Worksheet: Staying with Feelings

Introduction: Emotions can be overwhelming, especially when they trigger distressing feelings rooted in past wounds. The key to healing is learning how to stay with these feelings instead of reacting impulsively. This worksheet will guide you through a series of exercises to help you stay present with your emotions, allowing you to heal and regulate your emotional responses more effectively.

Step 1: Understanding Your Coping Mechanisms

- **Reflect:** What are your typical reactions when distressing emotions arise? Do you disassociate, overwork, drink, or find other ways to avoid the feeling?
    - **Exercise:** List three common reactions you have when faced with difficult emotions.
        1.
        2.
        3.
- **Awareness:** Recognize that these coping mechanisms are like band-aids. They provide temporary relief but don't address the underlying emotional wounds.

Step 2: Building Awareness

- **Identify the Emotion:** The first step in staying with your feelings is to become aware of the emotion you're experiencing.
    - **Exercise:** Throughout the week, notice when distressing feelings arise. Write down the specific emotions you feel and the situations that triggered them.
        - Emotion: _____
        - Situation: _____
- **Recognize the Impulse:** Pay attention to what you usually do when these emotions come up. This could be an urge to distract yourself, avoid the feeling, or engage in negative self-talk.

Step 3: Staying with the Feeling

- **Locate the Emotion in Your Body:** Anchor yourself by identifying where you feel the emotion physically. For example, anxiety is often felt in the chest.
    - **Exercise:** When you feel anxious, place your hand on your chest and say, "It's okay to feel anxious. I'm just going to sit here and feel this anxiety."
- **Redirect from Thoughts to Feelings:** When negative thoughts arise, redirect your focus back to the physical sensation of the emotion in your body.

    - **Practice:** Instead of engaging with the thoughts (e.g., "You'll never get this right"), gently bring your attention back to where you feel the emotion in your body.

Step 4: Healing Through Presence

- **Stay Present:** By staying with the feeling without reacting or engaging in coping mechanisms, you allow yourself to process the emotion rather than avoid it.
    - **Exercise:** The next time you feel a surge of distress, practice staying with the emotion for 5-10 minutes without reacting. Notice what happens when you allow the feeling to exist without judgment.
- **Reflect:** After practicing staying with your feelings, reflect on the experience.
    - What did you notice about your emotions?
    - Did the intensity of the feeling change as you stayed with it?
    - How did staying with the feeling affect your usual impulses?

Conclusion: Staying with your feelings is a powerful way to heal from old wounds and regulate your emotions. By practicing the exercises in this worksheet, you can start to move away from unhealthy coping mechanisms and develop a deeper connection with your emotions. Remember, healing takes time, and the more you practice, the easier it becomes to stay present with your feelings.