

Worksheet 4: Avoidance questionnaire

(Adapted from Harris, 2008b)⁴²

My avoidance behaviours

As you think of the narcissistic abuse you have endured and all the effects of it you have experienced or are experiencing, go through the following, making a note of as many as possible.

The thoughts I'd most like to get rid of are:

The feelings I'd most like to get rid of are:

The sensations I'd most like to get rid of are:

The memories I'd most like to get rid of are:

Now, take a few minutes to write a list of every single thing you've tried in order to avoid or get rid of these unpleasant thoughts, feelings, sensations and memories. Try to remember every strategy you have ever used (whether deliberately or by default). Below is a guide to help you. It is not an exhaustive list and there may be others relevant to you not listed below. Note those down as well.

Distraction: List everything you have ever done to distract yourself or 'zone out', or to take your mind off these painful thoughts, feelings, sensations or memories.

Opting out: List all the activities, interests, events, people or places that you have avoided or withdrawn from, and all the opportunities you have missed out on, because you did not feel good or wanted to avoid feeling bad. Write out what thoughts, feelings or sensations prevented you from engaging.

Thinking strategies: List and/or circle below all the different ways of thinking you have tried (deliberately or unintentionally) when painful thoughts or feelings start showing up. Note any of the following you have done and add any others not included in the list but that are very relevant to you:

Worrying	yes / no
Dwelling on the past	yes / no
Fantasising about the future	yes / no
Imagining escape scenarios (e.g. leaving partner or relationship)	yes / no
Imagining revenge scenarios	yes / no
Imagining getting justice for what has happened to you	yes / no
Imagining your abuser suffering/having bad things happen to them	yes / no
Imagining suicide scenarios	yes / no
Thinking 'it's not fair'	yes / no
Thinking 'if only'	yes / no
Thinking of suicide	yes / no
Blaming yourself	yes / no
Blaming others	yes / no
Blaming the world	yes / no
Talking logically to yourself	yes / no
Talking positively to yourself	yes / no
Talking negatively to yourself	yes / no
Analysing yourself (trying to figure out why you are like this)	yes / no
Analysing the situation (trying to figure out why this happened)	yes / no
Analysing others (trying to figure out why they are like this)	yes / no

Substances/behaviours: List all the substances you have ever used, or behaviours you have engaged in, to try to feel better, including food, drinks, cigarettes, recreational drugs, sex and prescription drugs.

Anything else: Write down anything else you can think of that you have tried in order to make yourself feel a bit better, or not so bad, when these painful thoughts and feelings have shown up.

Once you have done that, go through your list and for each item ask yourself:

1. Did this get rid of my painful thoughts, feelings and sensations in the long term?
2. Did it bring me closer to a rich, full and meaningful life that I value?
3. If the answer to question 2 is 'no', then what did this cost me in terms of time, energy, money, health, relationships, vitality and wholeheartedness?