



# ELM Medicine

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**Specialist Clinic. Internal Medicine. Infectious Diseases. Hepatitis B & C. Chronic Pain.  
Lifestyle Medicine Clinic. Stress Reduction Clinic**

**Dr. Atreyi Mukherji, MD, MPH, FRCPC**

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## ELM Medicine - Stress Reduction Clinic

### Childhood Wounding Exercise 1: Identifying Your Defense Mechanism

*Instructions: Please write your answers in a journal for discussion (your choice), at your next session.*

1. What were some of the ways you were wounded as a child? Often these are not intentional by our caretakers/parents. They may have thought it's for our own good or it's cultural or family norms. Or your parents were doing the best they knew how.

Some common areas of wounding include:

- Competence: our ability to achieve success in school, sports or other areas
- Body: weight, height, or other aspect of our appearance
- Identity: personality - too quiet, too loud, pushy, wimpy, too shy, too timid, too serious. Basically, a child is not accepted, when they act as their true nature. This leads a child to think something is wrong with my core being, I am bad in some way, I am not good enough, I am not worthy
- Relationship: I am only loveable if...

2. What were and are some of your **shields** (defense mechanisms) against these wounding? Don't judge yourself in this process.

- Overachiever, Money, Status, Prestige
- Perfectionism- if I am perfect at it, no one can criticize me
- Anger- as adult
- Silence and Invisibility
- People pleasing
- Other?



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3. What were and are some of the ways you **soothe** or numb the pain (defense mechanism)? Don't judge yourself in the process.
  - Drugs and Alcohol
  - Sex and Relationship
  - Food
  - Being too busy
  - Digital Media
  - Sleeping and Avoiding
  - Being Alone
  - Volunteering
  - Animal Rescue
  - Breath Work
  - Meditation
  - Exercise
  - Other?
  
4. When you shield or soothe, are you getting value for money? Is it worth the cost? We need ways of soothing and shielding to cope with life, but we need to drop the ones that are harmful. We want maximum value for our shielding and soothing with minimum cost and without drain in energy. A lot of our energy is used in how we shield and soothe. Think how much energy would be freed up, if we upgraded our defense mechanisms to ones which are healthy and serve us.
  
5. Please take a moment to be compassionate towards yourself, for completing this exercise. You just did some heavy lifting and that takes courage.

Repeat the following 'Loving Kindness Meditation' 2-3 times, ideally in front of a mirror.

May I be safe  
May I be strong  
May I be free from inner and outer harm  
May I be happy

Acknowledgement: Arti Wu.