



The Characters We Carry: A Reflective Worksheet for Self-Understanding

Who Do You Identify With?

This worksheet is a gentle reflective exercise for exploring a character you connected with when you were younger. Rather than judging or analyzing yourself, the goal is to listen with curiosity and compassion to the parts of you that may have needed safety, comfort, voice, belonging or protection.

Note: This worksheet is intended for reflection and journaling. It is not a substitute for mental health treatment. If strong distress arises, pause the exercise and seek support from a qualified professional or trusted support person.

Before you begin: Take a moment to notice your body, your breath and your surroundings. You are in the present. You can pause at any time. You do not have to answer anything that feels too intense today.

Calming Exercise: Arrive in the Present

Before answering any questions, try this short settling practice:

1. Place both feet on the floor or notice where your body is supported.
2. Take one slow breath in, then let the exhale be a little longer than the inhale.
3. Name three things you can see, two things you can feel and one sound you can hear.
4. Say quietly to yourself: "I am here now. I can go slowly."

What I noticed after this exercise:

Choose a Character

Prompt: A character I identified with when I was young was...

Write the name of the character here: _____



Where did you first meet this character? _____

What drew me to this character:

Explore the Connection

Use the questions below as invitations, not requirements. Notice which questions feel safe, interesting or meaningful and leave the others for another time.

- What was happening in my life when I connected with this character?
- What part of myself did I see in them?
- What need might this character have helped me recognize, such as safety, courage, voice, freedom, love, rest or belonging?
- What struggle did they carry that felt familiar to me?
- How might identifying with them have helped me cope, feel understood or feel less alone?
- What would I like to say to the younger version of me who loved or needed this character?

Notes:

You are not analyzing the character as much as listening to your younger self with warmth, patience and respect.

Character Examples

The examples below may help participants begin thinking about characters they connected with. These are only starting points; each person's interpretation may be different.



- **Matilda** — feeling unseen, relying on intelligence and finding power through the mind
- **Cinderella** — endurance, silence, responsibility and hoping rescue will come
- **Belle** — feeling different, seeking refuge in books and longing to be understood
- **Harry Potter** — neglect, hidden worth, chosen family and longing for belonging
- **Elsa** — hiding parts of the self, fearing harm, emotional control and self-acceptance
- **Anne Shirley** — imagination as refuge, sensitivity, longing for home and over-explaining

Participants may also choose characters from cartoons, anime, mythology, spiritual or religious stories, novels, games, films, television or animals. Any meaningful identification is valid.

Parts, Protection and Shadow-Work Lens

Sometimes we identify with characters because they carry a part of us that had to be hidden, protected, exaggerated or pushed away. These parts are not bad; they often developed to help us survive or belong.

- They may hold emotions we were not allowed to show.
- They may represent a protective strategy, such as staying quiet, staying strong, pleasing others, escaping into imagination or keeping control.
- They may show a longing for freedom, love, safety, recognition or belonging.
- They may reflect an inner strength we did not yet know how to claim.

Gentle inquiry:

What part of me was trying to protect me through this character and what does that part need from me now?

If anything feels overwhelming, pause and orient yourself to the present. Look around the room, name five things you can see, feel your feet on the floor or place a hand over your heart. You can always return to this later.

Calming Options During Reflection

If you notice tension, numbness, racing thoughts or the urge to rush, choose one of these calming options:

- **Hand-to-heart pause:** Place one hand on your chest or another comforting place and take three slow breaths.



- **5-4-3-2-1 grounding:** Notice five things you can see, four things you can feel, three things you can hear, two things you can smell and one thing you can taste.
- **Orienting:** Slowly look around the room and remind yourself that you are in the present moment.
- **Compassion phrase:** Try saying, “This is a tender memory. I can be gentle with myself.”
- **Pause choice:** Put the worksheet down, stretch, drink water or return later.

Which calming option helped most today?

How did my body feel before and after?

Example: Elsa

Elsa is a main character from Disney’s *Frozen* and *Frozen II*.

Who is Elsa as a person?

In the story, Elsa:

- Is born with powers she does not fully understand
- Is encouraged to hide or control those powers because they are seen as dangerous
- Learns to suppress emotions in order to feel safe and avoid harm
- Feels different and isolated while growing up
- Struggles with fear of hurting others
- Moves toward self-acceptance, authenticity and connection

Why people may identify with Elsa

Elsa can be a useful example because she represents the experience of carrying intense feelings or powerful parts of the self that do not initially feel safe to express.

- Feeling “too much” or afraid of one’s own emotions
- Hiding parts of yourself to feel safe or accepted
- Fear of rejection, judgment, or hurting others
- Learning to control feelings instead of receiving comfort for them
- Moving toward authenticity, self-trust and acceptance



Her ice powers can be understood as a metaphor for protective responses, such as:

- Emotional shutdown or numbness
- A freeze response during stress
- Protective distancing from others
- Creating control when life feels unpredictable

Reflection prompts for Elsa

- Where did I learn that I needed to hide part of myself?
- What part of me felt “too much” unsafe or hard to understand?
- What did I need back then that I may not have received?
- What helps me feel safe, grounded or accepted now?
- What would it sound like to speak to this part of myself with kindness?

My reflections:

Your Turn

Choose a character of your own and complete the sentence below:

I identified with this character because...

What this character helped me survive, understand, or express:

What this part of me may need now:



Closing and Integration

Before finishing, take a moment to return to the present. Notice one thing you learned, one feeling that came up, and one kind action you can offer yourself after this reflection.

Closing Calming Practice

When you are ready to finish, try this brief practice to help your nervous system settle:

1. Notice one object in the room that feels neutral or pleasant to look at.
2. Let your shoulders drop slightly if that feels comfortable.
3. Take three easy breaths, without forcing them.
4. Remind yourself: "I do not have to solve everything today."
5. Choose one small caring action after this, such as resting, getting water, stepping outside or speaking kindly to yourself.

- One thing I noticed: _____
- One feeling I want to acknowledge: _____
- One kind thing I can do for myself today: _____

After the closing practice, my body feels:

One thing I want to carry with me:

Summary

This worksheet explored how identifying with a character can offer insight into younger parts of the self, including emotional needs, protective strategies, hidden strengths and longings for safety, belonging, expression or acceptance.

Key takeaways:

- **Character identification can reveal unmet needs.** The characters we connect with may reflect needs that were important at the time, such as safety, comfort, voice, freedom, protection, recognition, rest or belonging.



- **Strong emotional connections often make sense in context.** A character may have felt meaningful because they mirrored a struggle, strength, fear, hope or coping strategy that was present in the participant's life.
- **Protective responses deserve compassion.** Responses such as hiding, controlling, pleasing, withdrawing, overachieving, escaping into imagination, or staying quiet may have developed as ways to stay safe, connected or accepted.
- **Reflection should be paced gently.** This work is most helpful when participants can pause, choose which prompts to answer, use grounding practices and stop if the exercise feels overwhelming.
- **The body offers useful information.** Noticing sensations before, during, and after reflection can help participants recognize what feels activating, calming, tender or supportive.
- **Younger parts of the self can be approached with kindness.** Instead of judging past feelings or choices, participants are invited to respond to younger parts with warmth, patience and respect.
- **Insight does not need to be forced.** The goal is not to find one perfect interpretation, but to build self-understanding, self-compassion and a greater sense of choice.
- **Integration matters.** Ending with grounding, a caring action or a simple next step can help participants leave the exercise feeling more settled and supported.

After completing this worksheet, consider returning to one response that felt meaningful and asking: "What does this part of me need from me now?"

Conclusion

This worksheet invites participants to view character identification as a meaningful doorway into self-understanding. A character who felt important in childhood or adolescence may reflect needs that were unmet, emotions that were difficult to express, strengths that were still developing or protective strategies that helped the participant cope.

By approaching these connections with curiosity, gentleness and grounding, participants can begin to recognize younger parts of themselves with more compassion. The purpose is not to force a single interpretation, but to create space for insight, emotional safety and choice.



As the reflection closes, participants are encouraged to honour what they noticed, pause where needed, and carry forward one small act of care. Even a brief moment of recognition can support healing, integration and a kinder relationship with the self.

Call to Action

Choose one small next step to continue this reflection in a grounded and supportive way. You do not need to do everything at once; one gentle action is enough.

“One gentle step is still movement toward yourself.”

- Return to one response that felt meaningful and write a little more about it.
- Choose one calming exercise from this worksheet and practise it again later today.
- Write a compassionate note to the younger part of yourself connected to this character.
- Share one insight with a therapist, counsellor, coach, facilitator or trusted support person if that feels appropriate.
- Choose one small caring action, such as resting, drinking water, going outside, setting a boundary or speaking kindly to yourself.

My next gentle action will be:

Follow-up reflection: After choosing one gentle next step, what support, reminder, or condition would help me follow through with care?

Thank yourself for whatever you were able to notice today. Reflection does not need to be complete to be meaningful.



ROOT Reflection

Reflect: Who did I identify with and why?

Observe: What feelings or memories came up?

Open: What does this tell me about my needs, strengths, or challenges?

Thrive: What would I like to nurture in myself moving forward?



Journal Prompts for Self-Discovery and Growth

Characters

- Which character did you admire most as a child?
- Which character did you wish could be your friend?
- Which character did you secretly want to be?
- Which character felt misunderstood like you?
- Which villain did you unexpectedly understand?

Animals

- If you were an animal growing up, what would you have been?
- What animal do you feel like today?
- What animal represents your strengths?
- What animal represents your fears?

Nature Reflection

- If your childhood was a season, which season would it be?
- If your life right now was a weather pattern, what would it be?
- Which tree do you relate to?
- Which flower represents you?



Hidden Parts of Self

- What part of yourself do people rarely see?
- What part of yourself worked hardest to protect you?
- What part of yourself deserves more compassion?
- What part of yourself is ready to grow?

Need support with this reflection?

If this worksheet brings up questions, emotions or insights you would like to explore further, I offer a free 30-minute consultation by Zoom or email. This is an opportunity to talk through what came up, consider next steps and decide whether ongoing support feels appropriate for you.

Please note: This consultation is not intended for crisis or emergency support. If you are in immediate danger or need urgent help, please contact local emergency services or a crisis support line.