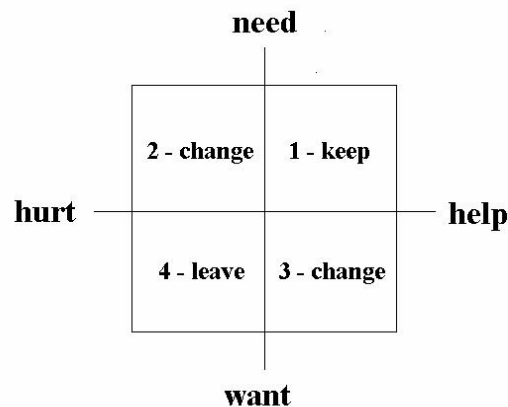


**Children Of Pain: 4 steps to recovery for survivors of childhood abuse - ChildrenOfPain.com**  
**Keep It, Change It, Leave It Exercise Workshop Script- 09/02/21**

(adapted 09/02/21 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 as follows:



1. On a piece of paper, draw a large square.
2. Above the square, write the word NEED.
3. Below the square, write the word WANT.
4. To the right of the square, write the word HELP.
5. To the left of the square, write the word HURT.

- review = square with 4 words outside

6. Divide the large square into 2 halves using a single vertical, top to bottom, line.
7. Divide the large square into 4 quarters using a single horizontal, side to side, line.  
- review = square divided into 4 smaller squares with 4 words outside
8. In the upper right small square, write 1-KEEP.
9. In the upper left small square, write 2-CHANGE.
10. In the lower right small square, write 3-CHANGE.
11. In the lower left small square, write 4-LEAVE.  
- review = square divided into 4 smaller squares, 4 words outside and 1 phrase in each small square

Once you have drawn this, pick the person, place or thing you want to consider and ask yourself:

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

- and -

**Does it help me or does it hurt me?**

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.

You must also decide if something is helping or hurting 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 circumstance separately. With this in mind, take whatever you are wondering about or questioning, and place them in:

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

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

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

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

Now, once you have put one or more things into their corresponding boxes, to reclaim your life, in:

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

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

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

**Box 4:** LEAVE - get rid of- the things you want but are hurtful 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 helpful (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).