

Religious Baggage

Spiritual Life

Step-Working Guide · The Recovery Files

In this workbook

1. **Religious Baggage** — key ideas, worksheet

Each topic's scored self-assessment and mind map are in the app.

TOPIC

Religious Baggage

KEY IDEAS

Religious Baggage

Barriers from Past Wounds

Religious baggage involves complex negative reactions to spiritual concepts based on past harmful experiences with organized religion or religious trauma.

It represents a significant barrier to Step 2 work because it involves real wounds and legitimate grievances that create understandable resistance to anything resembling past religious harm.

Wound Reactivation

Triggers and Trauma

Spiritual discussions may trigger memories of past religious hurt, causing anxiety, distress, or physical tension.

This reactivation makes spiritual exploration feel dangerous, triggering trauma responses that prevent the calm, open state necessary for spiritual growth and connection.

Identity Confusion

Spirituality vs. Religion

Conflating Step 2 spirituality with childhood religion can lead to fears that spiritual growth means returning to rejected beliefs.

This confusion prevents exploration of beneficial spiritual options by maintaining false dichotomies between spirituality and personal values.

Institutional Distrust

Fear of Community

Resistance to spiritual community often stems from assuming leaders will be manipulative or controlling based on past experiences.

This distrust prevents access to spiritual community and guidance that could support recovery, maintaining isolation that blocks growth opportunities.

Theological Rejection

Dismissing Concepts

Rejecting Step 2 concepts because they remind of harmful doctrines or refusing practices that seem too similar to religious rituals.

This creates barriers by preventing exploration of spiritual concepts that could be beneficial when separated from harmful religious contexts.

Emotional Dysregulation

Intense Reactions

Becoming angry, hostile, or overwhelmed when spiritual topics are discussed reflects emotional volatility from trauma.

This makes spiritual exploration emotionally unsafe and unpredictable, preventing the stability necessary for growth.

Protective Isolation

Withdrawing for Safety

Isolating from recovery activities with spiritual components to avoid triggers and protect oneself from perceived harm.

While protective, this isolation blocks access to essential resources and fellowship that support sustainable recovery.

Healing & Integration

Trauma-Informed Growth

Healing involves acknowledging wounds while developing spiritual differentiation and practicing gradual exposure.

The goal is not to force forgiveness but to develop wisdom about healthy spirituality, allowing past experiences to inform rather than limit spiritual growth.

WORKSHEET**Religious Baggage Worksheet**

Healing Past Wounds for Future Growth

PROFILE**Understanding Your Profile**

1. Which category of religious baggage affects you most powerfully, and what experiences contributed to it?

2. How do you distinguish between legitimate caution and baggage that blocks growth?

3. What specific concepts or settings trigger your strongest trauma responses?

4. How has your religious baggage evolved throughout your recovery?

5. What role does anger or resentment play in your resistance?

PSYCHOLOGY**The Psychology of Your Wounds**

6. How do your wounds serve both protective and limiting functions?

7. How might your background shape your resistance to Step 2 concepts?

8. How do your different baggage patterns reinforce each other?

9. What early warning signs indicate increasing baggage?

10. How might trauma symptoms specifically affect your ability to engage?

HEALING

Developing Healing Strategies

11. What practices have been effective for healing wounds while maintaining openness?

12. How do you balance caution with openness?

13. What role does trauma-informed guidance play in your healing?

14. How do you maintain openness during strong trigger periods?

15. What resources help you when struggling with blocking wounds?

RESILIENCE

Building Resilience

16. How has your relationship with your religious past changed?

17. What practices help you distinguish past harm from present opportunity?

18. How do you recognize progress without minimizing past harm?

19. What would it look like to view healing as part of development?

20. How might sharing your journey benefit you and others?

MAPPING**Your Personalized Baggage Map**

List specific examples for each dimension:

Wound Reactivation:

Identity Confusion:

Institutional Distrust:

Theological Rejection:

Emotional Dysregulation:

Protective Isolation:

Victim Identity:

ACTION**Action Planning for Healing**

Specific baggage pattern to address:

Measurable healing goal:

Small healing steps:

Accountability measures:

Timeline:

Remember: Religious baggage can transform from an absolute barrier into wisdom about healthy spirituality. Your relationship with spirituality can evolve from threatening to healing.