

Tobi Doyle's Down and Dirty Guide to Emotional Wounds & GMC

Goals, Motivations, and Conflicts (GMC) provide a foundation for building your characters throughout the story.

Purpose:

- Create compelling, realistic primary and secondary characters using Goal, Motivation, Conflict as a framework.
- Apply the concept of internal motivation to the creation of the protagonists and main antagonist/s in your novel.
- Explore internal motivations of the novel's protagonists and antagonist/s.
- Create a compelling backstory for your characters.

Remember the main protagonists and antagonist/s all need GMCs. An antagonist with a weak GMC means success is easily obtained or the protagonists are not very clever.

Part 1: Emotional Wounds

To create compelling characters, start with the characters' wounds. What happened in their past that hurt them deeply and changed how they perceive the world now? In real life, people have multiple wounds, but when writing your novel, pick one emotional wound for your characters' to work through.

A good resource for ideas is the Emotional Wound Thesaurus by Angela Ackerman and Becca Puglisi. You can find free examples at their website, onestopforwriters.com/wounds.

Answer these three questions to determine the nature of the character's wound:

- What happened in their past that hurt them deeply? (wound)
- What does the character now fear will happen? (fear)
- How does the past event change how they perceive the world now? (belief)

Wound Example 1: Accidentally Killing Someone

Wound	<i>They accidentally killed someone, maybe by instigating a prank or dare that went horribly wrong and ended in injury or death.</i>
Fear	<i>They fear responsibility; making decisions that impact others.</i>
Belief	<i>They may believe that they are a terrible and worthless person who is undeserving of love</i>

These wounds and beliefs will trigger the conflicts in the story, so they should be related. For example, using the above wound, our main character's backstory is they were with a group of

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friends and encouraged a classmate to jump off a bridge into a deep river and the classmate drowned. The character fears making decisions that impact others, so the story must put the character into that position and make it increasingly difficult and more dangerous each time. It can start simply with a statement that the character makes about dares being awful, but by the end of the story, the character should make a decision that could result in a fatality.

For the main characters, increase conflict by having their wounds conflict with each other. For example, the secondary main character may have lost a parent or sibling due to another's neglect and is looking for justice. Imagine the conflict possibilities when the love interests' pasts are triggering their old wounds and beliefs about themselves.

Knowing their past wounds and beliefs will help you craft emotionally satisfying goals, motivations, and conflicts for your story. This will drive the plot.

Writing Activity Unit 2, Part 1: Create Past Wounds, Fears, Beliefs

To Do: Create past wounds and how it affects your characters' fears and beliefs for your main characters and the antagonist/s. You may use the worksheet at the end of this document if you prefer.

Part 2: External Goals, Motivations, and Conflict

External GMC: *Character wants what (external goal) because (external motivation) but (external conflict) gets in the way.*

External goals are tangible, something that can be physically seen, like a house, or a job promotion. The goal, motivation, and conflict should relate to the internal wound/beliefs in some way.

For example, our main character, a tech geek, may be offered a job promotion, and he's bored in his current position. The conflict could be the promotion puts them in a manager position and they aren't comfortable with the responsibility.

Example A - External GMC: Tech Geek low stakes

Goal	<i>protagonist offered a job promotion</i>
Motivation	<i>Bored in their current position</i>
Conflict	<i>Management position means more responsibility.</i>

That's logical, but low stakes and not very emotionally charged. They could take the management position and be incredibly lazy or a horrible manager.

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The stakes would be raised, however, if the conflict was more closely related to the internal wound.

What if the character was a tech geek working for a high-end security firm and they've been offered a promotion, but it requires them to take on more decision-making on behalf of the company and its clients? If they decline the position, they lose their job.

That GMC plays directly into the character's wound and belief about themselves. The character will have to grow in order to achieve their goal. For romance, it's all about the character growth.

Example B - External GMC: Tech Geek high stakes

Goal	<i>protagonist wants to keep the job</i>
Motivation	<i>Love the job and the company, paycheck is helpful too</i>
Conflict	<i>could be put in a position where their mistake could seriously harm someone.</i>

Writing Activity Unit 2, Part 2: External GMC for your story

To Do: Using your main characters' and antagonist/s' wounds and beliefs, create their external goals, motivations, and conflicts. You may use the worksheet on the next page to complete the task.

Part 3: Internal Goals, Motivations, and Conflict

Internal GMC: *Character wants what (emotionally; internal goal) because (emotional motivation) but (emotional conflict) gets in the way.*

Internal goals are emotionally-based and related to healing the characters' wounds. They are not known to the other characters, and sometimes the character isn't aware of their own internal goals and motivations at the beginning of the book. Whatever you choose to write for the characters right now may be revised in later drafts. Creating logical goals, motivations, and conflicts that are also emotionally charged creates a stronger character and story.

The first main character believes they are a terrible and worthless person. For the romance genre to guarantee a happy-ever-after the character must grow, and get forgiveness and/or

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forgive themselves for partaking in the accident, and believe in their worthiness. (This could be the theme of your story.)

Internal Goal	To be forgiven. The character wants to be forgiven because they feel responsible but fear their belief that they are worthless and a terrible person will be reinforced.
Internal Motivation	they feel responsible and possibly want to make amends.
Internal Conflict	they fear their belief that they are worthless and a terrible person will be reinforced.

Note that the internal goal was not to fall in love or to find a soul mate. In our example, just looking for love would not heal the wound or make the character grow enough to handle a relationship with the other character that lost a parent or sibling due to someone's negligence.

Writing Activity Part 3: Internal GMC for your story

To Do: Using your main characters' and antagonist/s' wounds and beliefs, create their internal goals, motivations, and conflicts.

Note: In this activity, there are only examples of one main character, but the same care should be used for the main characters and antagonist/s. When creating your antagonist/s GMC make them believable and emotionally charged as well. If the antagonist's motivation is weak, it makes the main characters' defeat of the antagonist weak.

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You can use this table for each main character and antagonist/s.

Protagonist - Main Character 1 Name:

Wound:	Fear:	Belief:
External Goal:	External Motivation:	External Conflict:
Internal Goal:	Internal Motivation:	Internal Conflict:

Protagonist - Main Character 2 Name:

Wound:	Fear:	Belief:
External Goal:	External Motivation:	External Conflict:
Internal Goal:	Internal Motivation:	Internal Conflict:

Antagonist Name:

Wound:	Fear:	Belief:
External Goal:	External Motivation:	External Conflict:
Internal Goal:	Internal Motivation:	Internal Conflict:

*You may have more than one antagonist. For the purposes of this exercise, complete at least one antagonist's GMC.

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