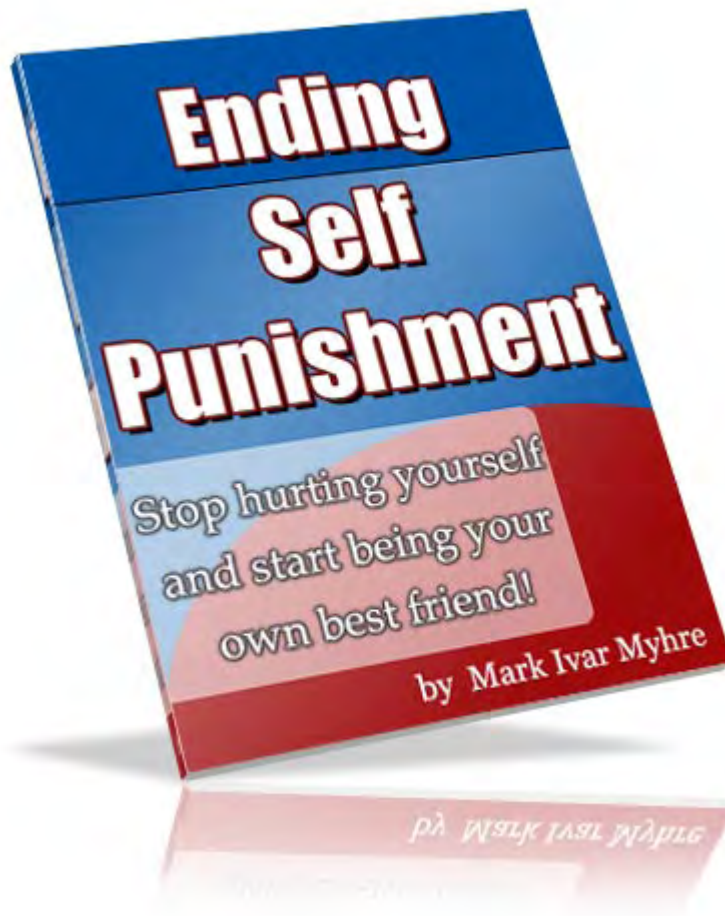


How To End Self-Punishment

This e-book brought to you by Mark Ivar Myhre



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Chapter 1 -- Self Punishment - What It Does To You

Punishment is all about inflicting pain, pure and simple.

And self-punishment is all about inflicting pain on **yourself**.

We're all familiar with the concept of self-punishment, but few people really break it apart and look at it closely. (Until now!)

First, let's look at the bottom line of self-punishment.

Basically, we're so afraid that others MIGHT inflict pain on us, that we want to punish *ourselves* as a way to avoid the pain from others. That's the bottom line. But it's so pervasive and so insidious, we rarely even recognize it:

"You don't have to hurt me - I'll do it to myself. I'll punish myself so you don't have to!"

Many people find their complete motivation in life revolves around avoiding the punishment - or rather, the THREAT of punishment - from others. And they have no idea they're even doing it! Instead, they just go about their days functioning out of this 'bottom line' of self-punishment.

But what happens when we do this?

In our attempts to avoid this threat - the threat that someone else *might* punish us - we get caught in some sort of 'limiting structure'.

The Four Limiting Structures Of Self-Punishment

1. The Maze of Projection & Identification

In this scenario, I project 'mother' or 'father' onto almost every single person I come in contact with. I do this so automatically, that I really don't even

recognize it. I just do it. And understand, it's the ENERGY - or the FUNCTION - that I project - and not the form.

So it's not like if my mom was overweight and had brown hair, then I'm only going to project 'mother' onto overweight, brown-haired women who are 25 years older than me.

It's nothing like that. Because I'm not projecting the *form*. I'm projecting the **energy**. Or I'm projecting the **function** of mother. I'm projecting what my mother did or didn't do to me. Or I'm projecting the potential of what she *could* do. Or what I *wanted* her to do. Or what I *didn't* want her to do.

Also, I could just as easily project mother onto other men in my reality, and not just the women I see. Projecting really has nothing to do with the form!

And when I project 'mother' or 'father' - then that means I get to identify myself as being a child.

Why in the world would I do such a crazy thing? Why would I want to see myself as a child, to identify as a child, and to function as a child?

Because my childhood sucked! But a part of me - a living, breathing part of my personality - is still stuck in childhood. A part of me is, and always will be, a child.

A part of my personality branched off and stayed behind. And now it's still there, even today. No matter how old I am. It's alive, with its own thoughts and feelings, quite separate from mine.

Plus, I didn't get enough love as a child. Or at least, that's what I believe with all my heart and all my mind. I'm so convinced that I was unloved (or at least, not loved enough) that now I HAVE TO MAKE IT RIGHT.

That child still suffers inside me. I've grown up, but that child lives on. And it still suffers from a lack of love. That child is stuck in a **tape loop** - thinking and feeling and acting in the same ways, over and over again. Day after day.

The only thing my inner child can possibly do to try to help himself is to come into my world. And somehow, this time, to 'get it right'; get the love he missed out on. And the only way he can do that is by pretending that *you're* my mother.

He's trying to get love by coming into my world and hoping the other people I come in contact with can somehow 'fix' him.

I don't even recognize this game I'm playing, and you don't either. So you can't possibly help me. So the next person I see, I have to pretend that *they're* my mother. Maybe they can help me. But when they don't, then I have to go on to the next person, and the next person, and the next...

All in a failed attempt to get enough love. I keep reliving the same energy and the same function - over and over again.

And of course, I have to avoid the pain that 'mother' and 'father' and EVERYBODY ELSE in the WHOLE FREAKING WORLD - *might* inflict upon me.

It's a maze of projection and identification. I never know what's around the next corner. What's around the next bend. I'm so freaked out about avoiding the pain that I'm lost in a maze. Trying to fix my childhood.

Or, I might identify myself as being the parent. And then I'll end up projecting 'child' onto everyone else in the world. It's the other side of the same coin. And in fact, some people switch back and forth from being the child to being the parent.

When you identify yourself as the parent, then you get lost in the judgments and the righteousness of trying to get all the 'children' to behave.

You're attempting to be the parent you never had. And you're still caught in the maze. You can end up spending your whole life as a child, or an adolescent, or your mother or father - or even someone else's child - but never being YOU. **Never being real.**

It's sad to think about, but I could end up spending my whole life trapped in this maze of pretending to be either a child or an adolescent or a parent.

If you'd like to heal your inner child, or inner adolescent, to help them get the love they missed out on, (and so you can start having healthier relationships yourself!) check out -

<http://creative-visualization.com/working-with-your-inner-child.html>

And if you'd like to heal your inner parent, so you can STOP all that internal criticism, (the nagging voice inside your head) go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/healing-the-critical-parent.html>

2. The Downward Spiral of Seeking Approval

In this situation, I find myself always seeking the approval of others. So while it's similar to the first scenario, now I realize I'm not a child. Instead, I simply want you to approve of me.

"Am I doing it okay? Is this what you wanted?"

And the closer you are to me, the more I seek your approval. **The more important you are in my life, the greater the need I feel to get you to approve.**

All my choices and decisions are based on what you'll think of me. All my thoughts and feelings. And even my beliefs, to a certain extent, revolve around the approval I so desperately crave.

I've got to make sure you approve. I'm so afraid you might deny me, or reject me, or punish me in some way.

And you become like a ghost that follows me around everywhere I go. Silently, invisibly, watching over me. Watching everything I do and say and think and feel. I have to always be careful. I never know when you might jump out of the shadows and pounce on me in some way.

I'm so afraid of the pain from some 'ghostly other' that I keep sinking lower and lower - in a downward spiral.

I'm playing a game I can't possibly win. Eventually it consumes me. I'm not even living my own life anymore. I'm not authentic. I'm not real. All because of a perceived threat I'll be punished. 'They' might punish me. Sometimes I'm not even sure who 'they' are. I just always have to watch out.

3. The Trap of Outside Validation

There's nothing wrong with outside validation. That paycheck you get on Friday serves as an excellent example!

The problem comes in when you seek outside validation as a source of self-esteem.

You see, everyone seeks self-esteem. Because everyone needs esteem to live. You would literally die if you had absolutely no esteem. You would have no reason to get out of bed, no reason to go to work, no reason to take care of yourself in any capacity.

But if you don't know where self-esteem comes from, if you don't know how to find it inside yourself, then you will be forced to seek false esteem from the world around you.

Now you got a problem. If you get your esteem from *inside* yourself, then no one can ever take it away. But if you seek it from the world, then you're at the whims of others. Other people, and other circumstances.

What if they're having a bad day? What if you get fired? What if that fancy car gets wrecked?

What's going to happen to your esteem?

Please understand, you **need** outside validation. But NOT as a source of your esteem.

Often times, we don't even get to the point of seeking true esteem, because we're so afraid of the pain - or the threat of pain - that others might inflict upon us. Usually it's because of the shame we've had to endure as children.

Therefore, **I give up on finding the *true source* of self-esteem, and go full force into the outside validation.**

"Look at my car. Look at my house. Look at my money. Look at my husband or wife."

Because I use the *trappings* of success as a **source** of esteem, I end up getting caught in a trap of outside validation. It becomes insatiable, because I can never have enough money to protect myself from my own imaginary fears.

I'm trapped in the competitiveness, the powerlessness, the resentment, that always results from using outside validation as a source of my esteem.

If you'd like to learn more about earning REAL self-esteem, so you never have to be at the whims of others, then go to -

<http://www.self-esteem-secrets.com>

At the very least, go check out that page to find out **what self esteem really is!**

4. The Web of Addiction to Excess

This one can be a little tricky to understand. Your ego can easily take you for a ride, and you'll end up believing some story about yourself that isn't true.

It's not the ACT that makes you addicted, it's the EXCESS.

Feeling pity once in a blue moon does not make you a pity addict. Having a beer or two on the weekend does not make you a drunk. Blaming every once in a while - when blame is truly called for in the situation - does not make you addicted to blame.

However, feeling pity every day, getting drunk on a daily basis, blaming over and over - now we're starting to look at an addiction.

Any excess usually becomes addictive. Whether it involves alcohol, drugs, food, smoking, recreation, sports activities, or anything else. **And it exists for the sole purpose of avoiding punishment.**

Addiction to excess is never about the 'pleasure'. It's always about avoiding the pain.

"Are you saying my softball game is addictive????"

No. That's your ego talking!

Just because you love food doesn't mean you're a food addict.

See? **There's a fine line here.** Only *you* can decide if your substance or activity or emotional pattern qualifies as an addiction. Look to whether it's excessive or not.

I'm not here to judge you. I'm just pointing out **the web of addiction to excess** that does exist. It's very real.

Just remember, no one ever gets drunk because they like the taste of whiskey. They get drunk to avoid the pain. But one Kentucky Cocktail at a party does not make you an addict. It's a fine line.

Anyway, these four situations -

- the maze of projection/identification,
- the downward spiral of seeking approval,

- the trap of outside validation,
- and the web of addiction to excess...

all involve **avoiding the punishment that others might inflict upon you.**

Rather than living my own life, I end up living out of the **fear** - the perceived threat - that others might punish me. Since my shame started so early in life, I can't even articulate this perceived threat.

Instead, I dedicate my life to avoiding the punishment that others might inflict on me. This is what shame has done to me. This is what I've become.

Ironically, **while I run from the punishment from others, I welcome the punishment I inflict upon myself.** At the very *least*, I avoid looking at my self-punishment.

Or, perhaps I call it 'being responsible'.

I run away from the pain of others and I run right into the pain I inflict upon myself. Then I get stuck in a **maze** or a **downward spiral** or a **trap** or a **web**. I anchor myself in one of these places, weighing myself down. Which now means I've just made it much harder to change.

Ending self-punishment starts with recognizing and acknowledging which one of these four ways has got me. Is it the maze, the downward spiral, the trap or the web?

Then it becomes simply a matter of forgiveness; forgiving yourself.

In fact, so much of ending self-punishment comes from first...

- recognizing it exists

and then...

- acknowledging our relationship with self-punishment,

(recognizing and acknowledging self-punishment is the purpose of this e-book) and then deliberately, with intention and focus...

- forgiving ourselves for even getting caught up in it in the first place!

By forgiving yourself, you create the space for change.

For all the details on exactly how to forgive yourself, check out "The Magic of Forgiveness" by going to -

<http://www.forgive-yourself.com>

In the next chapter, we'll look more closely at why we punish ourselves.

The more clearly we understand it, the easier it is to STOP doing it!

Chapter 2 -- Self Punishment - Why We Do It

While we often seek to avoid the punishment of others, we usually end up embracing the punishment we inflict on ourselves. To understand why we would do such a crazy thing, let's look at these...

Seven major reasons why we might punish ourselves.

1. We've been taught and conditioned by society, parents, schools and other institutions.

Every child knows, long before they reach school age, that when you're 'bad and wrong' you *deserve* to be punished.

Parents seldom say:

"you're hurting yourself here, and you're being destructive, and it's also hurting others, and we're going to have to take some sort of corrective action to help you learn new ways of conducting yourself to help you grow to be a better person."

Rather, it's usually more like -

*"you were bad and now you're going to be PUNISHED. You're only getting what you **deserve!**"*

It's expedient. And besides, how much logic and reason can a small child even understand, anyway?

But they certainly understand punishment!

In school, you're usually told how wrong you were, not how right you were.

*"You got four questions **WRONG.**"*

Not,

"Hey, you got 26 questions right!"

And the result of getting a few questions wrong? **You failed.** Which usually results in some sort of punishment. And once internalized, you thus learn to punish yourself.

Now, failure doesn't REALLY mean you should be punished. It's just a story we use to beat ourselves up with.

Two wrongs don't really make a right. Failure is bad enough on its own, without adding the extra burden of punishment.

Also, we learn if we can just punish ourselves first, maybe mother or the teacher will punish us a little less. If a sliver of glass from the vase we dropped somehow manages to fly up and penetrate our flesh, maybe mom won't be so hard on us.

In addition, we're also taught that **being self-effacing is a virtue.** If I put myself down, or belittle myself, then its called 'being humble'. If you're meek and mild, that's considered 'being good'.

If I think I'm better-than, either my parents will have to break me of the thought, or else they believe the world will surely break me. Either way...

Fortunately, many parents today do seem to be changing these habits, but still... the tendencies remain.

2. We have a natural need to feel.

It's part of the human condition; it's innate. We LONG to feel our feelings. And our **heart** longs to feel.

But society tells us NOT to feel our feelings. *"You're not supposed to feel,"* says society. *"Don't feel - it's a waste of time and energy and it's just going to create problems anyway."*

Men, in particular, are taught and conditioned to not feel anything. And women, while allowed to be somewhat melodramatic, and allowed to TALK about their feelings, are still not really supposed to FEEL their feelings. Talking and melodrama will suffice.

And if you must feel, for God's sake - do it in private! As if it's somehow shameful and wrong.

But the natural order of humanity is to feel. It's natural. You want to feel. It's a **need**. But for so many people, the only avenue left is pain. It's the only thing left to feel.

We end up inflicting pain on ourselves - or else we create someone else doing it to us - as a way to feel SOMETHING. As a way to satisfy that unquenchable desire and need to feel something.

How do you know you're awake? Do you ask someone to hug you? Or would you ask them to pinch you instead?

The problem is, so many people have **huge blockages** to feeling their feelings. These blockages form very early in life, and in fact, you could even make the argument you were born with them!

Either way, they exist. **You could visualize them as looking like massive boulders - big chunks of negative, limiting, energy.** A static, 'deadening' type of energy that separates you from your own feelings.

The end result - you simply refuse to feel your feelings. However, since all your **motivation** for living and succeeding in life, as well as all your **hopes and dreams**, lie within your feelings - well, this blockage produces quite a negative, painful impact in every area of your life.

It could be a blockage to *all* feelings, or it could be a blockage to **love** or **intimacy** or **happiness**. Or it could be some other type of blockage altogether.

The first step to dealing with blockages involves recognizing them. You could even objectify them - imagining what they look like. Next, you also have to be WILLING to work with them, and equally important, you have to

make a firm decision - a firm CHOICE - to face up to them and end them as best you can.

To really improve your life - and certainly to end self-punishment, you *need* to address your blockages (if they exist for you.)

AFTER you've made a firm commitment to work on any blockages you may have, check out a meditation I've developed that takes you to your own subconscious mind to find and eliminate blockages. For more info, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/removing-blockages.html>

3. We don't know how to process, or else we refuse to do it.

When I speak of 'process' here, I'm talking about the basic, fundamental pathway that we use to grow and change and become more of ourselves.

Because if we're not growing and changing, (best done through processing!) then life will most certainly be painful.

While variations exist, processing comes down to four basic steps -

- recognize,
- acknowledge,
- forgive
- and change.

Usually when I write about **processing**, I'm referring to the first two steps - recognize and acknowledge.

Recognition involves either writing out, or speaking to another, or maybe even speaking to the reflection you see in the mirror. You write or speak about what's going on - what situation in your life needs to change. You

also write or speak about the games you've been playing - the manipulations, the payoffs you've been taking.

You tell yourself the brutal truth. You admit your blame, your pity, your avoidance of responsibility, your hidden agenda to prove what a rotten childhood you had... whatever it may be.

You tell yourself the truth.

If you're writing it out, it may take twenty pages to uncover that truth! Or it may be one page. Either way, you write (or speak) long enough to find the real story, and to expose the phony story you've been telling yourself up till now.

Next you acknowledge it. You OWN it. You admit you created this. You understand your payoff - and FEEL the impact it's had on yourself and others.

And here's where the self-punishment comes in. After owning it, it becomes so tempting to beat yourself up about it.

"Bad, terrible, rotten me! Look at what I've done!"

Once you realize that it's NOT your mother, or your past, or some pathetic person in your life that's creating your reality - and you really let that in, and feel the impact and the damage you've caused to yourself - then it becomes so easy to punish yourself rather than forgive yourself.

Because punishment is usually all we know to do. It's the knee-jerk reaction that comes after recognizing and acknowledging. We think if we just punish ourselves enough, somehow we'll magically change.

It seldom works. Instead, **punishment usually locks the behavior in place.**

To grow and change and NOT punish ourselves, the third step involves **forgiving ourselves** - letting in the energy of forgiveness.

The best way I know to let in the energy of forgiveness -

<http://www.forgive-yourself.com>

Forgiveness creates the space for change, the fourth step of processing.

Once you've forgiven yourself, you naturally tend to create change in your life.

4. Society has nobilized struggle, suffering and sacrifice.

It's noble to struggle and sacrifice if you want to get ahead. Even suffering is considered almost a requirement of success. Nobody respects a person who has an easy life; or someone who easily achieves success. It's SUPPOSED to be hard. Or so we're told.

Every story we've ever read reinforces this idea.

But why? The concept has been so ingrained into our minds that we never stop to question it.

Why is suffering rewarded? And why do we seek to punish those who have it easy? The answer lies with **chauvinism** and **domination**. We've bought into the lie of 'how noble it is to struggle and suffer' so completely, that to question it almost seems laughable.

"OF COURSE you have to struggle to get ahead! What are you, an idiot?!"

And we know - those who have an easy life will be pulled down by others who observe it. Just like crabs in a box will pull down any other crab that attempts to climb out. Sad but true.

And if no one else is around to make us suffer and struggle and sacrifice, then we'll do it to ourselves.

This reason for self-punishment may be the hardest to change, since its become so ingrained into our very DNA. (Or so it seems.)

We might not call it by those names. Instead, it may be labeled as **will power** and **self-discipline**, but the energies of struggle, suffering and sacrifice are still there.

And finally, for some people, **struggle is the only friend they have.**

Struggle and suffering have been their only companions - or at least, the only companions who've never deserted them. And they're not about to give up on their best friends!

5. We don't know how dangerous our ego can be when its negative.

Most people have never learned to distinguish their own voice, from the voice of their ego. And that's a dangerous position to be in. If you've not taken the time to work with and understand your ego, and what it does... if you've not taken the time to learn WHY you even have an ego, and what its job is... if you've not taken back your power from your ego...

Then, at the very least, you'll experience the punishment from it. At the very least, it will be beating you up, and lying to you - telling you either you're the greatest person in the world, or the worst person in the world. (Or both!)

The worst case scenario is when you don't even know it's your ego talking to you. And you don't know how to shut off its voice.

Do you know how your ego functions? Do you know the games it plays, the stories it tells you inside your head? Do you know its simple, repetitive nature?

If you don't, you'll most assuredly punish yourself. Your ego will make sure of it! You have to **KNOW** your ego - and bring it closer - if you wish to heal it.

To know and understand your ego, and return it to its proper function, so it can SERVE you rather than punish you, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/healing-your-ego.html>

6. We have a natural need to know and understand ourselves.

Knowing yourself - understanding yourself - is a **need**. You have an insatiable desire to know yourself on deeper and deeper levels.

Well, knowing yourself comes through two avenues. One is through **love**. The other is through **pain**. Which path holds the most allure for you? Which path do you currently follow?

We both know which path most people take.

Because we have a **NEED** to know ourselves - and because self-love is almost demonized, the only avenue left to 'know thyself' comes from pain.

Look at the relationship between abusive parents and abused children. When parents don't know how to love, they end up trying to love their children in the only way they can; through pain.

Because they *have* to pass their feelings on to their children. And if they can't love them, they **WILL** abuse them in some way, by passing on their shame.

Shame becomes the only avenue to express their feelings.

And what happens to the abused child? You'd think it would do everything it could to get away from the abuser, but so much of the time, it keeps *returning* to the abuser. A connection forms between the two.

And when the child grows up, this new grownup still seeks to return to the abuser by projecting 'mother' and 'father' onto other grownups. That's why it's so important to heal the inner child within; to stop the painful cycle of abuse... the painful cycle of 'being intimate' through abuse.

The pain is perpetuated through unhealthy relationships. That's why I've put together a few audio files to help heal the inner child.

For more info on healing the inner child, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/working-with-your-inner-child.html>

To compound the problem, society doesn't encourage self-love. In fact, quite the opposite. Self-love equates to selfishness, narcissism, even solipsism (the delusion that you're the only one who's real).

You're supposed to love others - but who ever says you're supposed to love yourself? Since we've been taught self-love is selfish, we shut down this natural urge. **When you shut down self-love, then you're forced to know yourself through pain and self-punishment.**

If lack of self-love is an issue, I've outlined the exact process of how to start loving yourself in the e-book, How To Create Your Own Reality. To learn more go to -

<http://www.create-reality.com>

7. We develop our human and spiritual potential by suffering.

This is similar to the 4th reason. But rather than the nobility, here the motivation for punishment comes from its *inherent value*.

In the nobility of struggle, we'll be rewarded for our struggles.

"First you struggle and suffer, then you'll get the success."

In the 'inherent value' of struggle, the reward comes from the struggle itself. Or the pain, or the punishment, or the sacrifice, or the suffering. This concept may best be expressed by the slogan -

"No Pain, No Gain"

Now, that may be true when it comes to lifting weights, I don't know. But when it comes to life itself, I just can't find much value.

You hear people who've gone through terrible tragedy, and afterwards they say it was the best thing that ever happened to them. It's called 'learning from the misery of life'. (I've been there myself!)

Now, of course you can learn from pain. But you can learn a lot more from **love** and **joy** and **beauty** and **enthusiasm** and **curiosity**. You don't have to suffer and struggle and endure pain as a way to grow.

You don't have to suffer to be creative. You *can* - but you don't have to.

Meaning and value can be gleaned from any and all life experiences, including pain and punishment. So yes, you *can* find some value in your pain. But there's more value in love. You certainly don't need to punish yourself to become more of who you really are.

In fact, you don't need *any* of these 7 forms of self-punishment.

Unfortunately, we usually do end up punishing ourselves in one way or another.

To help end the punishment, review these different reasons. Which one or two (or three) are your favorites?

While you may have experienced all of them at one time or another, to one degree or another, you most likely have a pattern that revolves around usually one or two of these reasons, or at most three of them.

You need to know WHY you punish yourself if you want to end it. Spend the time to evaluate and understand each of these reasons to find your own unique pattern.

That's the first step to truly ending self-punishment.

Once again, here are the seven reasons why we might punish ourselves:

- 1. We've been taught and conditioned** by society, parents, schools and other institutions.
- 2. We have a natural need to feel.** Yet we've shut down our feelings so the only thing left to feel is pain.
- 3. We don't know how to process, or else we refuse to do it.** The basics of processing - recognize, acknowledge, forgive and change.
- 4. Society has nobilized struggle, suffering and sacrifice.** It's the 'right' thing to do.
- 5. We don't know how dangerous our ego can be when its negative.** The ego, when negative, can constantly berate us and mislead us.
- 6. We have a natural need to know and understand ourselves.** And if we can't know ourselves through love and joy, then we'll learn through pain and punishment.
- 7. We develop our human and spiritual potential by suffering.** We find our value through our pain; through how much we can endure.

Chapter 3 -- Self Punishment - How We Do It

In this chapter, we're going to be looking at the specific **techniques** we use to punish ourselves. **HOW** we do it.

It's taken a little extra time for me to write this particular chapter because I had to face up to the ways I was punishing myself. Interesting. So maybe we can all learn something together from these words! And by the way, this first one is mine.

1. We deny ourselves the fun and success and happiness that life has to offer.

Because we've been programmed *so intensely* to believe we're supposed to suffer, and because we're not supposed to enjoy our lives, this method of self-punishment is very common.

I mean, come on, how many people do you know who are both successful AND happy? We've all learned you can have one, or the other, (maybe!) but certainly not both.

And what does it mean to have fun? Usually, we default to the adolescent's version of fun, which often involves inebriation to excess.

"Let's see how much we can drink! Let's see who pukes first! What fun!"

I would say fun could best be defined as - "feeling the wonder of being alive".

And how many people will let themselves feel that? For most of us, life has become a drudgery of getting through the day. So we can somehow get through the next day. But fun can be found anywhere.

A walk in the woods could be fun. Building a business could be fun.

Or, that same walk could end up being a punishing nightmare. Just like with building a business.

What's the difference?

Whether or not I let it be fun.

And speaking of success... sometimes we'll ALMOST let ourselves succeed, and then at the last second, everything falls apart. We almost get there - then we end up being denied. This is a classic symptom of shame, and it's also a way we use to punish ourselves.

When we want something so strongly...

When we work so hard to get it...

When we do everything we can possibly think of...

and we still fall short - it's often a sign of shame and self-punishment.

And what ends up happening? We 'learn our lesson' - and stop trying, stop wanting, stop desiring, and sink to cynicism and pessimism.

We might not give up **wishing**, but usually that's as far as it goes. We'll fantasize, but we 'know' it's not really going to manifest.

Then we end up becoming "the person who never has any fun, the person who's never happy, the person who can never succeed".

We tell ourselves these types of stories, and then use those stories as a container to hold the bitterness, the pain, the suffering, that comes from this type of self-punishment.

"I probably didn't deserve it anyway."

Those types of statements become the receptacles of our pain.

2. We embrace self-ridicule, self-rejection and humiliation.

I'll put myself down before you have a chance to do it to me.

"Look how stupid I am!"

Or, I'll humiliate myself. Or else I'll just outright reject myself. Reject my thoughts and feelings, my desires, my imagination... Reject my dreams. Reject my worth. Reject any number of things about myself.

Because maybe then, if I reject myself, it won't hurt as bad when you reject me. Or so I believe.

This all goes back to punishing myself as a way to avoid the punishment (or rather - to avoid the THREAT of punishment) from others. I get so afraid someone else MIGHT punish me, that I do it to myself first.

3. Another, similar form of self-punishment, involves avoiding the punishment of others. (As explained more fully in the first chapter.)

For example, we get caught in the **maze of projection and identification** - where every person becomes mother or father, and I become the child.

Or we get caught in the **downward spiral of always seeking the approval of others**.

Or maybe we get stuck in the **trap of outside validation**, where we need the trappings of success - money, cars, nice home - as a substitute for our esteem. Or we need the perfect body or the perfect mate or the perfect kids or the perfect friends.

And finally, we can get caught in the **web of addiction to excess** - whether it's work or drugs or drinking or any number of obsessions that end up punishing ourselves as a way to avoid the potential punishment of others.

4. We inflict outright pain on ourselves.

Sadly, this is very common. Many people end up hurting themselves in some way, either through emotional, physical, or mental pain.

Often times, we'll create unpleasant or unbearable situations in our life, so it seems like it's not our fault. That way we can always point a finger at the other person or the outside event as the 'cause' of our own pain.

Some common examples include

- working a job your hate,
- being with someone who creates problems in your life, and
- living in a place that doesn't suit you.

We often create bad situations and then say we DIDN'T create them - and therefore, we can't possibly change them!

That's why it's so vitally important to remember **YOU CAN ALWAYS CHANGE.**

Sometimes, (but NOT always!) the best option is to move, or quit that job, or leave that abusive person.

As a way to clear your head, get some space, and start honestly looking at your present patterns. So you can change *inside*.

One of the best ways to begin that inner change is to learn the 'nuts and bolts' of reality creation. Then you can see so clearly **WHAT** you're doing to keep that present pattern in place. Just go to -

<http://www.create-reality.com>

5. We deny our self love and the love from others.

This is similar to the first two methods of self-punishment.

We just will not let in the love. But because **love is everywhere**, it's like being in a submarine under the water. We know the water is out there, but we can't touch it. Besides, if we sprung a leak, it could kill us. We'd drown at the bottom of the sea. To stay safe, we must stay in our submarine.

Usually, **the denial of love starts early in life**. As a child, we develop many beliefs about and around love. Here are just a few examples:

- Love means I suffer for others.
- Love means I sacrifice.
- Love means I don't get what I want, so someone else can get what they want.
- And sometimes, sadly, love means I get abused.

We often attach ugly meanings to love.

"Well why should I put up with all that? I think I'll just stay away from love."

I end up denying love because I've come to believe love equals something unpleasant. It's like - "damned if I do, and damned if I don't".

I can either punish myself by denying love (because I equate it with pain) or I can punish myself by embracing a painful twisted version of love.

6. We deny our Creator and spirituality.

We may talk the talk, but we don't walk the walk, if this is our preferred method of self-punishment. It's easy to say you are a spiritual person, or a religious person, but still lack the personal relationship with any type of Divine energy.

It's easy to turn your place of worship into a networking opportunity, or some sort of duty and obligation - going through the motions but not really touching the wonder of your Creator.

Also, **it can be hard to let in the help from above**, for so many reasons. We can say the words, but not really feel the energy. We can end up denying a **living, breathing spirituality** - which is always a two-way street. We give, and receive. And our Creator gives and receives.

From my experience, true spirituality is something you can almost taste in your mouth - because it's so plump and juicy and rich with energy. To deny yourself this energy *has* to be self-punishing.

Because spirituality is such a personal experience, there's not much more I'd want to say about it, except this: **it's never too late to start developing a relationship; it's never too late to ask for help.**

Out of habit, I often ask for help right before I go to sleep at night. Sometimes, (not always) it causes small miracles to happen in my life. I guess it depends upon whether or not I'm really ready for the changes I've asked for.

Chapter 4 -- Self Punishment - Preparing To End It

So far, we've talked about

- what self punishment does to you,
- why you might do it,
- and how you do it

(that is, IF you even do it!).

And in this chapter, we're going to start looking at preparing to end self-punishment. Specifically, we'll look at the **mindset** we need before we can end it.

The good news about self-punishment is that it's self-limiting. Meaning, it's something we create ourselves.

The bad news about self-punishment is also that it's self-limiting. Since we create it ourselves, we can't really blame it on anyone else, and if we don't take **responsibility** for it, then we'll likely use it as a club to punish ourselves even more.

So before we delve into the exact process to follow to end self-punishment, it might be useful to look at responsibility itself. What it means and what it DOESN'T mean.

First, let's look at what it doesn't mean. Most people would define responsibility as -

1. Blame
2. Shame
3. Guilt
4. Negative accountability
5. Struggle
6. Martyr
7. Control

And who wants all that?

Responsibility seems like such a hassle; so unpleasant; so distasteful.

No wonder we run from it! No wonder it's gotten such a bad rap! It often ends up meaning -

"Who did this?! Who spilt the milk?"

In other words, -

"who's going to get punished?"

It's almost like responsibility has come to be synonymous with punishment. When in reality, they're complete opposites of one another.

Responsibility has nothing to do with punishment. True responsibility means -

- I get to create my life the way I want it.
- I get to experience the best life has to offer.
- I get to choose.
- I get to enjoy.
- I get to be in dominion.
- I get to be free.
- I get to be powerful.
- I get to respond.
- I get to be self-determined.

In fact, I'd say **true responsibility could be defined as the most fun you can have in a human body.**

It's spontaneously generating your heart's desire. Living the good life. A life good and right and true. Responsibility compares to having your own playground as a kid.

That's how I define responsibility. It has nothing at all to do with any kind of punishment.

Now I understand, most people are scared to death of responsibility. I understand that fear quite well myself! I know you can't change a lifetime of negative programming just by reading these words. It takes a new mindset.

So that's why I've recorded a meditation to help you END the false responsibility. Because once you let go of the blame, shame, guilt, negative accountability, struggle, martyr and control, a whole new world opens up.

You can burn off your guilt, shame, etc - so it no longer holds you back.

And once you do, then you're able to feel a joy and a wonder and a power truly beyond words.

You're able to respond to your life as an adult once you've ended the false responsibility of guilt and struggle and blame and those other constricting energies.

It empowers you to take charge of your life.

Once you heal the negative assumptions around responsibility, you create the space for a positive change in your life.

That's exactly what my meditation is designed to do. (I've packaged it with two other meditations that help you end self-punishment for *good*.)

For more information on healing the false responsibility, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/end-self-punishment.html>

The meditation heals the erroneous assumptions about responsibility, so you can let in the truth. (And the joy and the wonder and all the other good stuff life has to offer!)

Getting back to self-punishment...

The keys to ending self-punishment consist of HONESTY and RESPONSIBILITY.

It's a fine line between being honest and responsible, versus using your insights into self-punishment as a way to beat yourself up even more.

And it's so, SO easy, to start with honesty and end up in self-punishment!

Or to move back and forth from one to the other. The trick, if there is one, involves recognizing which mindset you're in, and forgiving yourself when you slip into the resonance of **domination** (with its self-punishment), so you can return to the resonance of **dominion** (with its honesty and responsibility).

When I look at my actions, am I just being honest and responsible with myself, or am I using this introspection as a way to pile on more self-punishment?

Here's a little 'study guide' to help you:

When you're in pain, either through self-punishment, or through the punishment from others, the **FIRST** thing you want to do is **FEEL** the impact of what's happening.

Feel the pain, feel the hurt, feel the betrayal, the anger, the grief, the pity... whatever is there to feel.

First you feel. JUST feel. Feel the impact of what the punishment is doing to you.

WITHOUT the stories or rationalizations or judgments or whatever else you might use to justify why you're in pain. Just feel.

Admittedly, this can be hard to do. We've been so conditioned to **NOT** feel, and we've created such strong and potent blockages to feeling our true feelings, that it no longer seems natural to feel.

The 'natural' thing to do involves suppressing our true feelings, and putting up a good front. Pretending, even lying to ourselves, that we're okay.

"That didn't hurt."

"I deserved it."

"It's their problem, not mine."

Along with the countless other stories we tell ourselves. All as a way to avoid feeling our true feelings.

I've written about how we suppress our true feelings so many times, I don't want to belabor the point, except to say this:

When you truly open up to your feelings, in a healthy manner - it's a life-changing experience. It opens doorways that have been closed since, perhaps, early childhood. If they were ever open at all...

And once you become willing to feel ALL your feelings, then it becomes SO MUCH EASIER to feel whatever you WANT to feel.

And the more you resist feeling ANY of your feelings, the more likely it becomes you'll end up in emotional pain.

To illustrate that last point - if you don't feel your feelings around pain and punishment, then it becomes almost impossible to END the pain and the punishment. They stay trapped inside you.

To release something, you have to OWN it. To own it, you have to acknowledge it. To acknowledge it, you have to feel it.

In other words, the only way to release the pain and the trapped, painful emotions is to feel them fully. Then you can release them completely.

When we try to push them away or explain them away, that creates a painful dance.

Emotions don't cause pain. They never have and they never will. Dancing around them creates the pain.

Now you can be hurt - you can feel the *emotion* of hurt, but that's not the same as pain. Hurt, expressed cleanly, allows a release of energy that actually refreshes and renews and even empowers you.

At least, that's my experience.

I would suggest 'practicing' with feeling your feelings.

Give yourself permission to feel a little bit more, a little bit deeper, than you currently do.

Give yourself permission to open your heart a little bit more.

Give yourself permission to let the feelings into your heart a little bit more.

Anyway, if you want to end pain and punishment, it starts with feeling the feelings. Feeling the impact.

THEN, work on the thoughts. Think it through. Think about how and why you created the self-punishment.

But if you don't bleed off those feelings first, there's no way you can look at the situation clearly and cleanly. You'll be looking through the lens of pain, and through the lens of those unresolved emotions.

Your hands will be tied. You'll be limiting yourself. You won't have access to your own resources, until you resolve whatever feelings are there.

See? First you feel - just feel. Then you think about what you just felt. Then you feel whatever comes up around those thoughts. Then, you think about those new feelings.

In other words, **you go back and forth between thinking and feeling.** First you separate them out; feeling, thinking, feeling, thinking; so you can then integrate those thoughts and feelings.

One more point to keep in mind:

You won't be able to feel your feelings until you give up the blame and judgments and stories and any hidden agendas and payoffs you may have about your pain and punishment. Because you'll be feeling the blame, etc. instead of feeling the real feelings that lie beneath the blame.

Anyway, after you've felt the feelings, then you can start looking honestly and responsibly at the situation.

Why and how did I create this pain and/or punishment in my life?

With honesty and responsibility, solutions and answers become evident. With self-punishment, you won't be able to see any solutions.

In fact, that's a good indicator of whether or not you've resolved the feelings around your pain and punishment.

Can you see any solutions?

If not, then look at what unresolved emotions may still be present.

And keep in mind, **honesty and responsibility tend to produce change and momentum**. Mostly because it opens you up to help from above.

Punishment, on the other hand, tends to produce stagnation and inertia. It isolates you. And you just can't or won't open up to help from above. It makes life much more difficult, as you cut yourself off from the help that would otherwise be there.

Anyway, these are just a few points to ponder before we look at the specific steps to take to end self-punishment for good. (In the next chapter.)

Chapter 5 -- Ending Self-Punishment

In the last chapter, we looked at the difference between self-punishment, versus honesty and responsibility. We also looked at the importance of feeling the feelings and feeling the impact of what punishment does to you.

And once you've 'cleared the windshield' by feeling and releasing your feelings, then you can start looking at exactly *how* and *why* you created the punishment in the first place. Because it's important to remember that **all punishment is ultimately self-inflicted.**

Sometimes it doesn't seem that way. Sometimes it seems another person or another situation is creating our pain and punishment. And we're just the victim.

Maybe it's an unpleasant relationship, or a conflict at work. Maybe we're living in a painful environment. Whatever it is, it's important to understand - as adults, we have chosen our lives and our lifestyles. The world is not conspiring against us.

Once you get the fresh perspective that only comes from releasing the trapped feelings - only then can you start seeing solutions. Solutions that seem obvious once you release those feelings that can surround you like a hazy cloud.

And as I mentioned last chapter, truly feeling your feelings may need to happen one step at a time, since we've been so conditioned to NOT feel them. Instead, we've been taught we're supposed to suppress them or manipulate them or just plain not have them in the first place.

We've been taught feelings make you weak, and easily manipulated.

I would say **feelings are always streaming into you, just like your stream of thoughts.** To try to shut off this natural, ever-present flow, will only create problems. It would be like trying to not ever think.

The solution lies with opening up more and more to whatever feelings are really there - as a way to expedite the flow. The more the feelings flow -

- the more powerful you become,
- the smarter you become,
- the happier you become,
- and the more alive you become.

Your feelings make you more alive.

It's only when we try to restrict that flow do we feel emotional pain. That's what emotional pain IS. Trapped feelings. Trapped by stories of blame, shame, guilt, martyr, control, struggle, righteousness, and so forth.

Okay, I think you get the point. Now, back to ending self-punishment!

Here are the specific steps you can take to end it completely.

1. Look at the 'how' and the 'why' and the 'what' of self-punishment, so you can see your own unique pattern. That's what the first three chapters were all about.

As you review all the various listings, look for which ones resonate to your life. Which ones seem a little too familiar, a little too uncomfortable, a little too confronting?

The good news in all this - you only need to find the mains ones.

We form **patterns of behavior**, and usually we'll keep doing the same things over and over. So at most, you probably only have two or three different ways you punish yourself. By going through the listings, you can find which patterns you keep coming back to.

This exercise is essential to ending self-punishment.

If you'd like a little help, I've put together a meditation to help you find your patterns, and then program your subconscious mind to end those patterns.

For more information on how to end self-punishment, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/end-self-punishment.html>

2. The second step involves looking back to the past, to find the root of the problem.

Somewhere way, way back - most likely in childhood, you experienced your first specific incident where you felt you deserved to be punished. Or rather, you believed you should punish yourself.

This generating experience became the **root**, or the **anchor**, for a lifetime of self-punishment. If you can find that one first incident, the one that started it all, and release its energy, then it becomes much easier to end the self-punishment that may still be continuing to this day.

I have a meditation to help you with this step - to help you find your anchor of self-punishment. For more information, go to -

<http://creative-visualization.com/end-self-punishment.html>

Or, you can simply spend some quiet time alone to review your childhood to find this one particular incident that started the pattern of self-punishment. Once you've found the incident, then you'll want to replay it in your imagination, and change it. Change the outcome. Release and change the energy and the emotion behind it.

In the meditation, I explain it all in more detail, as well as guide you through it, but you get the idea.

3. Pay close attention to your motivation and self-talk around punishment.

When you do something, ask yourself -

"Is this what a self-punishing person would do, or is this what a loving person would do in this situation?"

"What would a person do here who loved himself, or herself?"

"What would a winner do?"

"What would a responsible person do here?"

Asking yourself these types of questions offers a good way to interrupt and break the pattern of self-punishment. It sounds too simple and easy, but it can work really well. I do this myself, whenever I'm faced with an uncertain or tough situation.

4. You may need to change certain aspects of your life.

This can be the most difficult step, but sometimes it really is the best option when it comes to making concrete changes in your life.

The key here involves making the external changes **ALONG WITH** the other steps to change. If you only make the external changes, without also following the other steps, then it's highly likely you'll end up recreating the painful and punishing environment.

As you're making the internal changes, you may wish to ask yourself - is there some person, some environment, some situation that just can't be fixed, and instead needs to change?

Sometimes the best option may be to leave. To move; to quit that job; to leave that other person. Not always. But sometimes. It really takes discernment and careful evaluation. You would always want to process this one out before taking action!

5. Pay close attention to the impact you're having on others.

Unless you're living as a hermit on a lonely remote mountaintop with no communication devices, then any self-punishing activities you engage in will also end up punishing those closest to you. (Come to think of it, maybe even that hermit lifestyle has negative effects on others!)

The ones you love always end up suffering in some way by your behavior, if you're punishing yourself.

At the very least, self-punishment is irresponsible. And if I'm not being as responsible as I could, then I'm forcing others to take up the slack.

Or it could be much more obvious and much more punishing. Maybe my behavior creates outright suffering in the lives of others. Maybe I'm making THEM feel punished. Maybe they have to walk around on eggshells.

Or maybe 'all' I'm doing is making them feel unloved.

Either way, **I have impact.** I have impact when I'm responsible and honest, and I have impact when I'm punishing myself.

In this step, take an honest look at what kind of impact you're having on others around you, especially those closest to you, and decide if it's the impact you really want to have.

"Maybe I can't change for myself, because I just don't feel the self-love. But I CAN change because I'm hurting my kids, or my spouse, or someone else I love and care about."

If you'll honestly look at your impact, and be brutally honest with yourself, this can be a great impetus to change yourself, whether it involves ending self-punishment, or anything else for that matter.

Think about the one or two or three people who are closest to you. They're the ones you have the greatest impact on - the ones who love you the most and the ones you love the most. What impact are you having on their lives?

6. And speaking of love...

No matter how close you are to others, now would be a good time to really get in touch with **yourself**. Getting to know yourself better; loving yourself more; and reaffirming that YOU are your own best friend.

By the way, who IS your best friend? Who's always there for you? Who never lets you down? Who never abandons you?

For some people, it's their pity. Pity is always there for them. For others, it's their blame. Or it could be righteous anger, cynicism, or morbid fears.

Sadly, for others, their best friend is their ego. Or their inner-martyr, or inner-victim.

Perhaps your best friend is another person; such as your spouse or maybe even a drinking buddy, or a fishing buddy. Maybe it's one of your children, or one of your parents.

Maybe it's your Creator. Nothing wrong with that.

But for me, as powerful of a relationship as I have with my Creator, **I still consider my best friend to be myself**. I came into this world alone, and I'll leave it alone.

I'm the closest to myself. I *want* to be the closest to myself. I want to be my own best friend.

And I'm always seeking to love myself more. Not in a selfish, narcissistic way, but as an expression of love itself. (The narcissist, by the way, loves himself the least.)

I'm stuck with myself, so I may as well enjoy the ride! May as well feel love for myself. I couldn't imagine it any other way.

And one of the many, many benefits of loving yourself more; you'll have much less tendency to punish yourself. (And punish others!) It just makes perfect sense.

Luckily, **there's nothing stopping anyone from loving themselves more.** It starts with a choice. And who knows where it will end?

7. Once you open up to loving yourself more, you also open up to the love around you.

The more you love yourself, the more you'll be able to feel the love from other people in your life. You'll be more clear-headed, so-to-speak. You'll be more aware. You'll be more in tune.

In addition to the love from other people, you'll also be opening up to the love from non-physical sources. From the divine; God, your soul, your spirit, your own higher self, your guardian angels, and many, many other sources as well.

I'm continually amazed to discover more and more avenues from which love can come showering down on me. It seems to be endless. The love seems to have no end. It just grows and grows.

If you'll open the door just a crack...

And remember, it starts with loving yourself first. Which goes against everything we've been taught and conditioned to believe. We're taught to love others, but not ourselves. Self-love equates with selfishness and narcissism.

At its worse, self-love equates with solipsism - the delusion that you're the only person who's even real.

If you can step beyond these erroneous assumptions, and embrace the self-love **THAT ALREADY EXISTS ANYWAY** - then it opens the door to receiving the love from other sources, as well as to ending self-punishment, among many other benefits.

I would say **the opposite of punishment is spirituality.** The more you open to a power greater than yourself, the less punishment you'll experience in your life.

To summarize, ending self-punishment comes from following these seven steps. Ending the punishment lies fully in your own hands.

No one can stop you from ending self-punishment! It sounds so obvious, but it's important to really let it in. Once you know how to end it, then it becomes a simple matter of following the steps outlined above.

The choice, as always, is up to you.

And finally, here's a complete list of the resources I've mentioned throughout this e-book that can help you end self-punishment (and improve your life in many other ways!):

<http://creative-visualization.com/working-with-your-inner-child.html>

<http://creative-visualization.com/healing-the-critical-parent.html>

<http://www.self-esteem-secrets.com>

<http://www.forgive-yourself.com>

<http://creative-visualization.com/removing-blockages.html>

<http://creative-visualization.com/healing-your-ego.html>

<http://www.create-reality.com>

<http://creative-visualization.com/end-self-punishment.html>