



GEORGIA SHAFFER  
COACH . AUTHOR . SPEAKER



## Leader's Guide for *Taking Out Your Emotional Trash*

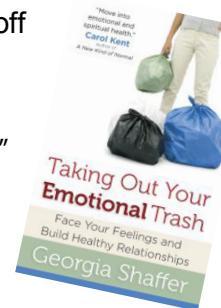
Do you want more energy, more peace and more happiness? You say, "Who doesn't?" Then I invite you to take a moment to close your eyes and picture the inside of your house. Can you see the piles of papers, books, clothes and projects lying around? Maybe they are in neat piles or maybe they are strewn about. Just walking into the room causes you to cringe. Likewise when you walk on the beach or in your neighborhood you can see papers, tin cans, and other "waste" lying around. Now imagine how your "emotional trash" can accumulate as well. What does it consist of? Unrealistic expectations, frustrations, and irritations that turn into long-held resentments, deep hurts, bitterness, envy, arrogance, unforgiveness, rage and even shame. God doesn't want us to live like this. And we don't have to.

I'm excited that you want to use my book, "Taking Out Your Emotional Trash," for your small group. This leader's guide will help you to facilitate your group to be free to be who they really are—loved, talented, valued, and forgiven.

**Leaders:** Encourage each person to bring their own Bible as well as a copy of "Taking Out Your Emotional Trash." Ideally, each week people will have read the chapter to be discussed and highlighted what was meaningful to them. Point out where the bathrooms are and encourage cell phones to be turned off as God wants to use this time for His focused healing.

### What you will need:

Each person needs a Bible and a copy of "Taking Out Your Emotional Trash"  
Poster board or a white board or create slide/s with Power Point  
3 x 5 cards  
A light and healthy snack: crackers, fruit, cheese, veggies, etc.  
Name Tags (optional)



### What to do:

Pray for the Holy Spirit. It is His job to reveal to us "emotional trash" that we do not realize we are harboring. He will convict us, cleanse us, free us and revive us. Without His presence nothing will happen.

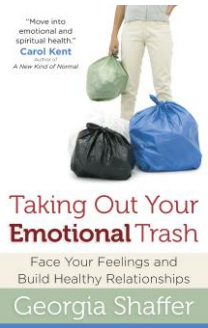
This study is best used as a ten-week study. I suggest starting with one chapter each week. Then if you find you need to combine chapters to shorten the time, you may. The ideal length each evening is about 75 minutes. Use the first fifteen minutes for a few snacks and conversation. Have someone start with a prayer then lead the group in reading the theme verses or quote for the week from the poster board. Use the discussion questions and points of emphasis for guiding and keeping focus. Most of the practical applications are take-home assignments, however a few are to be done in the group. Be sure to save at least ten minutes at the end for this share and prayer time.

So what are you waiting for!

# Week One:

## Chapter One

### Are You in the Danger Zone?



#### Poster Board or Power Point:

“Practice the art of identifying emotional garbage.” –Randy Schutt

“The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles” (Psalm 34:17 NIV).

#### Discussion Questions:

1. Do you tend to allow your emotions to pile up? Do you know why?
2. Describe how emotions were handled in your home when you were growing up?
3. Write on your 3 x 5 card any emotional trash the book identified that you wish to get rid of. Share now or wait until the “share and prayer” time.
4. Think about our theme text, “The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles.” Think about any mini-meltdowns you have had. Share how the Lord will be able to keep you in the safe level versus the danger zone.

#### Points of Emphasis:

It usually isn't just one emotion that puts us in the danger zone. Instead it's the sadness + frustration + embarrassment + disappointment + jealousy + anger that we ignore or stuff or allow to accumulate. The cumulative effect can be disastrous.

We all have times when we break our routines to deal with the urgent, and that's okay. But unless we're also attentive to how our emotions are building to critical mass, we'll find ourselves in trouble before we know it.

We need to be aware of where we are emotionally and commit to change to reverse our tendency to react rather than respond. One way to “check in” with ourselves is to set aside time to reflect and pray on what we're saying and doing.

#### Practical Application:

In groups of two or three share one way you plan to change how you will handle your emotions. Pray for each other for God's Holy Spirit's power to make “change decisions” from the heart. Pray that people in your group will take “God time” for reflection, commitment and worship. Claim the Psalm 34:17 promise.

# Week Two:

Chapter Two:

## What Trash Have You Grown Used To?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23 NIV).

### Discussion Questions:

1. Share with the group any interesting “trash” you have grown used to.
2. Has God ever revealed trash to you that you were holding onto? What happened when you let go? Take a moment of silent prayer for those who are still holding onto “trash.” (Leader prays and claims Psalm 139:23 then gives a few moments for silent prayers of “letting go.”)
3. What are your thoughts and feelings about paying attention to your own faults and not of others? Read Matthew 7:3&5.
4. Review the process of obeying God fully. Share how this has worked for you.

### Points of Emphasis:

God is able to shed his light in the darkest areas of your heart to reveal what you need to see? Will you trust Him as He does this? God wants to be your MasterCleaner. You only need to ask him to help and then be still, expectant, quietly listening, and ready to follow His counsel.

We use God’s Word for deep cleaning our hearts. And He even gives us His Spirit to help in understanding it. Remember to ask for the Spirit before you read God’s Word. John 16:13, says the Spirit will willingly guide you.

Pastor and author John Ortberg writes, “Confession is not primarily something God has us do because He needs it. God is not clutching tightly to His mercy, as if we have to pry it from His fingers like a child’s last cookie. We need to confess in order to heal and be changed.”

1 John 1:9 is for real and we can take God at His Word.

### Practical Application:

Take home assignment. Write this on your 3 x 5 card: “Lord I confess that I held onto \_\_\_\_\_. I ask Your forgiveness and renounce that activity. I believe You will lovingly continue to cleanse me and shed light on hidden places. This week I will take time to pause and listen to You, claiming our promise verses. Amen.”

# Week Three:

Chapter Three:

## How Do You Sort through Your Emotional Trash?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

"I love the Lord because He hears my voice and my prayer for mercy. Because He bends down to listen, I will pray as long as I have breath" (Psalm 116:1-2 NL).

Write these words: Psalm 22; Psalm 51; Psalm 102; Job 38-42

### Discussion Questions:

1. Do you feel free to share your feelings with God? How do you share?
2. Using a large sheet of paper, take five minutes to write a letter to God about the last time you had a negative emotional experience. Don't worry about grammar or spelling just write your raw emotions and feelings about that experience.
3. Share any Scriptures that have helped you identify and work through your emotions.
4. Pray around the circle using "feeling" words to describe what you are going through. Using only two or three sentences each with the "I" words. Next time around each pray, "I cannot always trust my feelings. So I ask God's help to heal any emotional trash I'm feeling."

### Points of Emphasis:

Our human tendency is to call another person when we're upset and unload as we process the negative emotions. This isn't the wisest choice. We may feel better, but sometimes our friends and family may feel dumped on. Always ask, "Is this something I need to talk with God about first?"

Acknowledging our feelings doesn't mean ignoring the truths from Scripture. Feelings come and go. Just because we *feel* something is true doesn't mean it is true. Hebrews 11:1 NIV shares, "Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." As you read the Bible during your turmoil, ask God to show you his truths. Take time to journal your thoughts in detail. And then you are ready to talk with someone you trust.

When there is nothing more we can do, we must let it go. We must realize that letting go is a process.

### Practical Application:

On your 3 x 5 card write Psalm 22; Psalm 51; Psalm 102; Job 38-42. Identify from page 46 which Bible chapter applies to you and read it if you haven't already. Use some of the sentences as prayers in your devotional prayer time. Be sure to let the power and control go and give it to God.

# Week Four:

Chapter Four:

## What Desires Need to Be Discarded?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

“If I could look at myself from God’s perspective, what would He say are my true needs?” Oswald Chambers

“My soul, wait silently for God alone, for my expectation *is* from Him”  
(Psalm 62:5 NKJV).

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are your hopes and dreams? What do you long for? Use your 3 x 5 to journal a listing of your desires or wish list. Now ask, are you expecting someone else to give you the desires of your heart? Take a silent moment to uplift your list to the Lord in prayer.
2. What would God say are your true needs?
3. Give an example of how God has helped you embrace reality. If He showed you through a Scripture verse please share it with the group.
4. Share with the group four things you are thankful for today.

### Points of Emphasis:

Unless we are paying attention, we too can get tangled up with our own unfulfilled desires. We need to be self-aware and understand that some of our relational problems might be caused by our refusal to reevaluate our desires to make sure they’re reasonable and what the potential is for their fulfillment.

James 4:1-2 warns us that our desires can battle within us and become demands. This vicious downward cycle can turn from desires to needs to expectations to demands to disconnections (punishment) to aggression. This is moving us from handling emotions in a healthy manner and in a Biblical way. The further we get from Jesus, the more messed up our emotions become, and that means we’re generating more emotional trash we’ll eventually have to deal with.

Learning to be grateful for what we have rather than focus on what we didn’t get enables us to move beyond our frustrations and irritations toward joy. Embracing “what is” means rethinking what we *thought* we needed. Living “what is” means putting our trust in God instead of people and things.

### Practical Application:

Pray in groups of two or three that you will recognize that only God knows what is best for you. You may claim, Psalm 51:10 TLB, “Create in me a new, clean heart, O God, filled with clean thoughts and right desires.”

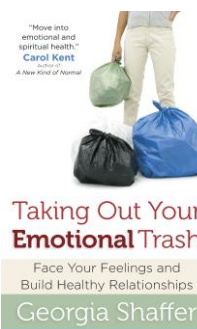
# Week Five:

## Chapter Five: Are You Recycling Your Anger?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger” (Proverbs 15:1 NIV).

... “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness,” (Exodus 34:6-7 NIV).



### Discussion Questions:

1. Would you describe your anger as foolish or wise?
2. Could you identify with any of the six major ways people express anger?
3. Go around the circle reading the “Hit Pause” Scriptures: James 1:19; Proverbs 19:11; Ecclesiastes 7:9; Proverbs 16:32 and Proverbs 14:17. What thoughts come to your mind?
4. Describe one thing you will do this week to help reduce and recycle your frustrations and fury.

### Points of Emphasis:

Getting a grip on our anger begins with recognizing that it is a God-given emotion. Everyone gets angry, but that doesn't mean we have to get trapped in unhealthy patterns of anger behavior or denial.

There are six major ways we can express our anger in a harmful manner. They are aggressive action, critical words, vengeful behavior, sarcastic remarks, withdrawing communication or withholding something.

Before you let loose with a barrage of angry words, hit an imaginary pause button, take several deep breaths, and count to ten. Take time to reflect on a verse. When tension rises, think about times when you were angry but didn't explode or do something regrettable. Identify your triggers and be aware of them so you can react differently. Then channel your hurt, pain and fury in a good direction so that ultimately you can make a positive difference in the world. It will help if you keep a list of practical, biblical helps for managing anger.

### Practical Application:

For yourself, this week pray the “managing anger” Scriptures on page 95.

# Week Six:

## Chapter Six: Who Do You Need to Forgive?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

“Forgiving the unforgivable is hard. So was the cross: hard words, hard wood, hard nails.” William S. Stoddard

“And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins” (Mark 11:25 NIV).

### Discussion Questions:

1. Who from your past would you rather not see again? List them on your 3 x 5 card for use in question #4.
2. Do you have a tendency to dwell on past hurts and pain? What are the signals that alert you of your need to forgive someone?
3. Take time to read Luke 23:26-49 about Jesus' crucifixion. How would you describe the meaning of the crucifixion to a non-Christian friend?
4. Will you choose to forgive the people on your list? Take time for silent prayers.

### Points of Emphasis:

One thing is clear. Unforgiveness equals trash.

Forgiveness is a *choice* or *decision* we make and the emotional process we move through as we let go of hurts and offenses that range from one-time petty grudges to repeated horrific offenses. It's important to define what "forgiveness" is not: Forgiveness *does not* mean we believe what happened was okay. Forgiveness *does not* mean we forget the offense. Forgiveness *does not* excuse someone's poor behavior.

Jesus is our best example of how forgiveness can be lived out in the midst of the most devastating of situations. When He was nailed to the cross, He forgave his enemies, His right to be treated with respect, and rights to earthly glory and majesty.

There are many benefits of forgiveness: Physical, Emotional, Spiritual and Relational. It will be challenging. However, remembering what happened helps us to learn new protective ways of responding to those who don't deserve our trust. Unlike the people around us, God is more than able to handle the brunt of our honest anger until we grieve and can accept what has happened in our lives.

### Practical Application:

During this week God may reveal to you others who have hurt you in the past: List how they hurt you, describe your emotional pain and choose to forgive because Jesus can heal the pain.

# Week Seven:

Chapter Seven:

## Are You Stuck in the Forgiveness Process?

### Poster Board or Power Point:

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32 NIV).

“The place where Jesus died was a garbage dump for the whole city. He died for all the garbage in our souls.” Living Word Community Church

### Discussion Questions:

1. Describe a time when you gave up an emotional issue to the Lord. How did that make you feel?
2. Do you tend to forgive too quickly? Why might this not be a good thing?
3. Discuss the searching questions with the person sitting beside you if you feel comfortable, then share with the group anything okay to share.
4. Read Ephesians 3:17-19. What is Paul requesting the Lord to do? Do you feel overwhelmed by the love of God?

### Points of Emphasis:

Forgiveness is like deleting a file. Making the choice to forgive is the beginning of the process. It's a first step, but there's more work to be done. Skimming over the process or burying the pain will keep you stuck in your junk and trapped in your trash.

Recognize that forgiveness is a process and it's normal to have times of discouragement. However you can find freedom from grudges and bitterness by being *intentional* about forgiving. Discuss the steps involved in forgiveness.

Forgiveness heals the deepest of wounds and frees us of resentment that may threaten our health and relationships. One way to know we are making progress is when we see signs of forgiveness in our lives. Discuss some of the signs of forgiveness.

### Practical Application:

As a group, pray around the circle, each person using sentence prayers of praise for the way they are progressing. Examples: “Lord, I praise You that I am no longer putting my life on hold while waiting for an apology or for the person to change. Lord, I thank you for my new sense of lightness and freedom.”



# Week Eight:

## Chapter Eight: Which Losses Can Be Composted?



### Poster Board or Power Point:

"[God] lifts the poor from the dust and the needy from the garbage dump. He sets them among princes, placing them in seats of honor" (1 Samuel 2:8 NLT).

### Discussion Questions:

1. Share some of the losses you've experienced. Have you grieved the unwanted changes? If not, how will you begin?
2. Understanding that each personality copes with adversity differently, how do you prefer to handle difficult times?
3. Explain how you have grown as a result of some of your losses.
4. Our theme verse, 1 Samuel 2:8 is in the middle of Hannah's prayer of triumph after a time of trial. How does Hannah's story help you to triumph over trial? How can you help others?

### Points of Emphasis:

Compost in our lives is the rich, fertile soil that results from the healthy process of taking care of the pain, deep hurts, or other negative emotions that result from our losses, shattered dreams and broken hearts. When handled properly, our losses slowly break down and are transformed into wonderful nutrients that promote new growth.

Emotionally speaking, what can be composted are the painful losses that don't go away in a day, a month, or even longer, such as: financial devastation, the loss of a home, the death of someone we love, etc. The first step in emotional composting is to identify what has died in our lives so we can sort it out and put it in our compost pile.

Whatever the losses, acknowledge them and know that these belong on your compost pile. They can be recycled into *life-enriching* experiences. Be sure to evaluate the experiences and emotions you can compost. Give yourself plenty of time and understand that you may grieve differently than your friend does.

You will know your losses have composted when you're ready to integrate what was of value in your life *before* the unwanted change with what you gained by *going through* the pain of the experience. Because we all experience unwanted change, we must ultimately answer this question: What will I do with my loss and pain?

### Practical Application:

Remind yourself that these losses will one day give you more compost. Pray a prayer of praise similar to Hannah's in 1 Samuel 2:1-10.

# Week Nine:

Chapter Nine:

## What Emotional Clutter Is Consuming Your Life?

**Poster Board or Power Point:** “My dear Martha, you are worried and upset over all these details! There is only one thing worth being concerned about. Mary has discovered it, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:40-42 NLT).

“So let’s walk right up to him and get what he is so ready to give. Take the mercy, accept the help” (Hebrews 4:16 NIV).

### Discussion Questions:

1. Are you preoccupied with your concerns, or unable to relate to others in a real and intimate way? If you are preoccupied, list the ways on your 3 x 5 card.
2. What ways did you declutter step-by-step this past week?
3. Share one of God’s truths about yourself. Then share one about the person sitting next to you. Share a favorite Scripture about your identity in God.
4. Form a circle of prayer praying sentence prayers for yourself and others that all will identify and give up clutter and continue to be focused on Jesus--the one main thing. Take as much time as needed.

### Points of Emphasis:

If you have an area in your house that needs some organization then you can relate to how emotional issues can also grow. Emotional clutter paralyzes us, hinders our ability to connect with others and may eventually crowd God out of our lives. Identify clutter and take it seriously. Some types are: lies, shame and guilt, worry, and people pleasing. Maybe you can think of others.

You can declutter step by step by: listing your energy drainers; focusing on one item at a time and resolving or eliminating it; getting help and enjoying the accomplishment. Be sure to tell yourself the truth about that item and replace it with God’s truth.

Ask Jesus for your own vision of God’s love for you. Images are powerful. One reason they can be so helpful is because images use the right side of our brains and words are processed on the left side. Between Scripture and the mental images, both sides of our brains are saturated with the truth. John 17:17 NL, says, “Make them pure and holy by teaching them your words of truth.” Trust the Lord will give you a vision of His love soon. In the meantime you can picture yourself just like Mary sitting at Jesus feet with no distractions.

### Practical Application:

Take all the items on your 3 x 5 card and work on them step-by-step this week. Visualize Jesus right beside you taking each clutter piece and replacing it with truth.

# Week Ten:

## Chapter Ten: Are You Taking Out Your Trash?

**Poster Board or Power Point:** “And now just as you trusted Christ to save you, trust him, too, for each day’s problems; live in vital union with him. Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him. See that you go on growing in the Lord, and become strong and vigorous in the truth you were taught. Let your lives overflow with joy and thanksgiving for all he has done” (Colossians 2:6-7 TLB).

### Discussion Questions:

1. What are you doing to keep emotional trash to a minimum?
2. What part of Joseph’s story can you identify with? How have you grown during this ten-week study? What changes will you continue to apply?
3. Describe how 1 Peter 2:24&25 applies to you personally regarding taking out your trash.
4. Take time for prayers around the circle. Be sure to emphasize praise for the healing that has taken place and faithfulness to continue to turn trash over to God.

### Points of Emphasis:

By continuing to monitor our lives and dealing with any trash that comes our way, we can keep clutter to a minimum and any relapses will be temporary. When we begin to see our emotional trash for what it is—garbage—we are less likely to allow it to accumulate and pollute our lives and the lives of others.

We often justify our behaviors and attitudes, using rationalizations to skate by the issues. The longer we put off dealing with issues, the bigger, older, and more difficult they will be to handle and the stronger the consequences. Take time now to take care of the problems by being intentional to maintain routines and practices, such as prayer, reading Scripture, journaling and seeking spiritual friendships.

Your physical health impacts your emotional health, and your emotions impact your body. So be sure to get plenty of sleep, eat healthfully and exercise to maintain physical health.

It’s time to say yes and give God your mess because just like recycling, He can make something good out of our junk. Jesus bore our sins so that we might “die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.” Consider asking if anyone wishes to accept Jesus into their lives or make a re-commitment.

### Practical Application:

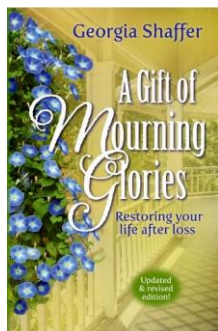
Where possible form Spiritual friendships or find someone to pray with once a week. Use a 3 x 5 card to list all the people in your group to keep uplifting them in prayer.

# Contact Georgia Shaffer

Georgia would love to connect with your group of ten or more on Skype as her schedule allows. See the bottom of the page for ways to contact her.

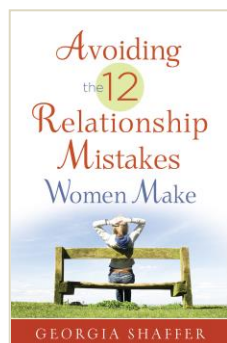
**Georgia Shaffer** is a licensed psychologist in Pennsylvania and a certified life coach. She is the author of *A Gift of Mourning Glories: Restoring Your Life After Loss* and *How Not to Date a Loser: A Guide to Making Smart Choices*. Georgia speaks frequently at conferences, women's retreats, and singles' events. She enjoys helping people identify what needs to grow and what needs to go in their lives.

## More books by Georgia Shaffer:



Unwanted change is a constant of life. You lose your job, face the death of a loved one, or experience the loss of your health or lifestyle. Fortunately, you can do more than “go” through these painful seasons—you can “grow” through them. In this book, Georgia empowers you to:

- Strengthen your ability to experience God's peace when your dreams are shattered.
- Identify healthy stress relievers that enable you to ease the pain of loss.
- Navigate the obstacles you encounter as you rebuild your life.
- Reduce your vulnerability to hopelessness by cultivating a supportive network.
- Heal from past hurts and enhance your ability to begin anew.



In her new book *Avoiding the 12 Relationship Mistakes Women Make*, author Georgia Shaffer helps us recognize our relational blind spots and reveals 12 ways you could be undermining your chances of enjoying fulfilling relationships. A relational blind spot is our inability to see things in ourselves or others as they really are. Just as we learn to be aware of our visual blind spots when we drive a car, we need to become aware of the blind spots in our relationships. It's common to think that everyone else has relational issues but us. Choose to grow in self-awareness as Georgia helps you to:

- Identify the most common relational blind spots and learn how they sabotage our interactions.
- Learn four strategies to see what you may be missing relationally.
- Understand the correlation between growing in self-awareness and your ability to enjoy meaningful healthy connections.