an important part of this journey. You and your counselor will talk about how you can learn new skills, get around obstacles, and move on with your life.

HOW WILL I KNOW I'M GETTING THERE?

Later in this workbook, we will talk about how you will know that you are making progress on this journey. **You will know you are making progress when you are able to answer five questions:**

1. How do you know things are getting better?
2. How do others know things are getting better?
3. How do you know things aren't going well?
4. How do others know things aren't going well?
5. If things are not going well, what can you do about it?

Counseling = Reasons for Hope

- After completing counseling, most people who harmed others in the past have gained the skills they need to prevent further criminal behavior.
- People who complete counseling do much better than those who do not. They get into less trouble with the law and have more skills for living a good life.
- The longer you go without harming anyone, the less likely it is that you will do it again.
- In all, there are lots of reasons for hope!

HOW WILL COUNSELING HELP ME BECOME THE WOMAN I WANT TO BE?

Let's start with what counseling is and is not.

What Counseling Is

Counseling is about understanding and changing the ways you think, feel, and act. You will learn how the ways you think, feel, and act have either helped you or gotten you into trouble.

For example, you may believe that the world is a scary and even dangerous place. "No one is going to give me what I need, so it is okay to get what I need any way I can." If that is your attitude toward life, there is a good chance you will get into trouble sooner or later.

On the other hand, you may believe that, "Life isn't always fair but I can solve problems and keep myself safe." If that is the way you think, you will probably have an easier time getting what you want out of life.

What Counseling Is Not

Sometimes during counseling, you may feel bad about things you did in the past. But counseling should **NEVER** leave you feeling bad about who you are.

Your Skills Toolbox

Being in counseling is like making a toolbox that will help you build the life you want for yourself. The tools you place in your box will be skills that you learn in counseling. Skills such as:

- Keeping yourself calm (your counselor may call this emotional regulation)
- Taking action based on your values and not just your emotions
- Knowing how to develop relationships with people (your counselor may call this interpersonal effectiveness)
- Being able to manage yourself in difficult situations

What Will My Counselor Think of Me?

When you begin counseling, you may feel that no one will accept or understand you. It is possible that in the eyes of the law you have committed a crime. However, in counseling you will learn that you are much more than your biggest mistakes. In time, you will prove to others that you are no longer the person you were when you made those mistakes.

What Will Other People Think of Me?

By the time people have begun counseling for harmful actions, they have usually heard a lot of other people tell them why they should be in counseling.

So let's look at what other people want for you. (By other people, we mean your family, friends, co-workers, social workers, or even the court.) Here is a story about a woman who was ordered into counseling by the court.

Harriett's Story, Part 1

Harriett was a single mom with one daughter, LaTasha, who was eight years old. Harriett was in many bad relationships with men. One day she met Paul and she thought things were going to change. Paul was nice to her and her daughter, paid attention to her, and bought her things. She was determined to stay with Paul no matter what. Paul started asking her to include LaTasha in their sexual acts. Harriett did not want to call LaTasha into the bedroom and engage in sexual acts with her but she did it to keep Paul happy. LaTasha told her school guidance counselor about her mother's and Paul's sexual behavior with her. Harriett and Paul were arrested.

Harriett was charged and convicted for molesting LaTasha. She was sentenced to three years of probation. She started counseling because the court ordered her into treatment. When she first started in counseling, she felt that her punishment was unfair. Yes, she had engaged in sexual acts with her daughter, but she did not want to do it and it was because Paul wanted it. Making her serve probation and attend treatment was too harsh a punishment.

Harriett was lucky. Her mother said that she would support her as long as she completed the treatment program. This was important to Harriett because her mother was the one caring for LaTasha. However, if she ever broke the law again, her mother would no longer be there for her.

At first, Harriett tried to convince the counselor and her mother that she did not need treatment and that it was all Paul's fault. Her mother gave her many reasons why she wasn't sure if she could ever trust her again. Harriett would have to work hard to regain her mother's trust. This upset Harriett. She still believed that molesting LaTasha was Paul's fault, but she did not want to lose her mother's support. She hoped that going through treatment would help show her mother that she could be trusted.

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- ◆ Harriett and her mother have different views of what she did. Which of the following is Harriett's view and which is her mother's view?

	Harriett's view	Her mother's view
What Harriett did to her daughter LaTasha was wrong.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What Harriett did to LaTasha was all Paul's fault.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Harriett's Story, Part 2

Harriett worked in treatment to understand why she had hurt her daughter. She believed that she needed to show others that she really wasn't the kind of person they thought she was. Her mother continued to be firm with her, telling her that she needed to change to become a good mother and daughter. Harriett wanted things to be like they had been before. Her mother wanted to be able to trust her again.

We will revisit Harriett's story later in this book.

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- ◆ Harriett and her mother have different reasons for wanting her to be in counseling. Which of the following is one of Harriett's reasons and which is one of her mother's reasons?

	Harriett's reason	Her mother's reason
To prove to other people that she is not a bad person.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To regain her mother's lost trust.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- ◆ In what ways are Harriett's reasons and your own reasons for entering counseling similar and different?

- ◆ In what ways are Harriett's views and your own family's views about counseling similar and different?

WILL OBSTACLES GET IN MY WAY?

Let's start this section with the story of Rebecca. She had obstacles in her path and there were no easy ways around them.



Rebecca's Story, Part 1

Rebecca left her parent's home at the age of 16. She lived with friends and eventually quit high school. She spent a lot of her teenage years getting high and turning tricks to make money. Now in her 20s, her friends had moved on with their lives, but Rebecca still didn't know what she was going to do with her life. She got a job at a gas station, but was fired after she was caught stealing money. Her friends all felt bad for her. It was like she never really grew up or learned how to get by in the world. Since she quit high school, she didn't have the education needed to get a good paying job and as a result lost a lot of opportunities along the way.

When she was 27, Rebecca met a woman named Deb and settled down. Deb had two children from a previous relationship who were four and six years old. Rebecca was working as a server at a local restaurant. Times could be tough and money was tight, but for a couple of years, Rebecca, Deb, and the children got by.

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One day, Rebecca got caught stealing money from the restaurant. She lost her job and the reputation that she had built. She said she had stolen the money so that she could feed her family, but her boss didn't believe her. When she got home later that day and told Deb what happened, Deb didn't believe her excuse either. Rebecca tried to make things right with Deb, but Deb was very angry with her. Rebecca became upset too. Rebecca got angrier and angrier and started screaming and throwing things around the house and at Deb. A glass hit Deb and cut her cheek. Rebecca went on like this for so long that one of the neighbors called the police. She was arrested for a domestic incident.

Deb and her kids went to live with Deb's mother. After a few weeks, Deb and Rebecca started talking again and wanted their relationship to work out. Rebecca was referred to counseling in order to receive a lighter sentence. Also, Child and Family Services had told Deb that if Rebecca didn't complete counseling, Rebecca would not be allowed to live with Deb and the children. Things were hard for everyone. Deb didn't want to leave Rebecca but she also didn't want things to stay the same.

Rebecca was getting more and more depressed. It was hard for her to talk in counseling because all of her problems seemed to get bigger and bigger. Every time she thought about them or tried to talk about them, her problems just seemed to get harder to solve. Meanwhile, talking to Deb was hard because she was always busy working, taking care of the kids, shopping for groceries, and doing other things. Rebecca felt guilty for not helping her more and this was also difficult to talk about. Sometimes, it seemed the only thing she wanted to talk about was how unfair the Child and Family Services people were.

Remember, the word obstacle means something that gets in the way of achieving a goal. There were no easy ways for Rebecca to get around her obstacles.

- ◆ In what ways have the obstacles to your success in counseling been similar to Rebecca's?

- ◆ In what ways have the obstacles to your success in counseling been different from Rebecca's?
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Rebecca's Story, Part 2

Rebecca was now in counseling. Deb didn't ask too many questions and was so focused on her children that she just wanted it all to be over. She was less talkative than she was before the incident. For her part, Rebecca didn't want to be violent anymore. She felt terrible about what she'd done. Her friends went on to have great lives. Why didn't she? On the one hand, she felt like a loser. On the other hand, she was sure that if she could have one more chance to get it right, she could be a better partner and maybe a better stepmother.

Rebecca tried to talk with Deb about the changes she was making. She was learning new skills for managing her emotions, and she was thinking a lot about their relationship. Each time she spoke about it, Deb would listen for a little while and then change the subject or say she didn't want to think about it too much. She wanted Rebecca around, but it was too hard for her to think about what they had been through. This was a problem for Rebecca, because in order to make sure counseling was working for her, she needed feedback from Deb on how their relationship was working. She also needed her input on developing a safety plan.

- ◆ Circle the two reasons why Rebecca wanted to be in counseling.
 - ◆ She didn't want to be angry or violent any more.
 - ◆ Her partner said she needed to be in counseling.
 - ◆ She wanted to have a better relationship with her partner.

Other People May Be Obstacles

Let's face it, entering counseling is not always easy. Sometimes family members have doubts about the usefulness of counseling. Let's explore this kind of obstacle for a while. Then you will be ready to come up with an action plan for moving forward.

- ◆ Do you think anyone in your friends or family might not want you to be in counseling?

Yes No

If you answered yes:

- ◆ Could it be that they do not understand your situation? Or could it be that they worry you will share private things about them? Write a few notes about these obstacles.

You May Be Your Own Obstacle

Sometimes people in counseling have their own reasons for not giving it their best shot. Write some reasons why you might not want to be in counseling:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

- ◆ How are the reasons you just listed the same for yourself and your family?

- ◆ How are they different?

HOW WILL I DEAL WITH THOSE OBSTACLES?

Before we answer this question, let's see how Rebecca dealt with her obstacles.

Rebecca's Story, Part 3

Rebecca really appreciated what counseling was doing for her. It had taken her a long time to talk about some things, but she felt better afterwards. She had learned a lot of skills she could practice to keep herself from getting angry and she was having good luck with these skills. The problem was that she wasn't able to work on communicating with Deb as much as she had hoped, and she really wanted to be able to do this. Their life together was improving, but she couldn't figure out how to talk with Deb effectively.

Eventually, Rebecca persuaded Deb to at least give the counselor a call. Deb was willing to do that. The counselor explained that Rebecca had been wanting to make sure they were communicating well and that Rebecca was truly making good progress in treatment. That was enough to get Deb to agree to come to a session. In it, they talked about how they communicate.

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- ◆ Rebecca didn't give up when Deb said no to counseling. Circle the strength that Rebecca used to succeed with her partner.

Kindness Fairness Persistence Generosity

- ◆ What strengths do you have that would help you in a situation like Rebecca's?

- ◆ Are your obstacles similar to Rebecca's?

Yes Not exactly No, not at all

- ◆ How are they similar or different?

- ◆ What are some steps you can take to deal with your obstacles?

1.

2.

3.

Now take a moment to pat yourself on the back for addressing a difficult topic!

To wrap up these exercises, do your best to complete the following sentence:

My biggest hope is that counseling will help me _____

WHAT KIND OF PERSON DO I WANT TO BE? WHAT DO I WANT OUT OF LIFE?

These are very big questions. To start finding the answers that are right for you, try this exercise:

First, try to recall yourself when you were 10 years younger than you are now.

How old were you? _____

Where did you live? _____

Who did you live with?

My parents My own family Friends or roommates No one

What was your favorite thing to do? _____

Did you have a job? Yes No

If yes, what kind of job was it? _____

What kind of job did you want to have? _____

Now imagine yourself 10 years older than you are today. Imagine that you are healthy, happy, and very satisfied with your life.

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How old are you? _____

Where do you live? _____

Is there someone about your age who you love and who loves you?

Wife? Husband? Girlfriend? Boyfriend? Other?

What kind of job do you have? _____

What kind of person are you now? _____

Do other people like you? Yes No

Why yes or why no? _____

Do you like other people? Yes No

Why yes or why no? _____

Think about the person you will be ten years from now. What are five words you hope others will use to describe you (for example, strong, hard-working, etc.)?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Now draw a circle around the one or two words that best describe the person you want to be. Write the words on an index card. Put the card in a safe place. Once in a while, take it out to remind yourself about the person you can be when you put your mind to it.