

# Everyday Language: Quick Reference

Plain-English definitions for every everyday language term on Shrinktionary, in one printable sheet.

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**Please read**

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## Boundaries

*Also: personal boundaries*

Boundaries are the limits a person sets to protect their wellbeing in relationships. They define what is and isn't okay, helping people care for themselves while staying connected to others.

## Burnout

*Also: Occupational burnout*

Burnout is a state of exhaustion, cynicism, and reduced effectiveness that builds up from chronic, unmanaged stress, usually at work. It's recognized in the ICD-11 as an occupational phenomenon, not a formal mental illness.

## Catastrophizing

Catastrophizing is the thinking pattern of jumping to the worst-case outcome and treating it as the most likely one. It's a common feature of anxiety and depression.

## Codependency

*Also: Relationship addiction*

Codependency is a relationship pattern where someone's sense of worth and identity gets tied to taking care of, fixing, or being needed by another person, often at their own expense. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Coping

*Also: Coping skills, Coping strategies*

Coping refers to the strategies people use to manage stress and difficult emotions. Some coping is adaptive and helps over the long run, while some is maladaptive and brings short-term relief at a longer-term cost.

## Doomscrolling

*Also: Doomsurfing*

Doomscrolling is the habit of compulsively scrolling through negative or distressing news and social media, often unable to stop even though it makes you feel worse. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Emotional labor

*Also: emotional work*

Emotional labor is the work of managing your own feelings, and often other people's, as part of a job or relationship. It isn't a diagnosis, but too much of it can lead to burnout.

## Gaslighting

*Also: Reality manipulation*

Gaslighting is a pattern of manipulation that leads someone to doubt their own memory, perception, or judgment. The word started in psychology but is now used casually for many kinds of dishonesty.

## High-functioning anxiety

*Also: Hidden anxiety*

High-functioning anxiety is a popular label for people who feel persistent anxiety on the inside while looking capable and put-together on the outside. It's not a formal diagnosis.

## Imposter Syndrome

*Also: Impostor syndrome, Imposter phenomenon*

Imposter syndrome is the persistent feeling of being a fraud who will be found out, even when there's clear evidence of your competence. It's a widely recognized experience, but it isn't a formal clinical diagnosis.

## Inner child

*Also: Inner child work*

The inner child is a popular way of describing the part of you that still carries the feelings, needs, and reactions formed in childhood. It's a metaphor used in some therapies, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Languishing

*Also: Blah feeling*

Languishing is a sense of stagnation and emptiness, feeling joyless and aimless without being clinically depressed. It's a popular term drawn from psychology, not a formal diagnosis.

## Love bombing

*Also: Idealization phase*

Love bombing is an overwhelming rush of affection, attention, and grand gestures early in a relationship, often used to gain control rather than to connect. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Masking

*Also: camouflaging, social camouflaging*

Masking is when a person hides or covers up their natural traits, feelings, or behaviors to fit in or meet social expectations. It comes up often in conversations about autism and ADHD, but anyone can do it.

## Mood

*Also: emotional state*

Mood is a person's general emotional state over a stretch of time, like feeling low, irritable, or content. It's more lasting and less specific than a single emotion.

## Nervous Breakdown

*Also: Mental breakdown, Emotional breakdown*

Nervous breakdown is an old, everyday phrase for a period of overwhelming distress when someone can't function. It isn't a clinical or diagnostic term.

## Overstimulation

*Also: sensory overload*

Overstimulation is when your senses or mind take in more input than you can comfortably handle. It isn't a diagnosis, but it can leave you frazzled, irritable, or shut down.

## Overthinking

*Also: Worry loops, Analysis paralysis*

Overthinking is the everyday word for getting stuck in loops of worry or replaying the same thoughts without reaching a useful conclusion. It's a normal human habit that can tip into a clinical concern when it's constant and hard to switch off.

## People-pleasing

*Also: fawning*

People-pleasing is a habit of prioritizing others' needs and approval over your own, often to avoid conflict or rejection. It isn't a diagnosis, but it can wear a person down.

## Perfectionism

*Also: perfectionist tendencies*

Perfectionism is holding yourself to standards so high that nothing feels good enough. It isn't a diagnosis, but it can fuel anxiety, burnout, and harsh self-criticism.

## Self-Care

*Also: Self-maintenance*

Self-care is the deliberate, ordinary set of actions people take to maintain their physical and mental health. It supports treatment but doesn't replace it.

## Self-compassion

*Also: self-kindness*

Self-compassion is treating yourself with the same kindness you'd offer a friend who's struggling. It isn't a diagnosis or a treatment, but it's a skill many find steadying.

## Self-sabotage

*Also: self-defeating behavior*

Self-sabotage is when a person gets in their own way, undermining goals they say they want. It isn't a diagnosis, but it can quietly stall work, health, and relationships.

## Stress

*Also: Stress response*

Stress is the body and mind's response to a demand or pressure. Short bursts are normal and even useful, but stress that never lets up can harm your health.

## Toxic positivity

*Also: Forced positivity*

Toxic positivity is the pressure to stay upbeat and dismiss difficult emotions, treating positive thinking as the only acceptable response. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Trauma bonding

*Also: Betrayal bond*

Trauma bonding is a strong emotional attachment that forms toward someone who is harmful, built through repeated cycles of abuse and intermittent kindness. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Trauma dumping

*Also: Emotional dumping*

Trauma dumping is when someone unloads heavy or distressing personal details on another person without warning, consent, or much regard for whether they can hold it. It's a popular term, not a clinical diagnosis.

## Triggered

*Also: Set off, Activated*

Triggered describes what happens when a cue sets off a strong trauma or anxiety response, pulling someone back into past pain. In everyday speech the word often gets used more loosely to mean simply annoyed or offended.

## Worry

*Also: Worrying*

Worry is the chain of what-if thoughts about things that might go wrong. A little helps you plan, but too much loops without landing on an answer.

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