



The Hero's Workbook for

Protection

Against

Harmful

Relationships

Beth E Peterson



**6 Steps to Building
Interpersonal Safety**



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Author's Note: This workbook will be most helpful if used in conjunction with its companion book, *The Hero's Guide to Protection Against Harmful Relationships*.

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This workbook is designed for use in conjunction with *The Hero's Guide to Protection Against Harmful Relationships*. There are spaces provided for answers; however, it is suggested that to get the most benefit you also keep a journal where you can answer the questions with even greater depth. The greater your self-knowledge, the greater your protection from outside manipulation becomes.

After all, the healthiest heroes are the ones who aren't afraid to do a great deal of digging inside their own psyche. 😊



Step 1

Recognize That Not Everyone Is Good

Manipulation can fall into a range of degrees. They are:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

In a random group of twenty-five people, _____ will have diagnosable personality disorders which lead to enduring patterns of interpersonal manipulation.

Trust must be earned.

Do you believe that trust must be earned or given unconditionally? _____

Why? _____

Love is an _____.

Trust is a _____.

To protect yourself, trust might need limits set on it. If you know your best friend always inadvertently burns the toast (and you like yours lightly browned), do you trust them to make yours?

On pages nine through eleven of *The Hero's Guide to Protection Against Harmful Relationships* we talk about trust. Trust is based on:

1. Evaluation of the other person's _____.
2. An _____ evaluation of your _____ of the other person.

Do you recognize cultural myths?

Love-related myths include "love hurts," "love will see us through," "Love will keep us together," and "love conquers all."

List five love-related cultural myths that you've encountered:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

List five other cultural myths (e.g. "good-looking people are better"):

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____





Step 2

Recognize the Manipulative Process and Manipulative People

There is a process of how manipulative relationships develop:

The six phases, with their definitions, that a manipulative relationship can go through are:

1. _____, which is _____

2. _____, which is _____

3. _____, which is _____

4. _____, which is _____

5. _____, which is _____

6. _____, which is _____

Manipulative people exist in your world.

All of us are vulnerable. A manipulator can discover anyone's vulnerabilities and exploit them. Manipulators exist, and exist in your space-time continuum.

1. How are you vulnerable to manipulation? _____

2. How can you prepare yourself to reduce your vulnerability? _____

Look for motivation.

Your motivations are vulnerabilities.

1. Desire is a motivator.

What do you most desire? _____

In your life? _____

In your job? _____

In your relationships? _____

2. Do you desire recognition or to be special? _____

In what area(s) of your life? _____

3. Why do you do the things you do? _____

4. Your emotions can be motivators.

When do you feel angry? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel sad? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel afraid? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel worried or anxious? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel loving? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel gratitude? _____

Why? _____

When do you feel happy? _____

Why? _____

Other's motivations are also key in learning to protect yourself.

Through understanding your own motivations – the "why" of what you do – you will build a better understanding of others and hone your skills at catching their motivations. Watch for the underlying motivations behind other people's words, actions, and emotions.

Continue to evaluate and assess your relationships.

Relationships change, for the better or for the worse, through time.

If a relationship started out good, does that mean it will be guaranteed to remain good? _____

Good relationships can eventually disintegrate into a dangerous or harmful relationship. Why do you agree or disagree with this statement? _____



Step 3

Build Conscious Limits of Tolerance

Limits of tolerance help keep you safe all things in moderation.

What will you tolerate in your relationships with others? _____

What won't you tolerate in your relationships with others? _____

For an excellent example of how a manipulator can stretch personal boundaries to open their targeted victims to more manipulation, watch the movie *Cold Creek Manor*. Twenty-four minutes into the movie, Dale Massey walks uninvited into Cooper and Lea Tilson's new house. Rather than being thrown out, Dale ends up being invited to a meal.

1. How did Dale push past Cooper and Lea's personal boundaries? _____

2. Why did Dale cross personal boundaries, invading Cooper and Lea's territory? _____

3. What excuse did Dale give for this invasion? _____

4. Dale portrays himself as a victim. Who do you think was the real victim(s)? _____

Why? _____

5. Do you think Cooper had **consciously** placed limits on what behaviors he would tolerate from others? _____

All things must be kept in moderation.

In order to protect yourself, you need to also place limits and boundaries on your own actions.

What behaviors will you not tolerate from yourself? _____

Why/why not? _____

What limits have you placed on your "good" behaviors? (e.g. Will you literally give someone the shirt off your back? How often? In what circumstances?)_____

Why have you set those particular limits? (Consciously knowing this protects you further.) _____

Good fences make good relationships.

What are the two ways personal boundaries can be breached or damaged?

1. Another person convinces you_____

2. Another person convinces you_____

Are you responsible for someone else's thoughts, feelings, or actions? _____

How are you responsible for someone else's thoughts, feelings, or actions? _____

Since you cannot be the cause of how anyone else feels or what they do, how much responsibility-taking do you feel is justified? _____

What can you do to minimize your feelings of responsibility? _____

Just say no to excuses.

Excuses are extremely useful to manipulators.

Have you ever known a person who consistently excuses their behavior, words, or feelings? _____

What form did their excuses take? (e.g. blaming others, blaming circumstances, blaming impersonal organizations such as a business or the government, etc.)

What is the difference between a reason and an excuse? _____





Step 4

Build Decision-Making Skills

Hone your ability to forecast.

Learn to recognize cause & effect and define the consequences of your potential actions before you commit yourself to that action.

1. Think of a specific situation where you have observed cause and effect.

2. How can you apply this same principal to relationships? _____

The best way to counteract pressure to make impulsive, snap decisions is to have already made your thought-through decisions about _____ of your life, including your _____ - _____ and your _____ of yourself and of others.

Experience is the best (and sometimes the only) teacher.

Your experiences, including the painful ones, are valuable tools for learning.

Think of your worst experience. _____

What positive things did you learn from that experience? _____



Step 5

Make Those Internal Decisions

Decide your deep-down definitions.

The better you know yourself the better your protection against harmful relationships.

The better you understand yourself the better your protection against harmful relationships.

The more fully you accept yourself the better your protection against harmful relationships.

The more fully you have made decisions about who you are, how you will view the world around you, what you expect from yourself and your relationships, and what you believe, the better your protection against harmful relationships.

In order to make informed decisions that will stick you will need to be brutally honest with yourself. No sidestepping things you don't want to see...be assured that a manipulator **will** see the lies you tell yourself in order to feel better about yourself. And there is a bonus in this. By doing this without glossing over uncomfortable aspects of yourself, you will be able to change those things and guide them into avenues that are beneficial to you. You will become a happier person.

In order to protect yourself, you must do four things:

- know who you are,
- understand who you are and why you are the way you are,
- accept who you are (even the aspects you may not like much), and
- work to change or modify those aspects of yourself that you determine need improvement.

Knowing Yourself: What makes you you? This is a tough question to plow into deeply enough without structuring a framework for the answer(s). After all, you *are* a complex human being with a lot of "moving" parts.

Let's break our query down into six different portions: thought, emotion, imagination, memory, will & expressions, and your physical being.

Thought: This includes all the cognitively based aspects of yourself.

1. What words do you use to describe the world when you think about the world around you? _____

2. Think about the words you chose. What underlying assumptions do you have about the world? _____

3. Think about those words and assumptions. What expectations do you have about the world around you? _____

4 What words do you use to describe people when you think about them in general? _____

5. Think about the words you chose. What underlying assumptions do you have about people? _____

6. Think about those words and assumptions. What expectations do you have about people? _____

7. What words do you use to describe you? _____

8. Think about the words you chose. What underlying assumptions do you have about yourself? _____

9. Think about those words and assumptions. What expectations do you have concerning yourself? _____

10. What are your spiritual beliefs? _____

11. What influenced you in forming your beliefs? _____

12. Did you grow into your beliefs over time, or did you make a formal, objective evaluation in private and then make a conscious decision? _____

Emotion: Your emotions are a powerful part of who you are.

1. Why do you think you have emotions? _____

2. What function(s) do emotions serve? _____

Emotions, especially fear, anxiety, and anger, can be seen as part of an early warning system. Fear and anxiety warn you that you are in some form of danger...or that your emotions "read" the situation as dangerous. Anger gives you the impetus to shield yourself from danger, to push the perceived danger away from you.

If you modify the way you think about things, can you modify your emotions?

Current emotions are those that pop up in response to something happening to you right now. However, your emotional reaction to something in the present is sometimes due to something that has happened to you in the past. Many times, old unresolved emotions can lurk beneath the surface and can be triggered by circumstances, thoughts, or words occurring now. Unresolved emotions are highly vulnerable to manipulation.

The good news is that unresolved emotions from the past are able to be resolved in the present. Think of yourself as an investigator, tracking down the leads that will help you identify why those unresolved emotions exist and where they came from.

1. Do you sometimes experience emotions (for example, anxiety, fear, grief, anger, or unspecified emotional pain) that don't quite seem to be appropriate to the current situation? _____

2. Think back to the last several times this has happened for each emotion. _____

3. Is there a pattern in the current events that seems associated with the occurrence of the displaced emotion? _____

5. Have you ever modified your plans because of another person, even though you really didn't want to? _____

6. When? _____

Dreams, because they are both desires and more nebulous in structure than plans, tend to be more vulnerable to manipulation.

7. Have you ever had your own personal dreams modified because of another person? _____

8. How and when? _____

Think of the actions involved in tying shoelaces. If you were teaching a child to tie their laces, you would perhaps begin by helping them learn how to form "bunny-ear" loops. Once they had gotten the hang of that part, you would then help them learn how to wrap and push one around the other and through. This process is an example of behavior shaping.

3. What skills have you learned through behavior shaping? _____

4. What skills have you taught another person by using behavior shaping? _____

5. How could a manipulative person use behavior-shaping techniques?

Will & Expressions: Will is that force that pushes you into action. It can be little more than that nudge that has you getting up from your chair and going into the bathroom. It can be a driving force that has enabled parents (with a goodly surge of adrenaline) to literally lift cars off of their trapped children.

Will is the ability to set yourself into "motion". Expressions are the way in which you "move." For example, it is will that initiates the motion of getting dressed in the morning. Choosing what to wear as you are in motion is your expression.

1. What is your clothing style(s) of expression? _____

2. What is your verbal style(s) of expression? _____

3. How do you express yourself through body language? _____

4. In what other ways do you express yourself? _____

5. What could a manipulative person learn about you through your expressions? _____

6. Could a manipulative person use this information against you? _____

7. How? _____

Physical Being: Part of what makes you the person you are is the physical shell encasing your spirit.

1. Describe your physical self. _____

2. How does your physical self influence how you think and feel about yourself? _____

3. Could a manipulative person use that against you? _____

4. How? _____

Understanding yourself: The above questions were mostly about knowing yourself. Understanding the how's and the why's is the second step.

1. How did you come to view the world as you do? What influenced you?

2. How did you come to how you view other people? _____

3. How did you come to view yourself as you do? _____

4. How did you come to how your spiritual beliefs (or lack thereof)? _____

5. What are your emotional triggers, in regards to current emotions? _____

6. How did these triggers come into being? _____

7. What are your unresolved emotional triggers? _____

8. How did these triggers come into being? _____

9. How do you view the future? _____

10. What has influenced your expectations of the future? _____

11. Why have you made the plans you have made? What influenced your planning? _____

12. What motivates your dreams? _____

13. What do you daydream about? _____

14. What are the themes of your daydreams? _____

15. Why are those things important to you? _____

Memory is fluid. It is influenced by how you view the world, the people involved in the memory, and yourself. As your views change, the way you interpret the memory may also change.

16. How has a better understanding of your own or someone else's motivations modified the way you view a certain memory? _____

17. Why do you express yourself the way you do? _____

18. What pushes you will to push you? _____

When it comes to the intrinsic nature of your physical being, you have had no choice. You can modify what you were handed by fate, but only to a certain degree, within certain parameters.

19. How do your physical attributes, needs and limitations affect you?

20. When your body does not function as well as you would like, what do you attribute this to? _____

21. Do you differentiate between your interior being and your physical being? _____

Accepting yourself: Now that you know and understand yourself, you need to accept yourself. This can be difficult. There may be things about yourself that you don't like, that make you feel uncomfortable, or even that frighten you.

In order to come to grips with the things you don't like about yourselves, you must accept their reality. Sweeping them under the rug does nothing to help you; in fact, avoiding the issue like that is actively detrimental to you. You cannot change something if you refuse to acknowledge that it exists.

1. What parts of yourself do you wish weren't there? _____

Your interior being can influence your physical being, but cannot change the fundamental structure. For example, worry can cause stress-related physical disorders such as hypertension. Fundamental structural aspects, such as having medical conditions like hemophilia or diabetes, cannot be modified through your interior aspects alone. In this respect, understanding and accepting fundamental physical problems for what they are frees you up so that you can make well-reasoned decisions on how to approach the problem you face.

2. Do you have physical attributes that disturb you? _____

Working to change: You may have found some things about yourself that were hard to accept. You don't like them, after all!

You will find that some things are easier to change than others. Some, after all, may have been around longer. You may also find that there are some things you cannot change about yourself. In that case, you need to revamp how you view that characteristic or attribute. You may not be able to change it directly, but you may be able to re-direct it into a more acceptable channel. At the very least, you will be able to take control over your reaction to its existence.

3. Reviewing your above answers, what things have you listed that are possible to change? _____

4. What things are able to be re-directed into healthier channels? (For example, unfocused anger can be redirected into anger towards abuse. This is

done through making a conscious decision about what you determine you should be angry about.) _____

5. What things are not able to be changed, modified or re-directed? _____

6. Do you need to grieve the fact that they exist and you cannot directly do anything about that fact? (For example, allow yourself to grieve in the face of debilitating physical limitations.) _____

4. Who controls how you feel emotionally? _____

5. Who controls your plans? _____

6. Who controls your dreams? _____

7. Who controls what you learn and put into practice? _____

8. Who controls what habits you build? _____

9. Who controls what activities you engage in? _____

10. Who controls how you react to the things you cannot change, whether about your inner self, your physical being, or the world and people around you?

11. Who controls the choices you make? _____

We may not be able to control the circumstances or the situation, but we can control how we react to it.





Step 6

Examine How You Relate to Relationships

You have a relationship with yourself.

Self-concept and self-image are two related, but in practice profoundly different, ideas.

A healthy self-concept is based on a _____ of who you are and why you are that way.

A self-image is a set of _____ that the person tells themselves.

Decisions that are based on self-image are not as likely to be able to withstand outside attacks from a manipulator. Do you agree with this statement? _____

Why/why not? _____

How can a manipulative person use a person's self-image against them? _____

Decisions based on _____ evaluations and true _____ - _____ can help you avoid harmful relationships.

Why do you seek relationships?

Why do you want relationships with others? _____

What are you seeking when you enter into or are in a relationship? _____

Do you hope that the relationship will fill a void or need? _____

What expectations do you have of your relationships? _____

Do you believe "the right one" will fulfill your desire to be loved? _____

What do you want your partner to do or be in your shared relationship? _____

Having _____ motivations, hopes, assumptions, or expectations sets you up for problems in your relationships.

The first step to truly being a friend to someone else is to be a friend to yourself.

Do you like you? _____

If you met yourself walking down the street and started a conversation with you, would you like the person you were talking to? Would you enjoy being with you? _____

Why/why not? _____

The first step to truly being able to give love to another is to be able to give love to yourself.

Do you love you? _____

Why/why not? _____

Are you lovable? _____

Why/why not? _____

Are you comfortable with who you are? _____

Why/why not? _____

Are you able to be alone with yourself for extended periods of time? _____

Why/why not? _____

By fulfilling your needs within yourself before you ever go looking for an outside relationship, you are able to have _____ relationships with others.

By fulfilling your needs within yourself, you are closing the gaps that manipulative people use to begin drawing you into a _____ relationship.

There are some prerequisites for healthy relationships.

1. You must be _____ with yourself; you do not need another person to fulfill you or your life.

2. You recognize and accept that _____ are responsible for you – for your thoughts, feelings, and actions.

3. You do not accept responsibility for _____ – their thoughts, feelings or actions.

4. You are _____ with yourself, especially in regards to who you are.

5. You have consciously set _____ of _____ on what you will accept from others in your relationships with them, and from yourself.

6. You must _____ and allow the other person to know who you truly are.

7. You must be ready and willing to wait for the person who _____, _____, and _____ you for who you truly are.

Being friendly and being a friend are _____ things.

There is a hero inside you, right now.

We all see ourselves as the _____ of our own story, our own lives.

Healthy heroes strive for _____.

Healthy heroes _____ other people.

Unhealthy heroes, on the other hand, do not _____ others.

About the Author

Beth Peterson is an unusual combination of visual artist and social scientist. Before pursuing her Master of Fine Art she became ensnared by an extreme manipulator. This experience, while extremely painful and difficult, provided the seed that led Beth into the social sciences.



Having gone through the crucible, Beth's goals shifted. She became driven to both understand what had happened to her and to help others understand and avoid similar experiences. With this in mind Beth returned to school and earned a Masters in psychology. As chief psychologist in a community mental health agency, she worked with some of the toughest clients, including sexual offenders and survivors of abuse. Currently, Beth works with developmentally disabled adults with histories of behavioral outbursts. This has opened another window of observation into the inner workings of people.

As both artist and psychologist Beth has been trained in the art of evaluative observation. Complex patterns fascinate her. This ability to recognize and work with patterns is part of what is often called "the artist's eye" and she has translated this ability from visual patterns to the patterns of the human psyche and human interactions.

In addition to this work Beth also wrote *People Who Play God: How Ultra-Authorities Enslave the Hearts, Minds, and Souls of Their Victims*, available at www.xlibris.com/PeopleWhoPlayGod.html.

Beth continues speaking and writing on human interactions; she is also a peer counselor and informational source through her website, www.beth-peterson.com. And as always, Beth remains an active artist. Her art-related website is www.wingedblue.com.