



MODULE 1 · PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK · OCTOBER 2024



Silent Scars

The Invisible Wound

How Childhood Emotional Trauma Shapes Adult Relationships

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Name

Date

A NOTE BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This workbook is designed to accompany the five-week journey through Module 1. You do not have to complete everything at once. Move at a pace that allows you to stay curious, grounded and honest.

Welcome

The fact that you are holding this workbook tells me something important: you are willing to look honestly at your life in order to live it differently. That takes courage.

This work asks us to look back without turning the past into a courtroom. Nothing here is designed to blame your parents, dishonour your family, or erase the love that was present in your home. We are trying to understand what shaped you — including what was missing, what was difficult to name, and what you learned to do to stay connected and safe.

A GENTLE REMINDER

Some reflections may bring up memories or feelings. You may pause, breathe, step away, ground yourself, or return later. You do not have to share anything from these pages unless you choose to.

How to use this workbook

- Use each week's section alongside the corresponding live session and course text.
- Write honestly rather than trying to produce the 'right' answer.
- Notice your body as well as your thoughts.
- If a question feels too activating, skip it and return when you feel more settled.
- Keep deeper writing private unless you consciously choose to share it.

THE FIVE-WEEK JOURNEY

Module 1 — The Five-Week Journey

Module 1 is intentionally spread across five weeks. Each week adds another layer. You are not expected to understand the whole story in the first session.

WEEK 1	The Invisible Wound Learning to see what we were never given language for.
WEEK 2	Why It Was Normalised When 'that's just how we were raised' becomes invisible.
WEEK 3	How It Lives On The bridge between childhood and adult love.
WEEK 4	Naming the Wounds The specific childhood experiences this course will explore.
WEEK 5	From Survival to Choice Understanding survival strategies and beginning to choose differently.

THE THREAD THROUGH ALL FIVE WEEKS

The question is not: 'What is wrong with me?' The question is: 'What happened to me — and what did I learn from it?'

STARTING WHERE YOU ARE

Before we go anywhere, name what brought you here. You can return to these answers at the end of Week 5.

1. What brought me here? What relationship pain, confusion or pattern made you say yes to this work?

2. The pattern I keep noticing — across relationships, family, friendships, work, or yourself, what keeps repeating?

3. My hope — in one sentence, what do you most hope to understand, shift or heal through these five weeks?

WEEK 1

The Invisible Wound

Learning to See What We Were Never Given Language For

THIS WEEK'S INTENTION

To notice the emotional experiences that may have shaped you, without blaming yourself or your family.

What we are exploring

- The difference between a visible wound and a silent scar.
- Why love can be real while emotional needs still go unmet.
- The emotional language many of us were not taught.
- How historical and cultural context helps us understand — without pathologising African families.
- A working, non-clinical understanding of childhood emotional trauma.
- How an experience in childhood can change form and appear later in adult relationships.

Before the teaching — When you hear the phrase "childhood trauma", what comes to mind? What kinds of experiences do you think count — and which ones do you instinctively dismiss?

The Invisible Wound

A silent scar does not necessarily begin with one dramatic event. It can form through the slow accumulation of experiences that teach a child something about love, safety, worth, need and belonging.

The wound may live in what was absent: comfort that was not offered, feelings that were not named, questions that could not be asked, or the expectation that a child should simply be strong.

REMEMBER

The absence of emotional language does not mean the absence of emotional experience. Children feel what they feel even when nobody has words for it.

Love can be real — and something can still be missing

Many African homes express love through action: provision, sacrifice, presence, discipline, faith and endurance. Those forms of love matter. The course is not asking you to deny them.

It is also asking us to notice another language children need: 'That must have been scary.' 'I can see that you are sad.' 'Come here.' 'Tell me what happened.'

Reflection — When you think about the people who raised you, what was easy for them to give — and what was harder? Think about comfort, reassurance, affection, listening, curiosity about your inner world, or emotional presence.

The silence has a history

Pre-colonial African communities had ways of holding grief and emotion collectively through mourning rituals, storytelling, elders and communal structures. Colonisation disrupted many communal systems and reinforced forms of emotional containment as strength.

CONTEXT IS NOT AN EXCUSE

Understanding where a pattern came from does not erase its impact. It gives us a fuller picture — and makes room for compassion without requiring denial.

What was the emotional language of my home? What did people do with sadness, fear, anger, disappointment, affection and need? What was spoken? What stayed unspoken?

Meet Amara

Amara grew up in a comfortable Accra household. Her father was a civil engineer and her mother a schoolteacher. The family was stable, religious and, by external measures, loving. Emotional expression, however, did not happen easily at home.

At nine, Amara's younger brother died suddenly from meningitis. The family grieved quietly and separately. There was no conversation with the children about what they felt, no acknowledgement of their terror, and after the funeral and prayers, life resumed.

AMARA'S WORDS

"It was like it didn't happen... Nobody asked how I was. I didn't know how to ask myself how I was. I just knew I was afraid that someone else would disappear."

Sitting with Amara — What do you notice in the gap between what happened to Amara at nine and the fear she carried into adulthood? You are not diagnosing her. You are simply noticing how an old fear can change shape over time.

Twenty-eight years later

At 37, Amara became highly anxious when a partner was distant or unpredictable. She pursued reassurance, escalated when she could not get it, and partners sometimes retreated further. Her body had carried the connection between the nine-year-old who feared another disappearance and the adult who feared emotional distance.

THE BRIDGE

Childhood emotional experiences do not simply disappear. They can change form — becoming patterns in the way we move through love, closeness, conflict and trust.

Holding both truths — Can you hold both: 'I was loved' and 'there were things I needed that I did not receive'? What becomes possible when you stop forcing yourself to choose only one?

Closing Week 1 reflection — What did I learn, without anyone teaching me directly, about whether it was safe to need someone?

BETWEEN NOW AND WEEK 2

Notice rather than fix. When a reaction, longing or relationship pattern catches your attention, simply ask: 'What might this be connected to?' No diagnosis. No self-judgment.

WEEK 2

Why It Was Normalised

When "That's Just How We Were Raised" Becomes Invisible

THIS WEEK'S INTENTION

To understand how common childhood experiences can become so normal that we stop recognising their impact.

The key idea

One of the disorienting parts of an emotionally wounding environment is that it often felt like home. It felt normal because it was familiar, shared and rarely questioned.

COMMON IS NOT THE SAME AS HEALTHY

The fact that an experience was widespread — even across a whole generation — does not automatically make it harmless.

Finish the sentence — Growing up, 'That's just how we were raised' meant...

"Stop crying or I will give you something to cry about."

For many people, this sentence captures a particular lesson: distress was something to manage rather than something to be met. Children learned to swallow tears and become "strong".

What happened to emotion? Which feelings were easiest to express in your home? Which ones were minimised, corrected or ignored?

Meet Fatima

Fatima grew up in a Nairobi household with a mother she described as 'fierce and loving in equal measure.' Her mother worked hard, carried economic pressure and was deeply committed to her children's futures. She also struggled to tolerate emotional weakness.

Fatima learned to handle things. As an adult, she was reliable, successful and known as 'the strong one', yet she struggled to access and express her emotions in intimate relationships.

THE REFRAME

What looked like emotional unavailability in adulthood had once been an intelligent adaptation: emotional expression had not felt useful or safe enough to practise.

Where did strength begin for me? When did being 'strong', 'mature', 'easy' or 'responsible' become part of how you understood your worth?

Context: Why did this become normal?

The course names several forces that shaped the emotional environments of African families: poverty and survival stress, boarding-school experiences, religious frameworks, urbanisation and displacement, and the effects of colonialism. These are not excuses. They are context.

- In my family, survival needs often came before emotional needs.
- Boarding school or separation affected how closeness was experienced.
- Religion was sometimes used to contain, redirect or dismiss difficult feelings.
- Family or community expectations made emotional expression difficult.
- Keeping family matters private shaped what could be spoken about.
- Being useful, strong or responsible was rewarded more than expressing need.

What do I notice now? Which statements feel ordinary because they were so familiar? Which feel different now that you have language for them?

WEEK 2 TAKEAWAY

Understanding why something was normalised does not make its impact less real. It allows you to hold context and impact at the same time.

WEEK 3

How It Lives On

The Bridge Between Childhood and Adult Love

THIS WEEK'S INTENTION

To begin connecting childhood learning with attachment, emotional regulation and the relational beliefs that show up today.

Three ways childhood can travel forward

- Attachment patterns — what closeness, trust and dependence came to mean.
- Emotional regulation — what you learned to do with feelings when they became uncomfortable.
- Deep relational beliefs — the quiet conclusions you formed about love, worth, need and safety.

My first lessons about closeness — What did closeness feel like in your childhood? What did you have to do to maintain connection?

Attachment is not a label

The course introduces secure, anxious, avoidant and disorganised attachment as patterns of relating. The more useful question is: how does closeness feel in my body and behaviour?

- I pursue reassurance when I sense distance.
- I pull back when someone gets emotionally close.
- I want closeness but also feel frightened by it.
- I find it difficult to trust even when someone is consistent.
- I can generally stay connected to myself and the other person during closeness.

What did I learn to do with feelings?

Children develop ways of managing emotion in the environments available to them. Some suppress. Some become highly alert to other people's moods. Some intellectualise. Some become very good at functioning while disconnected from what they feel.

My emotional strategy — When strong feelings came up in childhood, what did you learn to do — hide them, solve them, minimise them, express them, make someone else okay, or leave?

How does it show up now? Where do you notice that same strategy in your adult relationships?

Deep relational beliefs

Repeated experiences can leave behind beliefs such as: 'I have to earn love.' 'My needs are too much.' 'People leave.' 'If I am useful, I will belong.' 'Closeness is dangerous.' 'I have to handle things alone.'

The story underneath the pattern — Complete: 'In relationships, I often act as though...' Then ask: 'Where might I have learned this?'

My closeness map — When someone moves toward me emotionally, I tend to... When someone moves away, I tend to...

My regulation pattern — When I am activated in a relationship, what happens first in my body, then in my thoughts, then in my behaviour?

WEEK 3 TAKEAWAY

A pattern is easier to change when you can see the sequence: trigger → body/emotion → meaning → response.

WEEK 4

Naming the Wounds

The Specific Experiences This Course Will Explore

THIS WEEK'S INTENTION

To put language around common childhood experiences that can shape adult relationships — without assuming that every family or every story is the same.

This week is a map, not a verdict. You may recognise yourself in some experiences and not others.

4.1 Father Absence

The course explores what happens when a father's physical or emotional absence leaves questions about worth, safety, belonging or being chosen.

Reflect — What did the presence, absence or emotional availability of a father figure teach me about love or being chosen?

4.2 Emotional Neglect

Emotional neglect can be the absence of attunement: feelings are not noticed, named, responded to or held, even when physical needs are met.

Reflect — What emotional needs did I learn not to bring to other people?

4.3 Parentification

A child may become overly responsible for practical tasks, siblings or a parent's emotional wellbeing, learning that usefulness is tied to belonging.

Reflect — Where did I become responsible too early? What did that role teach me about receiving?

4.4 Poverty and Survival Stress

When a family is under chronic economic pressure, survival understandably takes priority. The emotional cost can still matter.

Reflect — What did scarcity, financial stress or survival pressure teach me about need, safety or responsibility?

4.5 Boarding School

Early or prolonged separation can interrupt everyday attachment and change how children experience closeness, independence and reunion.

Reflect — What did separation from home or caregivers teach me about needing people?

4.6 Religious and Moral Conditioning

Faith can be a profound source of support. The course also examines what happens when difficult emotions are met primarily with shame, suppression or spiritual correction.

Reflect — What messages did I receive about anger, sadness, desire, doubt, obedience and being 'good'?

4.7 Family Conflict and the Atmosphere of Fear

Children can adapt to conflict, unpredictability, silence or emotional volatility by becoming hyper-alert, invisible, pleasing or controlling.

Reflect — What did I learn to do when the emotional atmosphere of home changed?

The question underneath the wound

Across these experiences, the course returns to a deeper question: what did the child come to believe about love?

My unfinished sentence — Because of what I experienced, I may have learned that...

And the adult pattern may be... — If that belief travelled forward, where might it show up in my relationships today?

WEEK 4 TAKEAWAY

The specific experience matters. So does the meaning the child made from it. That meaning can become the wound that travels.

WEEK 5

From Survival to Choice

Understanding Survival Strategies and Beginning to Choose Differently

THIS WEEK'S INTENTION

To see adult relational patterns as adaptations that once made sense — and to begin creating room for different choices.

The central insight

The relational patterns causing difficulty today were not random, chosen or evidence of a flawed character. They were adaptive responses to the emotional environment of childhood.

A REFRAME

What we call 'dysfunction' in adults is often adaptation in children. The question becomes: does this strategy still need to run in the same way today?

From child strategy to adult pattern

- I learned to please people to maintain connection.
- I learned to withdraw when closeness felt unsafe.
- I learned to become highly self-reliant.
- I learned to monitor other people's moods.
- I learned to caretake or fix problems.
- I learned to achieve or perform to feel worthy.
- I learned to stay too long because leaving felt unsafe.
- I learned to leave first so I could not be left.

The strategy that protected me — Which strategy feels most familiar? What did it help the younger you accomplish or avoid?

Where it no longer serves me — Where does that same strategy create difficulty in your adult relationships now?

Why understanding matters

Understanding is not the same as excusing. When you understand a pattern, you can notice it earlier and begin to create a pause between the old strategy and the next choice.

My pause — What is one moment in a familiar pattern where I could practise noticing before reacting?

What I want to choose instead — If I did not have to obey the old strategy automatically, what would a more conscious response look like?

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO FIX EVERYTHING

Understanding is a beginning. You can hold what you have learned gently and allow the work to unfold over time.

YOUR FIVE-WEEK INTEGRATION

1. The most important thing I now understand — What is the insight that landed most deeply — not the most intellectual one, but the one that felt true?

2. The pattern I want to notice — What specific relationship pattern will you watch for without immediately trying to change it?

3. The story I want to question — What old belief about love, worth, trust or need are you beginning to question?

4. One healing action — What is one small, concrete action that supports the kind of relationship you want to build?

A SMALL HEALING PRACTICE

The Daily Body Check-In

Once a day, pause for a few minutes and ask:

- Where am I holding tension right now?
- What emotion is present in my body?
- What does this feeling need — acknowledgment, movement, rest, expression, company or silence?

You do not need to fix the feeling. Noticing is the practice.

Day	What I noticed in my body / emotion / need
Day 1	
Day 2	
Day 3	
Day 4	
Day 5	
Day 6	
Day 7	

THE MAP OF THE JOURNEY AHEAD

WEEK 1

The Invisible Wound

Learning to see what we were never given language for.

WEEK 2

Why It Was Normalised

When 'that's just how we were raised' becomes invisible.

WEEK 3

How It Lives On

The bridge between childhood and adult love.

WEEK 4

Naming the Wounds

The specific childhood experiences this course will explore.

WEEK 5

From Survival to Choice

Understanding survival strategies and beginning to choose differently.

UKWELI NI DAWA. Truth is medicine. You have begun the medicine.

Thank you for doing this work with honesty and compassion. You do not have to resolve everything you have seen here. The work is to keep seeing — gently, truthfully, and without abandoning yourself.