

**ESALEN INSTITUTE CONTINUING EDUCATION**  
**MFT/LCSW/LPCC/LEP**

**Leader Name/s:** Susan Anderson

**Workshop Title:** Abandonment to Healing: Overcoming Your Self-Defeating Patterns

**Workshop Description:**

Abandonment is a primal human fear and the underlying cause of emotional distress and dysfunction. Susan Anderson, psychotherapist and author of *Taming Your Outer Child* and *Journey from Abandonment to Healing*, will share powerful tools of emotional and spiritual healing to help you reverse abandonment's universal wound. You will be taught exercises for each of the five stages of abandonment: shattering, withdrawal, internalizing, rage, and lifting; how to conquer "abandoholism" and other outer child behaviors; how to make new connections; and steps for healing abandonment. Whether you're experiencing a recent breakup, a lingering wound from the past, or struggling to overcome self-defeating patterns, the tools will propel your growth, help restore your sense of self, and increase your capacity for love. This workshop is particularly useful for health and healing professionals in their work with clients and patients.

Recommended reading: Anderson, *Taming Your Outer Child*, *Journey from Abandonment to Healing*, and *Black Swan: 12 Lessons of Abandonment Recovery*.

**Course Objectives**

1. Explore the primal fear of abandonment and recognize its universal impact on people's lives as demonstrated by a broad spectrum of responses within the group sharing process. Explore its impact on in own life.
2. Describe 5 overlapping phases of abandonment and recovery and define self-abandonment.
3. Identify at least 10 adult scenarios – i.e. romantic rejection, getting fired, being excluded or dismissed, losing a friend, etc. – that can trigger abandonment feelings in people's lives and at least one event that has triggered abandonment feelings in their own life.
4. Explore at least one way in which unresolved abandonment may be impinging in their adult functioning life – i.e. in intimate relationships, goal-achievement, emotional self-regulation, and/or self-esteem, etc. – and gain spectrum awareness (through the group sharing process) about a variety of ways it impinges in others' lives.

5. Practice and experience a psychodynamic exercise called "Separation Therapy" that utilizes a written dialogue to reverse self-abandonment and get in touch with and administer to their most deeply felt emotional needs.
6. Summarize the affects of abandonment trauma on the brain's emotional memory system (especially in the amygdala), and describe how it can lead to the formation of automatic defense mechanisms that become maladaptive.
7. Using the "Outer Child" self-awareness tool, identify at least 2 behavior patterns that interfere in their current relationships and goals – i.e. procrastination, avoidance, hyper-reactivity, overeating, overspending, and/or chasing-the-unavailable, etc., and identify at least 5 patterns that interfere in others.
8. Identify at least one emotional trigger that can set their habituated (Outer Child) behaviors in motion.
9. Describe the benefits on the brain of practicing Mindfulness and LovingKindness meditation.
10. Practice and experience a person-centered exercise called "Relationship Letters" that helps resolve and/or bring closure to core emotional issues in intimate relationships.
11. Gain experiential practice in utilizing a gestalt exercise called "Dream House" that incorporates Mindfulness/LovingKindness techniques and enhances wellbeing and goal-achievement.
12. Gain experiential practice in utilizing a written exercise called "Back To The Future" that helps overcome the resistance to change and other internal barriers, and increases motivation to work toward goals.
13. Describe how these tools, when practiced regularly, act like physical therapy for the brain to incrementally repair and regenerate healthy new neuronal, emotional, and behavioral processes.
14. Incorporate at least one of these tools into a comprehensive take-home plan that will help them progress toward ongoing spiritual, emotional, and behavioral growth and recovery.

## Course Syllabus and Schedule (subject to change)

The workshop *From Abandonment to Healing: Overcoming Patterns of Self Sabotage* utilizes the methods of experiential training, didactics presentation, and an intensive process of group sharing.

**Workshop goals:** To provide an overview of abandonment recovery process; provide information about abandonment trauma and psychobiological issues of separation and attachment; provide safe space for sharing so that participants internalize a beneficial program of exercises and gain positive support and energy from a dynamic group sharing process (also see program objectives).

### **Sunday night, 8:30 – 10:30 (2 class hours)**

Introduction to abandonment recovery / Introduction of members and facilitator / Overview ground rules that facilitate a "safe sharing space" and intimacy within group / Overview of workshop topics and goals / Overview of experiential training process.

### **Monday Morning 9:30 – 12:45 (3 ¼ class hours)**

Define fear of abandonment as a universal, primal emotion / Five phases of abandonment and recovery / Application of techniques for creating safety and intimacy within groups, both professionally led and peer peer-facilitated / Address abandonment's impact in adult life choices through group sharing process.

### **Monday Afternoon 4:00-6:30 (2 ½ class hours)**

Overview of defense mechanisms, i.e. patterns of self-sabotage ("outer child behaviors") / Behavior patterns that can interfere in intimate relationships / Self-abandonment / Separation anxiety / Benefits of Mindfulness and Loving Kindness meditation.

### **Tuesday Morning 9:30 – 12:45 (3 ¼ class hours)**

Primal scenes of childhood abandonment / Personality profiles of people with unresolved abandonment / Issues of attachment and separation / Experiential training in use of psychodynamic self-help exercise called "separation therapy" / Application of this tool to reverse self-abandonment and remediate core internal emotional conflicts.

### **Tuesday Afternoon 4:00-6:30 (2 ½ class hours)**

How unresolved abandonment and heightened separation anxiety can interfere in adult goal achievement / Experiential training in using the "separation therapy" technique to overcome deeply entrenched patterns of self-sabotage / Issues of self-abandonment.

### **Wednesday Morning 9:30 – 12:45 (3 ¼ class hours)**

Experiential training in use of a written self-help technique called "relationship letter" that helps resolve deep-seated conflicts within intimate relationships / Principle of unconditional radical responsibility / Theory of multiple realities / Issues of self-abandonment.

**Wednesday Afternoon 4:00-6:30 (2 ½ class hours)**

Experiential training part two / how to utilize this tool to resolve, repair, improve, and or seek closure in conflicted relationships / Issues of self-abandonment / Application of Mindfulness and Loving Kindness meditation.

**Thursday Morning 9:30 – 12:45 (3 ¼ class hours)**

Experiential training in use exercise called "twig" to increase self-awareness about one's emotional arc from infancy to the present / How to shape one's future trajectory.

**Thursday Afternoon 4:00-6:30 (2 ½ class hours)**

Experiential training in exercise called "back to the future" / How to use imagination and "sense of future" to enhance goal achievement / Benefits of Gratitude.

**Friday Morning 9:30- 11:30 (2 class hours)**

Integrate insights and skills / Incorporate abandonment recovery tools into one's daily life to increase capacity for love and connection / Create a comprehensive take-home plan / Acknowledge the impact of the honesty, trust, and intimacy exhibited by group mates / Closure.

**Susan Anderson's professional background and training:** Post graduate training in psychoanalytic psychotherapy (Peterson-Krag Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy Post Graduate Institute), bereavement counseling, systemic family therapy, and drug and alcohol addiction. Clinical experience stems from twenty years of working in psychiatric hospitals, day treatment centers, and drug and alcohol settings, followed by thirteen years working in elementary school system as mental health consultant, doing clinical therapy with children and parents, gathering anecdotal information on the impact of primal abandonment scenarios and developing ameliorative programs for community based parent educations programs, in all 35 years of clinical experience and research to working with the victims of abandonment trauma, grief and loss.

This course meets the qualifications for 26 hours of continuing education credit for LMFTs, LCSWs, LPCCs, and/or LEPs as required by the California Board of Behavioral Sciences. Esalen is an approved provider of continuing education by the California Association of Marriage and Family Therapists .

Esalen Institute maintains responsibility for this program and its content. You may contact us at [CE@esalen.org](mailto:CE@esalen.org). We encourage you to be in touch with our office with any grievances in a timely manner.