

Safe Haven Connect CIC

Letting Go of the Past

A Practical Workbook

Version: 1.0

Welcome

Everyone has experiences they wish had turned out differently. You may be carrying painful memories, regrets, difficult relationships, or events that continue to affect your wellbeing today.

Letting go of the past doesn't mean forgetting what happened or pretending it didn't matter. It means learning to accept what cannot be changed, understanding how it has affected you, and choosing to move forward in a way that supports your wellbeing.

Healing takes time, and everyone's journey is different. There is no right or wrong pace.

This workbook will help you reflect on the past with compassion, recognise what you can and cannot control, and begin building a future based on hope rather than regret.

What You'll Learn

By completing this workbook, you will:

Understand why the past can continue to affect us.

Recognise thoughts and emotions that keep you feeling stuck.

Learn practical ways to let go of unhelpful thoughts.

Develop self-compassion and acceptance.

Create a personal plan for moving forward.

Before You Begin

This workbook may bring up difficult emotions.

Take your time.

Pause whenever you need to.

If an activity feels overwhelming, return to it another day.

Remember that asking for support is a sign of strength, not weakness.

Inspirational Quote

> "Your past has shaped you, but it does not have to define the person you become."

Module 1 – Understanding the Past

Every person has experiences that influence how they think, feel and behave.

These may include:

Loss or bereavement

Relationship breakdowns

Childhood experiences

Bullying

Trauma

Mistakes or regrets

Financial difficulties

Illness

Life changes

Missed opportunities

Sometimes these experiences continue to affect us long after they have happened.

You may notice:

Thinking about the past frequently.

Wondering "what if?"

Feeling guilty or ashamed.

Finding it difficult to trust others.

Avoiding certain places or situations.

Feeling stuck and unable to move forward.

These reactions are common and do not mean there is something wrong with you.

Why Is It So Hard to Let Go?

Our brains naturally remember emotionally significant events. This can be helpful because it allows us to learn from experiences and recognise future risks.

Sometimes, however, our minds keep returning to painful memories in ways that increase distress rather than helping us move forward.

Learning to let go doesn't mean forgetting—it means changing your relationship with those memories so they have less control over your life.

Activity 1 – Reflecting on My Past

Without going into more detail than feels comfortable, answer the questions below.

What experience or experiences do I find hardest to let go of?

How do these experiences affect my life today?

What emotions do they bring up?

☐ Sadness

☐ Anger

☐ Guilt

☐ Shame

☐ Fear

☐ Regret

☐ Loneliness

☐ Anxiety

☐ Other:

What would I like to feel instead?

Reflection

The aim of this workbook is not to erase your past. It is to help you understand it with kindness and begin creating a future that isn't controlled by it.

Healing is often made up of many small steps, and completing this workbook is one of them.

> "You cannot change yesterday, but you can choose how you care for yourself today."

Next: Module 2 – Learning to Let Go, where you'll explore what you're holding onto, identify what you can and cannot control, and begin developing practical strategies for moving forward.

Module 2 – Learning to Let Go

Letting go is not about pretending something never happened. It is about accepting that you cannot change the past while choosing to care for yourself in the present.

This process takes time. Some days will feel easier than others, and that's completely normal.

What Are You Holding On To?

Sometimes we carry things that no longer serve us.

These might include:

- ☐ Regret
- ☐ Guilt
- ☐ Anger
- ☐ Resentment
- ☐ Shame
- ☐ Fear
- ☐ Self-blame
- ☐ Hurt caused by others
- ☐ Unanswered questions
- ☐ Missed opportunities

☐ Other:

Recognising these emotions is the first step towards healing.

What Can I Control?

One helpful way to move forward is to separate what you can control from what you cannot.

I Can Control

How I treat myself today.

The choices I make.

How I respond to difficult emotions.

Asking for help when I need it.

Looking after my wellbeing.

Learning from my experiences.

I Cannot Control

The past.

Other people's actions.

Other people's opinions.

Things that have already happened.

Every situation I encounter.

Focusing on what you can control can help you feel more empowered.

Activity – My Circle of Control

Things I cannot change

Things I can influence today

One positive action I can take this week

Practising Self-Compassion

Many people are much kinder to others than they are to themselves.

Ask yourself:

If someone I cared about had been through what I've experienced, what would I say to them?

Now consider:

Can I offer some of that same kindness to myself?

Healing often begins when we replace self-criticism with self-compassion.

Activity – A Letter to Myself

Imagine writing a letter to yourself from the perspective of someone who cares about you deeply.

You might include:

Words of encouragement.

Recognition of what you've survived.

Hope for the future.

Compassion for your struggles.

Begin here:

Dear Me,

Reflection

What would letting go make room for in your life?

- ☐ More peace
- ☐ Better relationships
- ☐ Greater confidence
- ☐ Less anxiety
- ☐ More happiness
- ☐ Self-acceptance
- ☐ Hope
- ☐ Other:

Remember

Letting go doesn't happen all at once. It is something you practise through patience, self-compassion, and choosing to move forward one day at a time.

> "You deserve the same compassion and understanding that you so freely give to others."

Next: Module 3 – Reframing the Past, where you'll explore how to challenge unhelpful thoughts, recognise personal strengths, and focus on growth rather than regret.

Module 3 – Reframing the Past

The way we think about our past can influence how we feel in the present. While we cannot change what has happened, we can learn to view our experiences in ways that support healing rather than keeping us stuck.

Reframing does not mean pretending painful experiences were okay. It means recognising that your past is only one part of your story—it does not define your future.

Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

When we think about difficult experiences, our minds can sometimes tell us things that aren't completely true.

Examples include:

Instead of:

"Everything was my fault."

Try:

"I may have made mistakes, but I was doing the best I could with what I knew at the time."

Instead of:

"I'll never move on."

Try:

"Healing takes time, and I am making progress one step at a time."

Instead of:

"My past defines who I am."

Try:

"My experiences have shaped me, but they do not decide who I become."

Activity – Reframing My Thoughts

A thought that keeps coming back:

Is this thought completely true?

What evidence supports it?

What evidence challenges it?

A kinder, more balanced thought:

Recognising Your Strengths

It's easy to focus on painful experiences and overlook the strength it took to get through them.

Think about what you've already overcome.

Tick any strengths you've shown.

- ☐ Courage
- ☐ Determination
- ☐ Kindness
- ☐ Patience
- ☐ Resilience
- ☐ Hope
- ☐ Compassion
- ☐ Honesty
- ☐ Strength
- ☐ Willingness to keep going
- ☐ Other:

Activity – My Strengths

Three strengths I have shown during difficult times:

1.

2.

3.

How could I use these strengths in the future?

Looking Towards the Future

The past is one chapter of your life—not the whole book.

Think about what you want your future to include.

☐ More peace

☐ Better relationships

☐ Improved wellbeing

☐ New hobbies

☐ Greater confidence

☐ Better health

☐ New opportunities

☐ More self-kindness

☐ Other:

Reflection

What is one lesson you've learned from your past?

What is one thing you're proud of yourself for?

What positive step could you take this week?

Remember

Healing doesn't mean forgetting your past. It means carrying it in a way that no longer stops you from living your life.

Every positive choice you make today is helping to build a future based on hope, resilience, and self-compassion.

> "Your story is still being written. The next chapter can be filled with growth, hope, and new possibilities."

Next: Module 4 – Living in the Present, where you'll explore mindfulness, gratitude, building healthy daily habits, and creating a life that focuses on today rather than yesterday.

Module 4 – Living in the Present

When we've experienced difficult events, it's easy for our minds to spend time replaying the past or worrying about the future.

Living in the present doesn't mean ignoring what has happened. It means giving yourself permission to focus on what is happening right now, where positive change is possible.

Each day offers a new opportunity to make choices that support your wellbeing.

Bringing Yourself Back to the Present

When you notice your mind returning to painful memories, try gently bringing your attention back to the present.

Ask yourself:

What can I see around me?

What can I hear?

What can I feel?

What am I grateful for today?

What is one small thing I can do right now?

You don't need to solve everything today. Focus on the next small step.

Mindfulness Exercise

Take one slow breath in.

Now slowly breathe out.

Notice:

- ☐ Five things you can see.
- ☐ Four things you can feel.
- ☐ Three things you can hear.
- ☐ Two things you can smell.
- ☐ One thing you can taste.

Take another slow breath.

Notice how you feel.

Gratitude Practice

Even on difficult days, there are often small things we can appreciate.

Today I am grateful for:

1.

2.

3.

Remember, gratitude doesn't remove problems—it helps us notice the good alongside them.

Creating New Positive Experiences

One of the best ways to move forward is by creating new memories.

Ideas include:

☐ Going for a walk.

☐ Trying a new hobby.

☐ Reading a book.

☐ Meeting a friend.

☐ Visiting somewhere new.

☐ Listening to music.

☐ Spending time in nature.

☐ Volunteering.

☐ Learning a new skill.

☐ Doing something creative.

☐ Other:

Activity – My Fresh Start Plan

This week I will:

Try something new:

Spend time with:

Do something kind for myself:

Take one step towards my future by:

Living by Your Values

Think about the kind of person you want to be moving forward.

Tick the values that matter most to you.

☐ Kindness

☐ Honesty

☐ Compassion

☐ Respect

☐ Courage

☐ Hope

☐ Patience

☐ Forgiveness

☐ Gratitude

☐ Growth

☐ Other:

How can you live these values this week?

Reflection

What is one thing from today that made you smile?

What positive memory would you like to create this week?

What gives you hope for the future?

Remember

The past may always be part of your story, but it does not have to write the chapters that come next. By focusing on today, you give yourself the opportunity to build a future that reflects who you are now—not only what you've been through.

> "Every day is a new page. You cannot rewrite yesterday, but you can choose what you write today."

Next: Module 5 – My Moving Forward Plan, where you'll create a personal action plan, set future goals, review what you've learned, and complete the workbook with a summary, congratulations, disclaimer, copyright, and information about Safe Haven Connect CIC.

Module 5 – My Moving Forward Plan

You've reached the final module of this workbook. Moving forward doesn't mean forgetting your past—it means choosing not to let it stop you from living the life you want today.

There may still be difficult days, but you now have practical tools to help you respond with greater understanding, self-compassion, and hope.

My Personal Action Plan

What am I ready to leave behind?

What would I like to welcome into my life?

My Goals for the Next Month

- ☐ Be kinder to myself.
- ☐ Focus more on the present.
- ☐ Challenge negative thoughts.
- ☐ Spend more time with supportive people.
- ☐ Try a new hobby or activity.
- ☐ Improve my physical wellbeing.
- ☐ Practise gratitude every day.
- ☐ Ask for help when I need it.
- ☐ Create healthier boundaries.
- ☐ Other:

My Support Network

People I can turn to when I need encouragement:

Name

Phone/email

Name

Phone/email

Name

Phone/email

Weekly Progress Review

This week I feel:

😊 Very positive

😊 Hopeful

😐 Okay

😞 Finding things difficult

😓 Struggling

One positive step I took this week

Something I learned about myself

One thing I want to continue

One goal for next week

My Commitment to Myself

I choose to:

- ☐ Accept that I cannot change the past.
- ☐ Treat myself with kindness and patience.
- ☐ Focus on what I can control.
- ☐ Continue learning and growing.
- ☐ Allow myself to move forward at my own pace.
- ☐ Celebrate every small step of progress.

Signed:

Date:

Final Thoughts

The past may always be a part of your story, but it does not have to determine your future.

Healing is rarely a straight path. There will be moments of progress, setbacks, hope, and uncertainty. Every time you choose self-compassion over self-criticism, hope over despair, or action over fear, you are taking another step forward.

You are more than the difficult experiences you've had. You have strengths, qualities, and opportunities that continue to grow every day.

Congratulations!

Well done on completing the Letting Go of the Past Workbook.

By working through these activities, you've taken meaningful steps towards understanding yourself, practising self-compassion, and building a future that reflects your values rather than your past.

Remember, healing is a journey, and every small step matters.

> "Your past may explain part of your story, but it does not decide how the next chapter will be written."

Disclaimer

This workbook has been created by Safe Haven Connect CIC for educational and self-help purposes only. It is not a substitute for professional medical, psychological, or therapeutic advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

If you are experiencing severe distress, have concerns about your mental health, or feel that you may be at risk of harming yourself or others, seek immediate support from a qualified healthcare professional or your local emergency services.

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About Safe Haven Connect CIC

Safe Haven Connect CIC provides free mental health and wellbeing resources to help people improve their wellbeing, build resilience, and access practical support whenever they need it.

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