

Am I Stuck in a Core Negative Self-Meaning?

A Reflective SMBT Worksheet

What is a Core Negative Self-Meaning?

In Self-Meaning Based Therapy® (SMBT), a Core Negative Self-Meaning is a deep, emotionally encoded conclusion about who you are that formed early in life during moments of pain, loss, misunderstanding, neglect, or emotional overwhelm. It is not a belief you consciously chose or a thought you can simply change. Rather, it is a meaning your nervous system and emotional memory formed in order to survive, preserve connection, or make sense of what was happening.

Because this Self-Meaning often forms before language and outside of awareness, it can continue to shape how you feel about yourself, how safe you feel with others, and how you respond to stress—long after the original circumstances have passed. A Core Negative Self-Meaning is not a flaw or a failure. It was an adaptive conclusion made by a younger version of you.

Directions

Take your time with this worksheet. Read each statement slowly and notice your immediate internal response—especially any sensations, emotions, or shifts in your body. You do not need to analyze or justify your answers.

Check each statement that feels emotionally true for you right now, even if you do not like it or wish it were different. There are no right or wrong answers. This worksheet is not a test or a diagnosis. It is simply a tool for reflection and for helping you and your therapist understand what may be operating at a deeper level.

Checklist

- 1. I understand my history and patterns, but deep down nothing really feels different.
- 2. Some symptoms have improved, yet I still feel broken, unsafe, or not good enough.
- 3. I keep ending up in similar relationship or work situations, even when things look different on the surface.
- 4. When something goes wrong, I quickly assume it is my fault.
- 5. Small disappointments or conflicts trigger intense emotional reactions.
- 6. It is hard for me to really take in care, reassurance, or positive feedback.
- 7. I rely on staying busy, pleasing others, being perfect, or staying in control to cope.
- 8. I often feel like I have tried everything and nothing has reached the core of the problem.
- 9. When I feel distressed, it feels like something about who I am—not just what I am feeling or doing.

10. When therapy feels stuck, I blame myself rather than wondering if something deeper needs attention.

Reflection

1. Which statements felt most true or emotionally charged for you?

2. When you imagine yourself as a younger version of you during hard moments, what might you have learned about yourself?

3. If there was a Self-Meaning underneath these hard moments, what might they say about you?

4. What feels most important to explore or bring into therapy next?
