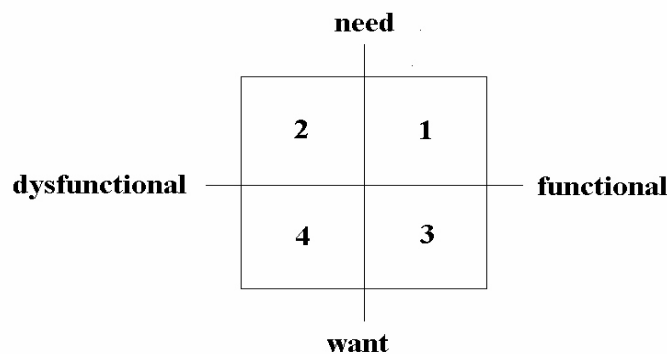


**Children Of Pain: 4 steps to recovery for survivors of childhood abuse - ChildrenOfPain.com**  
**Keep It, Change It, Leave It Exercise Workshop Script- 04/28/21**

(adapted 04/28/21 from the 2021 book Children Of Pain by Robert Ben Mitchell, pages 86 - 91)

*Keep It, Change It, Leave It* is a Step Four exercise for developing and executing an action plan to reclaim your life. It can redefine who our real family and friends are, what we need in our lives, where we go, and what we do. That includes the things we do that we wish we didn't. As survivors, we were not only harmed, but that harm has had a dramatic influence over how we behave now as adults. This includes our behaviors which harm others, like taking offense too easily, or being self-centered.

While there are circumstances where we should take offense, and others where being self-centered is appropriate, *Keep It, Change It, Leave It* can help us to determine when we are behaving in a healthy manner, and when the ghost in our machine is controlling how we act. With our memories in repair and or parts on the mend, we can use this exercise to reclaim our lives, while letting go of the collateral damage that came from our past. You begin by drawing this chart:



Once you have this drawn on a computer, a piece of paper, or in your mind, pick the person, place or things you want to consider and ask yourself two questions:

**Do I need this or do I want it?**

- and -

**Is it functional or dysfunctional?**

To tell the difference between needs and wants, consider a cake. Needs are the inside of our cake and provide the substance and structure of our lives. Wants are the icing on that cake, and they provide superficial decoration and delight. For the purpose of recovery, we want to put the emphasis on needs over wants. This doesn't mean we have to eliminate all of our wants, but that we must first attend to our needs, lest our cakes collapse and our lives become unmanageable.

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As for functional versus dysfunctional, decide if something is helping or hurting you: functional things help you and dysfunctional things hurt you. Sometimes both circumstances exist where something is helpful at times and hurtful at others. In those cases, divide the issue in two and look at each separately. With this in mind, take whatever things you are wondering about or questioning, and place them in:

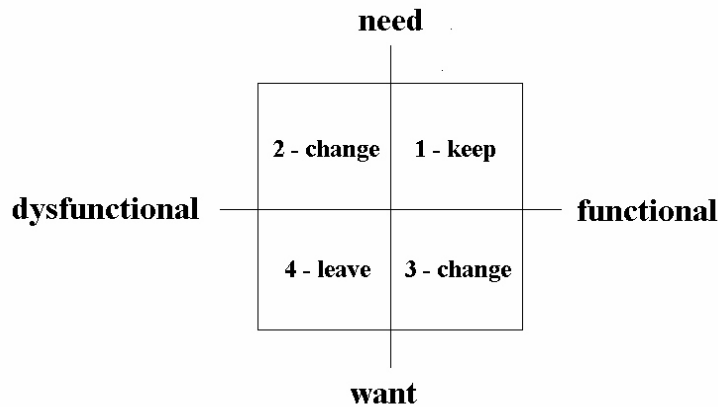
**Box 1:** things we need and are functional, like a healthy diet or good exercise.

**Box 2:** things that we need but are also dysfunctional, like a good friend who is an alcoholic.

**Box 3:** things that we want but don't need, yet are functional, like expensive cars or fancy clothes.

**Box 4:** things that we want but are dysfunctional, like a gambling or drug addiction.

Now, once you have put one or more things into their corresponding boxes, redraw the chart as:



So, to reclaim your life, in:

**Box 1:** KEEP the things that you need and are functional.

**Box 2:** CHANGE the things you need but are dysfunctional.

**Box 3:** CHANGE the things you want and are functional into things you need and are functional.

**Box 4:** LEAVE - get rid of- the things you want but are dysfunctional in your life.

By placing the important people, places, and things in your life into their corresponding boxes, you can start to see whether you should hold onto them as they are (box 1), consider changing something about them to make them either more functional (box 2) or more vital and less superficial (box 3), or drop them all together from your life if they're toxic and you don't need them (box 4).