

Ways You Try to PASS on Breast-Related Shame and Other Painful Feelings

This two-part worksheet helps you take an inventory of how you PASS (**P**roblem-Solve, **A**void, **S**idetrack, or do **S**omething else) on internalized breast-related shame or other inner pain. As discussed in Chapter 9 of *Busting Free*, although these things provide temporary relief, they also trap you in the unworkable agenda of trying to get rid of your unwanted thoughts and feelings. To bust free of that trap, this worksheet helps you look at how these strategies work for you in the long run.

Part One

For each section below, read through the examples and then describe how you use those strategies to seek relief from feeling bad about your breasts. Keep in mind that acknowledging your use of these strategies doesn't label them as *bad* or *worthless*. Rather, it honors your efforts to cope with unwanted thoughts and feelings about your breasts.

P: Problem-solving refers to all the ways you use your mind to ease your emotional pain. These strategies include comparing yourself to others to convince yourself you don't have it so bad, thinking positively, trying to "clear your mind," worrying or fantasizing about the future, revisiting, or rewriting the past, looking for someone or something to blame, "figuring out" yourself, the situation, or other people, or challenging, countering, or disputing the Breast Rulebook.

A: To avoid inner pain you might also avoid people, situations, clothing, or experiences that bring on the painful thoughts and feelings that you (or your breasts or post-explant chest) are *less than* or *not good enough*. These strategies include quitting, declining, renouncing, saying "no thanks," opting out, convincing yourself that you're "not into" something, or telling yourself something's not worth doing. You might be keenly aware that you're hoping to avoid feeling bad about your breasts or body, or you might make these decisions without fully acknowledging this behind-the-scenes inner process.

S: There are many ways to **sidetrack** yourself from uncomfortable feelings, including purposefully distracting yourself, doing something else, thinking about something else, or mentally or physically engaging in something with hopes it will swap your “bad” feelings with “good” ones. For example, if you fear the discovery of a **silent rupture**, you might sidetrack yourself with reassurances of breast implant safety rather than scheduling an MRI. Another popular way to sidetrack your mind is to use positive affirmations.

S: You can also seek relief from inner pain by putting **something else** into your body or mind (e.g., breast implants, recreational drugs, prescription drugs, supplements, comforting or pleasurable food, alcohol, coffee, tea, sugar). You can also seek relief by *doing* something else such as therapy, coaching, meditation, yoga, exercise, or detoxing purely out of the hope they will get rid of your inner suffering.

Part Two

Though you get some temporary relief with these strategies, consider whether any of them got rid of your unwanted thoughts and feelings *once and for all*? Were any of them permanent solutions? Did painful stuff keep coming back? If you’re like almost everyone else in the history of the world, painful stuff continues pushing you around despite all your hard work to avoid, control, or be relieved from it. Use the space below to track the long-term impacts these strategies have on your health, well-being, relationships, and sense of safety within yourself.

Has **problem-solving** your pain ever led you to feel stuck in your head, or like you were so busy doing things to cope with your thoughts and feelings that you missed out on the rest of your life? Has it ever interfered with your ability to focus or experience deep, restorative sleep? How else has problem-solving your inner pain affected you?

Has **avoidance** ever led you to miss out on doing the things that matter in your life? If so, how?

Has **sidetracking** yourself led you to invest in things you didn't care about, waste your time and energy, or not take care of problems needing your attention? If so, how?

Describe how putting **something else** into your body (like breast implants), or doing something else entirely to get rid of suffering, has damaged your health, cost a lot of money, fueled unhelpful hopes, or set you up for emotional letdown?

By reflecting on all that you've tried, you can see how hard you've worked. You might also see that you've been at this for a *really* long time and that you try to PASS on many things in your life—not just your breast-related thoughts and feelings. Please know this isn't just a "you" thing. Nearly everyone tries to PASS on pain because those strategies often provide some relief.

Looking at what you've tried, how it's worked, and what it's cost you to struggle against your unwanted thoughts and feelings about your breasts makes the case that it's time to learn a new way to respond to your inner pain. Rather than trying to abandon it, Chapter 9 teaches you how to companion it. Please keep this inventory in mind as you move forward to help catch when you're buying into this old, familiar, unworkable strategy and to empower you to do something different.