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Inner Child Dialogue Exercise

A Practice for Reconnecting with Your Emotional Self

Why This Practice Matters

As adults, and especially as parents, many of us have lost touch with our inner emotional world. We've learned to prioritize productivity, responsibilities, and others' needs over our own feelings. We push down emotions that feel inconvenient or uncomfortable. We ignore the whispers of what we truly want or need. Over time, we become disconnected from ourselves—from that part of us that knows what we feel, what we need, and what matters to us.

This disconnection often begins in childhood. If we grew up in environments where our emotions weren't welcomed, where our needs felt like burdens, or where we had to be the "easy child" to survive, we learned early to abandon ourselves. We never developed a loving, compassionate inner voice that could soothe us, validate our feelings, or advocate for our needs.

This inner child/inner parent dialogue is a powerful practice for healing this disconnection. By creating a conversation between your adult self (the loving parent you needed) and your younger self (the child who still lives inside you with all their feelings and needs), you can begin to rebuild that internal relationship. You can learn to listen to yourself, comfort yourself, and show up for yourself in the way you may never have experienced as a child.

Who This Practice Is For

This practice is especially helpful if you:

- Struggle to identify what you're feeling or dismiss your own feelings
- Have difficulty knowing what you need or want
- Tend to be hard on yourself or self-critical
- Never learned to self-soothe or offer yourself compassion
- Experienced emotional neglect or invalidation in childhood
- Feel disconnected from your emotions or numb

The Exercise: Two-Handed Dialogue

This exercise uses your dominant and non-dominant hands to create a written dialogue between your adult self (inner parent) and your younger self (inner child). The physical

act of switching hands helps you access different parts of yourself and bypasses your usual mental filters.

What you'll need:

- A notebook or blank paper
- A pen or pencil
- 15-20 minutes of uninterrupted time in a private space

How to practice:

1. Get settled and present

Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit. Take a few deep breaths. Allow yourself to slow down and turn your attention inward. You're about to have a conversation with a part of yourself that may have been waiting a long time to be heard.

2. Start with your dominant hand (Inner Parent)

Using your dominant hand (the hand you normally write with), write a simple, caring question to your inner child. Start with something like:

"How are you feeling today?"

"What are you needing right now?"

"I'm here. What do you want me to know?"

Write in a warm, gentle tone—the voice of a loving, attentive parent.

3. Switch to your non-dominant hand (Inner Child)

Now switch the pen to your non-dominant hand. This will feel awkward and your handwriting will likely be messy—that's completely normal and actually part of the process. The awkwardness helps you access a more vulnerable, unfiltered part of yourself.

Let your inner child respond. Don't think too hard about what to write—just let whatever comes up flow onto the page. If needed, put your hand on your belly to help you access your child's voice. Your inner child's voice might sound young, scared, angry, needy, or sad. Trust whatever emerges.

4. Expect resistance or anger (and stay with it)

Important: The first response from your inner child may not be what you expect. Often, the first thing your inner child says is something like:

"What do you care?"

"You never listen to me."

"Why should I trust you?"

"I don't want to talk to you."

This is completely normal. Your inner child has likely felt ignored or abandoned for a long time. They have every right to be angry, hurt, or distrustful. Don't be discouraged by this response—it's actually a sign that you're making contact with a real, vulnerable part of yourself.

When this happens, respond with compassion and patience. Switch back to your dominant hand and write something like:

"You're right. I haven't been listening. I'm sorry. I'm here now, and I want to hear you."

"I understand you're angry. You have every reason to be. I'm not going anywhere."

"I know I've let you down. I'm learning how to show up for you now."

5. Continue the dialogue

Keep switching hands and writing back and forth. Let the conversation unfold naturally. Your inner parent asks caring questions, listens, validates feelings, and offers comfort. Your inner child shares what they're feeling, what they need, what hurts, what they're afraid of.

Don't rush this process. Some days the conversation will be short; other days it might go on for pages. Follow what feels right.

6. Close with reassurance

When you're ready to end the session, use your dominant hand to write a message of love and reassurance to your inner child. Let them know you'll be back, that you're committed to listening, and that they matter. For example:

"Thank you for sharing with me today. I'll be back tomorrow to check in with you again. You're not alone anymore."

"I love you, and I'm learning how to take care of you."

What to Expect

- **It may feel awkward or silly at first.** That's normal. Writing with your non-dominant hand is uncomfortable, and talking to yourself can feel strange. Keep going anyway—the discomfort will fade as you get into the practice.
- **Your inner child may be angry or distrustful initially.** This is actually a good sign—it means you're making real contact. Be patient and keep showing up. Over time, as your inner child learns you're consistent and trustworthy, the dialogue will soften.

- **You might cry or feel intense emotions.** This practice can bring up grief, loneliness, or longing. Allow yourself to feel whatever comes up. This is part of the healing.
- **It takes time to build trust.** Just as it would take time to build trust with any relationship, rebuilding trust with yourself requires consistency. Practice regularly—daily or several times a week—to show your inner child that you're reliable.
- **Over time, the dialogue becomes easier and more loving.** With regular practice, you'll find it easier to access your feelings, understand what you need, and offer yourself compassion. Your inner child will begin to trust that you're truly listening and that their feelings matter. You may not need to communicate in writing. You've made contact and may have easier access to your inner child's voice.

Tips for Success

- **Practice regularly.** Consistency is more important than length. Even 5-10 minutes several times a week is better than one long session once a month.
- **Don't edit or judge what comes up.** Let your inner child's voice be messy, angry, scared, or needy. This is a safe space for unfiltered expression. You can discard what was written if it feels too vulnerable to leave around.
- **Be patient with yourself.** If you've spent years disconnected from yourself, it will take time to rebuild that relationship. Be as patient with yourself as you would be with a beloved, frightened child.
- **Notice what your inner child needs and try to honor it when possible.** If your inner child says they need rest, play, connection, or space—see if you can give them what they are asking for, even if it can't be the same day. Follow through on promises to your inner child. This builds trust.
- **Consider working with a therapist.** If this practice brings up overwhelming emotions or traumatic memories, it can be helpful to process these experiences with a trained therapist. If you are in California, reach out to me through my website at <http://merilevy.com>.