

“Stuck Points” are parts of your story that are the most difficult to re-visit. You can find them in your story by looking for these things:

- Jumps in the story from one event to another, without any transition. The missing transition is probably a stuck point.
- Parts of the story where you find yourself avoiding the full details.
- Parts of the story that you can’t write about.
- Parts of the story you can read, but sound numb and emotionless.
- Parts of the story where you are suddenly *flooded* with emotions.

A stuck point happens wherever there is a conflict between your old beliefs (or what you *want* to believe), and the reality of the rape. This can also happen wherever your experiences seem to *confirm* a prior negative belief you have had about yourself.

Our tendency is to avoid these parts of the story. We skip over them, write very little about them, and feel deeply ashamed when they come to mind. But stuck points are precisely the ingredient in the “trauma stew” that will continue to generate flashbacks, nightmares, and the urges to cut or drink.

The parts of the story we most want to avoid are the parts we must pay the most attention to.

If we complete therapy without really facing, writing, and exploring these points, we have permitted toxins from our turmoil to remain inside us. It’s like taking out the trash but allowing rotting meat to stay hidden around the house—eventually, it will become poisonous again. It may be foul and awful to find the “rotting meat” of our stuck points and pull them out, but that’s how we finally throw them away so we can heal.

Your homework is to identify two stuck points and examine them. Choose the most potent, difficult stuck points you can think of—the very things that seem the most shameful. Then use your journal to go through the following activity.

Below is a list of questions to be used in helping you challenge your toxic and shame-causing beliefs. Not all questions will apply to the belief/stuck point you have decided to work on. Answer as many of the questions as you can, and answer them *fully*—no shortcuts or quick answers.

Stuck Point #1. the part of my story where I feel the most shame, and the greatest urge to avoid the details is:

The belief this point causes me to think about myself is:

1. What is the evidence for and against this idea?
2. Are you confusing a habit with a fact? (example: “I tend to take blame from others; I’ve done it all my life, so maybe I’m feeling ashamed out of habit, not out of fact”)
3. Are your interpretations of the situation too far removed from reality to be reliable? (example: “I dissociated and/or blacked out, so my assumptions about what happened aren’t necessarily accurate” or “I wasn’t physically capable of fighting, yet I blame myself for not doing so” or “I was only four years old”)
4. Are you thinking in all-or-none terms? (example: things are either all good or all bad; I do everything right or everything wrong; if I make *one* mistake in a situation, the *whole* situation is my fault)
5. Are you using words or phrases that are extreme or exaggerated? (examples: always, never, forever, should, everyone, no one; “I am nothing; I am worthless; I will never be lovable; Everyone will reject me; Nobody can understand me; I can never forgive myself”)
6. Are you taking selected examples out of context? (example: making a judgment without considering the entire situation; “I’m just exaggerating things, because I was hurt by someone who could also be nice to me at other times” or “I have been hurt by one person, but most other people in my life truly support me”)
7. Are you making excuses? (example: excuses *for the abuser* such as “s/he probably didn’t know what they were doing because I didn’t say or do more”; excuses to avoid things such as “This part of the story was worse than I actually wrote, but they get the gist.”)
8. Is the source of information reliable? (example: is it appropriate to use things the rapist said to set your beliefs about what happened? Can misinformed friends be reliable advice-givers? Can the rapist’s friends give accurate opinions of you?)
9. Are your judgments based on feelings rather than facts? (example: “I feel I should have known what would happen” or “I feel embarrassed by the rape, which means I am a shameful person.”)