

TRRAP Handbook

Toxic Relationship Recovery Assistance Program



What is TRRAP?

TRRAP stands for **Toxic Relationship Recovery Assistance Program**. It was created by The Little Shaman and is based on the principles of radical acceptance and fearless ownership. TRRAP is similar to the 12 Step model often implemented by addiction recovery programs. People end up in toxic relationships because they have given their power away. The only way we can take our power back is by accepting that we've given it away and that we are in control of ourselves and our lives. By accepting that we have the power to change our current situation, and by taking ownership of ourselves and our lives, we reclaim our power.

Some of the truths that we embrace are difficult. TRRAP is for survivors who want to thrive.

Is there an addiction involved?

As a matter of fact, yes. Science has discovered that [drama uses the same mechanisms and creates the same reactions in the brain as opiates](#), such as heroin and morphine. There is a very real chemical component to this dynamic, as well as a psychological one. Therefore, an addiction to the arousal (drama) of a toxic relationship should be viewed as a very real thing. People who are detoxing from these relationships often experience very real withdrawal symptoms like cravings, irritability, heightened reactivity, gastrointestinal upset, difficulty sleeping, anxiety and other things that we typically associate with chemical dependency.

What is the goal is TRRAP?

TRRAP aims to provide people struggling with arousal addiction a set of steps they can work on to help deal with their underlying issues while they work through their very real addiction to arousal (drama), as well as a supportive network. As with any other type of dependency, the addiction itself is not the problem. It is a symptom of the *real* problem.

Getting Started

By undertaking these 12 Steps, you are acknowledging that you have an issue that you need help with. No change is ever easy, and some of these steps may make you rather uncomfortable. However, if you never challenge yourself or leave your comfort zone, nothing can ever be different.

You may be [battling an addiction](#) right now, and these steps can help you work on the underlying issues that led you to this place. Over time, your physical symptoms will fade and so will your cravings, but you will still be left with a vulnerability to these kinds of relationships if you cannot resolve the issues that created the situation you find yourself in now. Remember to take care of yourself and don't forget: it works if you work it.

May The Great Spirit Bless You

How to Work The Program

You don't have to sign up for anything. The program is free. You begin on the next page, to start familiarizing yourself with the concepts and principals the Steps are based on. The Steps are designed to be worked autonomously (by yourself, at your own pace). That means you don't have to wait to do anything. You can start working the program right now, on your own. All that's required is a commitment to breaking the addiction and working on yourself.

The Steps outlined on the next page are a guide defining the things that need to be embraced if you want to reduce your vulnerability to toxic relationships. There are podcasts, articles and other materials included here that will help you with understanding what each of these things looks like and suggestions regarding how to implement them in your life. Review these *before* you begin the exercises.

You start by familiarizing yourself with the Steps. What do they mean? What do they mean in *your* life? Decide how things would have to change - how *you* would have to change - in order to achieve these things. Make journal entries about what the Step would look like in practical terms. Ask yourself the tough questions. Create a very clear list of things you need to do in order to achieve it in reality. Break it down as much as you need to. Work on each Step one at a time until you have truly integrated that Step into your life. Then move on to the next. There is no set time for how long this can (or should) take. Some may take longer than others. Don't rush through it. Work on it every day and you will see progress.

Because everyone is different, the Steps are designed to be worked by yourself, at your own pace so you can progress in your own way. If you need support, you can attend one of our weekly meetings. For 1 on 1 coaching or support, you should [schedule an appointment with The Little Shaman](#).

Some downloadable materials that will be helpful:

- [Self-Care & Healing From Abusive Relationships](#)
- [Recovering Yourself After Abuse](#)
- [How to STOP! Dealing With Narcissists](#)
- [Challenging Negative Thinking \[Video Workshop\]](#)

Step One

**I admit that I have given my power away to this situation,
and that things have become unmanageable because of it.**

The first step in any recovery program is to admit that you have a problem. It can be embarrassing, painful or even seem silly but the acknowledgment that there is a problem is very important. It shows that the denial has been broken through. The **TRRAP** is based on the principles of radical acceptance and fearless ownership. The only way we can take our power back is by accepting that we've given it away and accepting that we are in control of ourselves and our lives. By taking ownership of ourselves and our lives, we reclaim our power.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What would my life look like if I took my power back?*
- *How would my life improve if this changed?*
- *Describe a recent situation where you felt powerless and examine it to challenge yourself on what you could have done differently to empower yourself.*
- *Describe what recovery looks like for you.*

Suggested goal list: *To take my power back, I need to _____.*

[Podcast about this here.](#)

Step Two

I free myself from denial and fantasy.

I accept that truth is essential, even when it hurts.

Denial and fantasy can be very dangerous in toxic relationships. When someone is in denial about something or projecting a fantasy onto the situation, they are refusing to see the truth about it. When this happens, they make decisions that are not informed, or that are ill-advised. They end up getting hurt, or hurting others. You cannot be healthy and be in denial at the same time. You must accept the reality of all situations at all times, even if it is painful, shocking or uncomfortable. Denying reality has no affect on reality and it does not keep you from getting hurt. It only affects your ability to make good, healthy decisions. If you find that you are not being authentic with yourself or others about the relationship, ask yourself what is so painful about the truth that you need to hide from it. Whatever the reason, it must to be addressed. Bottom line: you cannot recover if you refuse to see the truth.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What are my fantasies about the relationship & how are they hurting me?*
- *What am I having trouble facing and why?*
- *The reality of the situation is _____.*
- *Things I do when I am refusing to accept reality (could be things like lie, throw tantrums, withdraw, arguing, etc.)*
- *What better coping mechanisms can I use so that I no longer have to deny reality?*
- *Describe a situation where you had a fantasy about a relationship that you were forced to let go of, and why. Examine your feelings about this situation.*

Suggested goal list: *To accept reality, I need to _____*

[Podcast about this here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Step Three

**I am honest with myself. I accept that total honesty with myself
about myself and the situation is the only way to recover.**

Now that you've dealt with the denial and the fantasy of the relationship, it's time to get really honest with yourself. We never lie better than when we lie to ourselves. What are your true motivations? What are you really trying to accomplish with the things you are doing? For example, do you really want closure or are you simply looking for any excuse to talk to the person one more time? You must be fearless here and brutally honest with yourself about the situation. There is no other way to deal with this, and you cannot change something if you will not admit it.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What are my true motivations?*
- *What do I really want?*
- *Honesty is necessary because _____.*
- *Ways I am dishonest with myself and/or others.*
- *Describe a situation where you were dishonest with yourself and what led you to engage in self-deception (fear, etc.).*

Suggested goal list: *To be totally honest with myself, I need to _____*

[Podcast about this here.](#)

Step Four

I realize that I have a choice. I accept that only reclaiming my power can restore balance to my life and defeat my feelings of helplessness.

It's not uncommon for people to feel controlled, trapped or forced into doing things in a toxic relationship, so it's very important to understand that you do have a choice. You always have. You are not helpless! The way to defeat helplessness is act consciously and purposefully at all times. You must find the courage to say NO and mean it. You must find the courage to set and enforce strong boundaries. You must find the courage to walk away when you are being mistreated. No one can do these things for you.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What are the choices I have right now?*
- *What choices have I made in the past that I could have made differently?*
- *Why have I made the choices that I have made?*
- *The choices I have made have impacted my life in the following ways:*
- *Describe your decision-making process and the parameters you use to make choices, then examine this. Is my decision-making reactive or proactive? Is it logical or emotional?*
-

Suggested goal list: *To make healthier choices, I need to _____*

[Article about this here](#) and [here](#).

Step Five

I take ownership of my life and my choices.

I accept that this problem is *mine*, and is caused by issues of my own that must be addressed.

Taking ownership of your life and your choices is very important. It is no one's responsibility to make sure your needs are met but yours, and no one is responsible for your life but you. You must accept and acknowledge that your actions have contributed to the situation that you are in, because ultimately, you are in charge of your own life. It is only by accepting this that you can be empowered to change it.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What does taking ownership of my life look and feel like?*
- *How can I take ownership of my life in a more intentional way?*
- *How has my inability to take ownership of my life and my choices contributed to the situation(s) I am in?*
- *Taking ownership and responsibility of my life and myself are important because _____.*
- *Reasons other people are not responsible for my choices:*
- *Describe a situation where your needs were not met and how you could have met them better (seeking validation from others vs validating yourself, etc.).*

Suggested goal list: *To take ownership of my own life, I need to _____*

[Podcast about this here.](#)

Step Six

I take control of myself. I accept that no one has control over me and that the decisions I've made have been my own - for better or for worse.

People often say that they are being manipulated by another person. The majority of the time, it is actually your own feelings that are manipulating you. People feel controlled when they are making decisions based on what other people want instead of what feels right to them. For whatever reason, you've repeatedly chosen to act against your own self-interest. It's up to you to determine why you've done that. Focusing on others can sometimes be a way of avoiding or ignoring your own issues. If you have acted (or reacted) out of fear, pity or anything else, you must take fearless ownership of that and not try to hold others responsible for your decisions. In the end, the choices have always been your own. When you truly accept that, you realize that you have the power to change it.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *How can I control my reactions better?*
- *How have my reactions contributed to the toxic situation(s)?*
- *My needs are just as important as everyone else's because _____.*
- *How have my emotions contributed to feeling helpless or manipulated?*
- *Things I can do to control my emotions better so that my decisions are healthier:*
- *How would taking firm action change my situation?*
- *What is holding me back from accepting responsibility for my decisions and/or taking firm action?*
- *Describe a situation where you felt controlled or manipulated by another person and examine how your own feelings played into it.*

Suggested goal list: *To take real control of myself, I need to _____.*

Podcast about this [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).

Step Seven

I free myself from the need to control others.

I accept that I have no control over anything except myself and my reactions.

So much suffering is caused by the desire to control other people. In toxic relationships, people often try to control another person's behavior using their own: "If I do this, maybe he won't do that," or "If I don't do this, maybe she will do that." It's an illusion. People do things for their own reasons, the same way that you do. You cannot control other people or anything except your own behavior and your own reactions. You absolutely must accept this if you want to recover, because the belief that you can control others – or that they can control you – prevents you from accepting reality. Many times, this behavior is motivated by fear. By practicing [radical acceptance](#), you can learn to let go of the need to control other people. You must learn to be accepting of the way things are, rather than fantasizing about how you would like them to be. You must learn to let others take responsibility for their own lives, feelings and well-being; to put down the burdens that are not yours to carry.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *Why do I feel the need to try to control situations and/or people?*
- *What am I afraid of?*
- *Things I am responsible for:*
- *What does radical acceptance look like?*
- *Things I do when I am trying to control others: (could look like issuing ultimatums, threats, manipulations, etc.)*
- *Describe a situation where you were attempting to control another person or situation and examine why you behaved that way (how did you feel, what were you thinking, etc.).*

Suggested goal list: *To free myself from the need to control my environment, I need to _____.*

[Article about this here.](#) [Podcast about this here.](#)

Step Eight

I take responsibility for my own well-being. I accept that my redemption as a person does not lie in other people, nor does my value, worth or validity as a human being. It is within me.

Many people stay in toxic relationships because they do not have strong self-worth and self-esteem. These things are often tied up in their relationships with other people. The underlying feeling may be that outside of the relationship, they have no value. They may subconsciously feel that if they can help the toxic person or somehow convince the toxic person to validate them, this will create self-worth. This is a vicious cycle that will repeat itself over and over again until you realize that your value is not based on what other people think. It is not based on whether another person values you or not – no matter who they are. What matters is what you think of yourself, how you feel about yourself. Once you can address that, you will find that your need for the approval and validation of others is no longer a problem.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *Reasons I am responsible for my own well-being:*
- *Do I make decisions based on another person's well-being or happiness instead of my own?*
- *How do I truly feel about myself?*
- *Negative beliefs I hold about myself vs. reality*
- *Ways I practice self-care and how I can practice better self-care*
- *How has my lack of self-esteem and/or self-worth contributed to my decision-making?*
- *How would improving my self-esteem improve my life and my relationships with others?*
- *What are my needs?*
- *Healthy ways I can meet my needs:*
- *Describe a situation where you made a decision based on needing something (approval, validation, etc.) from another person instead of what was best for you. Examine the emotions and thoughts driving your decision-making.*

Suggested goal list: *To improve my self-esteem, I need to _____. To curb negative thinking, I need to _____.*

[Article about this here](#) and [here](#). [Video workshop about this here](#).

Step Nine

I respect myself.

I accept that people treat me the way I allow myself to be treated.

How we allow others to treat us is so important. People will treat you the way you allow them to treat you. If you don't enforce boundaries, you cannot expect others to simply create them for you. You must respect yourself enough to say, "I will not allow others to treat me this way. I will not do things I don't want to do, or participate in things if I don't like how they make me feel." If you don't respect yourself, you cannot expect anyone else to do so. Boundaries are not a negotiation. They are not an ultimatum. They are a line in the sand that says, "If you cross this line, that tells me that you do not respect me and the relationship cannot continue." Another person's approval or attention should never be more important than your self-respect. If it is, it is up to you to discover why.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What does self-respect look like?*
- *How can I respect myself better?*
- *How can I teach others to respect me?*
- *How has my decision-making reflected my self-respect?*
- *How has self-respect figured into my relationship?*
- *What are boundaries?*
- *What do healthy boundaries look like in my life?*
- *Describe a situation where you created a boundary with someone but did not enforce it. Examine the reasons why that happened, particularly the emotions and/or thoughts that led you to give in. How would this situation have been different if you had not given in?*
- *Describe a situation where you did create and enforce a boundary, and examine the reasons why that happened, particularly the emotions and/or thoughts that led you not to give in. Examine the differences in these situations.*

Suggested goal list:

- *To practice self-respect, I need to _____.*

- *To create and enforce boundaries, I need to _____.*

[Podcast about this here.](#) [Article about this here.](#)

Step Ten

I understand that I am not perfect. I accept that I have made mistakes and have flaws. Some of the choices I've made have hurt others or myself. Confessing these things out loud removes their power over me.

In toxic relationships, people often blame the other person. They are responsible for their actions 100%, but you are also responsible for yours. You are not perfect. You are not flawless. No one is. And that's OK. We have all made mistakes, done stupid things, done hurtful things, done things we shouldn't have. Sometimes we have hurt other people because we were jealous, angry, hurt or upset. Sometimes we were being selfish. Sometimes the unhealthy decisions we made didn't affect just ourselves. Sometimes we hurt our loved ones with our choices or our denial. When you can admit to having done these things, you remove their power over you. You can begin to repair your relationships with – or bring closure to – the people who were hurt by your actions. You may find that some people are not interested in closure or repairing the relationship, or with speaking to you at all. And that needs to be accepted as well. Sometimes, you can't fix things. Sometimes, you have to accept them as they are and learn to be OK with that.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *Reasons I am not perfect and reasons that's OK!*
- *Behaviors that impact my life in a negative way: (raging, withdrawing, addictions, jealousy, etc.)*
- *Ways I can learn from my mistakes.*
- *Choices I have made that hurt or affected other people (besides myself).*
- *People that I have hurt and ways I can make amends with them.*
- *Healthy ways I can process my guilt.*
- *How can I move on from mistakes I have made?*
- *How can I make different decisions so that acting out negatively becomes less frequent for me?*
- *What healthy coping mechanisms can I use when I am upset or feeling vulnerable?*
- *Describe a situation where you made a mistake or an unhealthy choice. Then write a letter forgiving yourself for it.*

Suggested goal list:

- *To accept myself as I am, I need to _____.*
- *To remove my burdens of guilt, I need to _____.*
- *To react more appropriately and/or acceptably, I need to _____.*

[Podcast about this here.](#)

Step Eleven

I take ownership of my recovery. I accept that I have past traumas and issues that *must* be addressed. I understand that my wounds may not be my fault but recovery is my responsibility.

When we examine the question of how someone ends up in a toxic relationship, the answer is usually rooted in that person's past. There may be issues with parents, or abuse, or previous relationships. There are reasons you ended up where you are, and those issues must be addressed. If they are not, this toxic relationship will end and another will be found. It's likely that your initial wound is not your fault. However, your recovery belongs to you. It is your responsibility to take care of yourself.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *What does the toxic relationship symbolize in my life?*
- *What similar situations have I been in?*
- *Why was/is this toxic relationship so attractive to me?*
- *What was/am I really trying to get out of this relationship?*
- *What in my history explains or relates to where I am right now?*
- *What traumas or wounds do I have?*
- *What part have my own wounds played in my decision-making and my current situation?*
- *How can I mitigate the impact of these things on my decision-making and my life moving forward?*
- *How can I resolve my feelings about myself in regard to these traumas?*
- *How can I accept that these things happened and go forward with my life?*

Suggested goal list:

- *To accept my past traumas, I need to _____.*
- *To remove my burdens of guilt, I need to _____.*

Article about this here and here.

Step Twelve

I make a lifetime commitment to wellness. I accept that these are things I must consciously practice every day if I want to recover.

Recovery from this situation is a journey, not a destination. There is a lot of self-discovery along the way, and it's possible that you may have to work the steps a number of times throughout your life; programming like this can be very hard to break and like any other addiction, there may be relapses. A commitment to self-care and to the principles here can help boost your chances of a successful lifetime recovery.

Suggested journal topic(s):

- *In five years, what will my life look like?*
- *How does my life compare to 6 months ago?*
- *What have I gained from working the Steps?*
- *How can I apply what I've learned in the TRRAP to other aspects of my life?*
- *How can I help others in my same situation?*

Suggested goal list:

- *To continue practicing wellness, I need to _____.*
- *To help others, I can _____.*