



RECLAIM HOPE
WORKBOOK

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|------------|
| Introduction | 2 |
| Trauma and the Brain | 10 |
| Planning Ahead | |
| Taking Conscious Action | |
| Creating a Sleep Routine | |
| Movement and Your Brain | |
| Nutrition, Your Brain, and Your Body | |
| Strategy 1: Awareness | 36 |
| Paced Breathing | |
| Anchoring to This Moment | |
| Emotion Wheel | |
| Body Scan | |
| Walking with Awareness | |
| Strategy 2: Acknowledgement | 66 |
| Intro to Expressive Writing | |
| Assessing a Relationship | |
| Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) | |
| Assertive Communication | |
| Challenging Unproductive Thoughts | |
| Strategy 3: Power Through Surrender | 96 |
| What Can I Control? | |
| Mental Imagery | |
| Movement and Martial Arts | |
| Expressive Art Journaling | |
| Practicing Boundaries | |
| Strategy 4: Mindfulness | 126 |
| Choosing an Anchor | |
| Anchor Through Writing | |
| Mindful Eating | |
| Yoga | |
| Mindful Meditation | |
| Strategy 5: Faith | 154 |
| Celebrate Your Victories | |
| Post-Traumatic Growth | |
| Looking Ahead | |
| Your Body Will Thank You | |
| Creating a Vision Board | |



*Start small, be realistic, and
forgive yourself easily when you
get sidetracked.*

REBECCA SCRITCHFIELD

Introduction

Welcome to the companion workbook to *Reclaim Hope: Empowering Your Life Through the Five Strategies*. The exercises in this workbook will help you put into practice the 5 Strategies to Reclaim Hope that you learned about in the book. As a reminder, those strategies are:

- 1. Awareness**
- 2. Acknowledgement**
- 3. Power Through Surrender**
- 4. Mindfulness**
- 5. Faith**

You also learned about how trauma affects your brain and the roles that your conscious system and subconscious system serve in protecting your mind and body. While the first chapter in this workbook is specifically focused on the Trauma and the Brain principles, all of the activities included here are designed to strengthen the partnership between your limbic system and frontal lobe, their connection to the body, and their impact on your healing journey.

As you work to strengthen your understanding on how the brain responds to traumatic events, and to practice the five strategies, your capacity to manage the effects of your sexual abuse will increase.

What's in This Book

Each chapter in this workbook follows a pattern. The chapter begins with a reminder from your *Reclaim Hope* reading about information you learned and how it ties into your healing journey. Five activities will then be presented as ways you can apply this information into your everyday life. Each activity includes an introduction to what you'll be doing, the benefits behind it, and how it ties into your healing journey, followed by instructions to guide you through the activity. At the end of each activity is a Deepen Your Experience section, which gives additional options for trying the activity in a different way.

Trauma and the Brain

Trauma and the Brain presents five activities to help you apply what you learned about the Two-Part Brain (conscious system and subconscious system) and their connection to the body into basic needs of your life including sleep, movement, and nutrition.

Strategy 1: Awareness

Awareness is being physically and emotionally present in the moment. These activities will help your limbic system recognize the difference between then and now so you can stay better connected to the present.

Strategy 2: Acknowledgement

Acknowledgement is recognizing the reality and impact of your past trauma. These activities will help you see where you're currently at so that you can consciously determine the next steps on your healing journey.

Strategy 3: Power Through Surrender

Power Through Surrender is coexisting in a positive way with intrusive trauma responses.

These activities will help you notice the unwanted thoughts, emotions, and memories initiated by your limbic system and, rather than fight against them, allow yourself to experience those feelings.

Strategy 4: Mindfulness

Mindfulness presents five activities to help you focus on empowering thoughts and choose healing actions. As you practice redirecting your attention toward specific thoughts or “anchors,” you create new neural pathways that will help enable your frontal lobe and limbic system to respond to stress in a productive way.

Strategy 5: Faith

Faith presents five activities to help you act on the belief that you can heal. These activities give you the opportunity to develop hopeful thoughts and emotions as you consciously identify and align your life with what you value most.

Activity Categories

These chapters include a variety of types of activities, which are categorized and marked with an identifying icon:



Writing

Research demonstrates the effectiveness of writing, and we support the idea that survivors may use writing to work through their trauma and emotions, or as a way to process events. Each writing activity will have a different goal in mind, but each is meant to assist you in working through different parts of your trauma by exploring your thoughts and feelings in words.



Social

Research has also shown that positive, healthy connections are a key part of a

healing journey. While it can be daunting, patiently building relationships allows survivors to develop a support system, identify and maintain healthy boundaries, experience positive interactions, and connect with others who also yearn to be seen. To encourage and provide opportunities to build such relationships, the social activities in this workbook range from activities that can be done with other people to activities that focus on developing and strengthening interpersonal connections.



Art

Art can be an incredibly effective form of therapy for survivors. The exercises in this workbook are therapeutic but are not art therapy—which can only be done with a licensed art therapist. You may benefit from participating in the exercises no matter what, but if they resonate with you, then you may want to consider seeking out a licensed art therapist to pursue that form of therapy.



Movement

In situations where sexual abuse trauma has occurred, it is common that survivors will disconnect from their body. Reconnecting with your body is an integral part of the healing process. Each of the movement activities will have a different goal in mind, but they are all designed to help you focus on connecting with your body once again.

Disclaimer:

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in a particular movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Younique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in a movement activity.



Blended

In addition to the categories listed above, we have provided additional activities within each chapter that vary in style and approach—from mental imagery to meditation to roleplaying. This diversity of options is intended to allow for customization to your specific situation, experience, and learning preference. Blended activities also feature aspects and/or combinations of writing, social, art, and movement throughout.

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook is meant to be a resource for you. We encourage you to go through each exercise and try it at least once. Even if it seems like something you wouldn't normally do, give it a try. It might surprise you. You can also adjust any activity to fit your particular needs. For example, if you do not feel you are in a place where you can write a full letter of self-compassion to yourself, try writing at least one sentence and, over time, gradually work up to writing the letter.

You can do all of the exercises in this workbook on a daily basis, at your own pace, and (usually) right in your own home. Although this book is not meant to replace work with a licensed therapist, it can augment it or jumpstart your healing as you go through the process of finding professional help.

Be kind to yourself as you work, daily, to change patterns of thought and behavior that have been a part of your life for a long time. You may experience moments of discouragement when it seems like these exercises, or other efforts you are making, don't seem to be as effective as quickly as you'd like. In those moments, hold tight to even the tiniest hope that healing is possible. Growth happens in incremental steps, and each small thing you do

moves you one step closer to a place where you'll see the results of your hard work.

It may be beneficial to pick up this workbook again—even if you've already completed it. These activities are intentionally layered and going through them again at a later date may provide different insights or results, depending on where you're at or how you're feeling. Because healing is a journey, circling back to "places you've already been" may help you understand, with additional depth, yourself and your experience. Repetition also builds the neural pathways you are working to strengthen, so we're big advocates of returning to these activities anytime.

If you have attended The Haven Retreat, we suggest you also engage in the companion experience Haven Online: A Course to Empower You. This 12-week online course complements the content found in the *Reclaim Hope* book and workbook, while also presenting a new way for you to engage in the five strategies and understand how trauma impacts your brain. Led by an instructor, each class provides opportunities to learn and practice healing tools in a safe community of fellow survivors. If you haven't attended The Haven Retreat, we invite you to learn more about it on our website:

youniquefoundation.org/the-haven-retreat

You can also check out a myriad of online resources available on our homepage.

We encourage use of the *Reclaim Hope* book and workbook in the Finding Hope Support Groups which are facilitated by survivors who volunteer their time in an effort to expand the community of support. If you are interested in attending a group in your area, visit www.findinghope.org for more

information. If there are no groups in your area, contact us for help in starting a support group in your community.

The Benefits of Using This Book

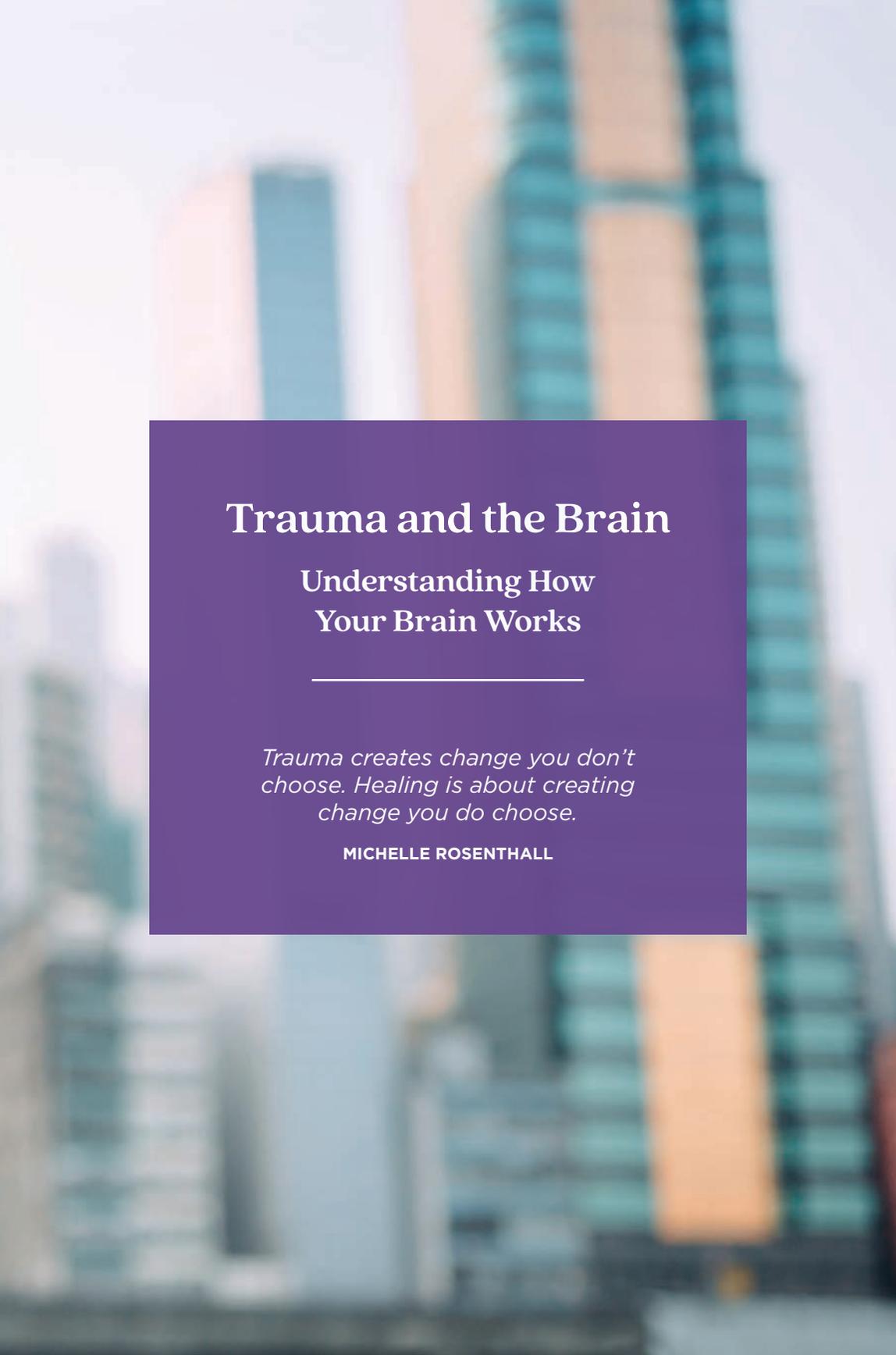
As you learned in the *Reclaim Hope* book, trauma recovery, like the art of kintsugi, involves seeing the potential and strength in what you or others may have once considered broken. Think of the activities in this book as the glue that can help you bind the pieces of your experiences together and assist you in finding ways to nurture hope and healing. By going through this workbook and engaging in these activities, you are taking action in your own story. You are gathering the pieces of your experiences and collecting them into a new whole.

We understand that you want to feel hope, to feel like healing is possible. And, we want to help nurture your hope by giving you the tools that can assist you in your healing journey. Thank you for putting your trust in us; we feel honored to be a part of your story.

For additional resources, printables, and downloads, visit our website:

youniquefoundation.org/resources



A blurred background of a city skyline with several tall buildings in shades of blue, teal, and orange.

Trauma and the Brain

Understanding How Your Brain Works

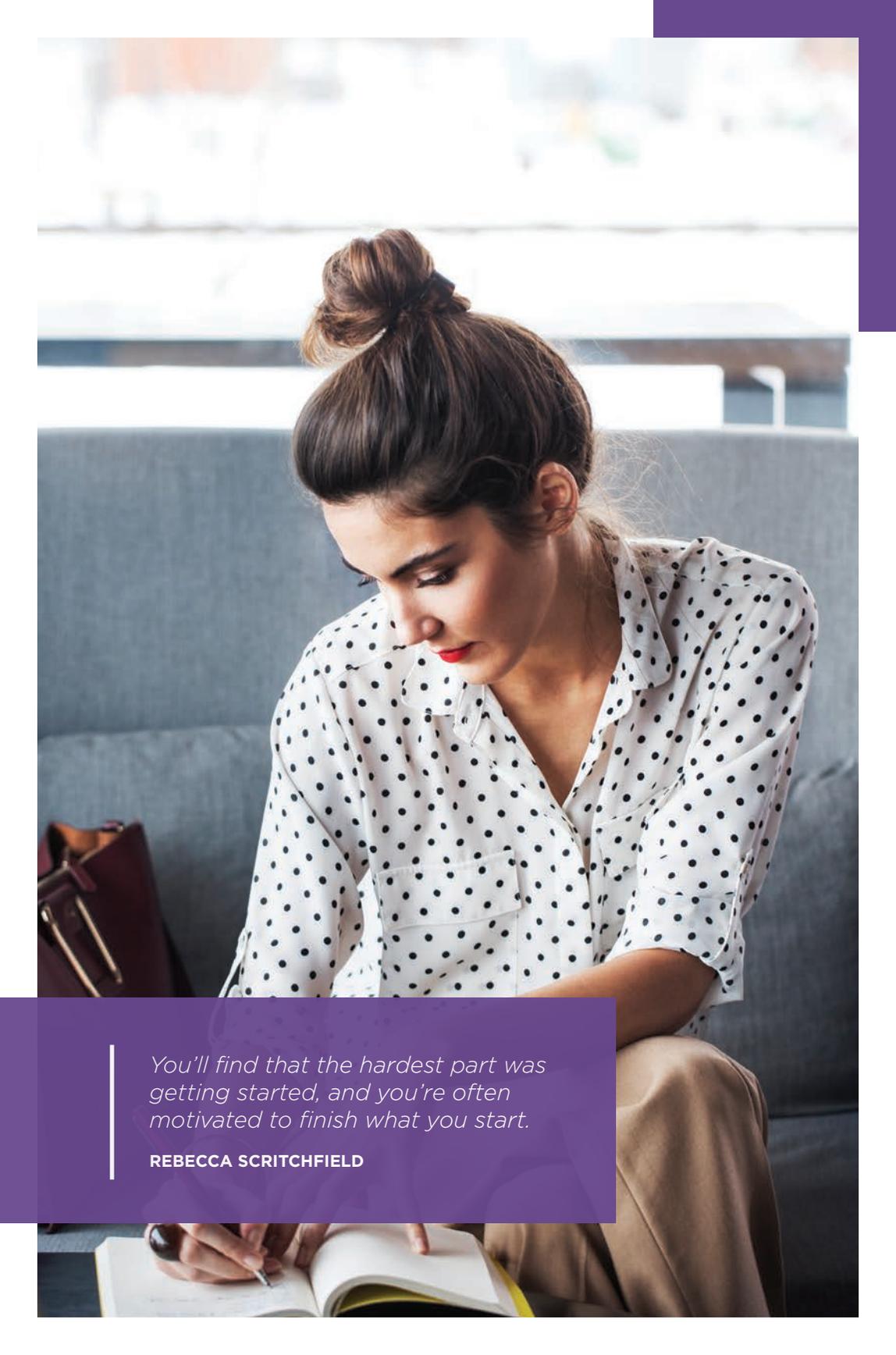
*Trauma creates change you don't
choose. Healing is about creating
change you do choose.*

MICHELLE ROSENTHALL

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- The Two-Part Brain Model helps you understand your trauma by focusing on conscious and subconscious systems in your brain: the frontal lobe (think *choice*) and the limbic system (think *automatic*).
- Childhood trauma can disrupt the ability of your limbic system and frontal lobe to work together, causing you to go numb or into overdrive.
- Childhood trauma can affect your body and the way it communicates with your brain, often leading to chronic physical and mental health issues.
- The 5 Strategies to Reclaim Hope give you the tools to strengthen your mind, your body, and the connections within them.



A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a white polka-dot shirt, is sitting on a grey couch. She is looking down at an open notebook on her lap, which she is writing in with a pen. A purple bag is visible to her left. The background is a blurred outdoor setting with buildings and a railing.

You'll find that the hardest part was getting started, and you're often motivated to finish what you start.

REBECCA SCRITCHFIELD

EXERCISE 1

Planning Ahead



Planning ahead can be an effective tool in making your healing a priority. When you write down even one reminder of what you'd like to focus on today, tomorrow, or the rest of this week you're not just creating a plan, you're strengthening the connection between your limbic system and frontal lobe.

Making conscious choices, such as planning, tracking, and following through, strengthens your frontal lobe. This added strength can positively impact both your limbic system and your body because it helps to build new connections in your brain. As you look ahead and act on these plans, you may find that you can create positive memories and experiences. Over time and with consistent care, these brain connections will get stronger and you'll feel more empowered to act on the plans and dreams you have.

Activity Steps

1. **Refer to the weekly planning sheet provided for this activity.**
2. **As you anticipate the upcoming week, select at least one question that stands out to you and write down an answer.**
 - What is one thing I want to focus on this week to progress on my healing journey? What can I do to achieve that?



For more about identifying what is important to you and the future you want, see the "Looking Ahead" activity on page 170 and "Creating a Vision Board" activity on page 178.

- What is one thing I'm looking forward to this week?
- What is one new experience I would like to have this week?
- What is one reassurance I can give myself this week?
- What might I struggle with this week, and how can I plan ahead so I can handle it in a healthy way?
- Who can I reach out to for support?



If you're feeling overwhelmed by the idea of filling out this planning sheet, feel free to write down just one thing that you think will help you on your healing journey this week.

3. On the weekly planning sheet, write down anything that you think will help you in the upcoming week. This might be notes, goals, events, reminders, etc.

If you would like more guidance on what to plan, consider including:

- One activity from this workbook that you'd like to focus on.
- One thing that you're looking forward to, whether it will occur this week or not.
- One new experience that you would like to have.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

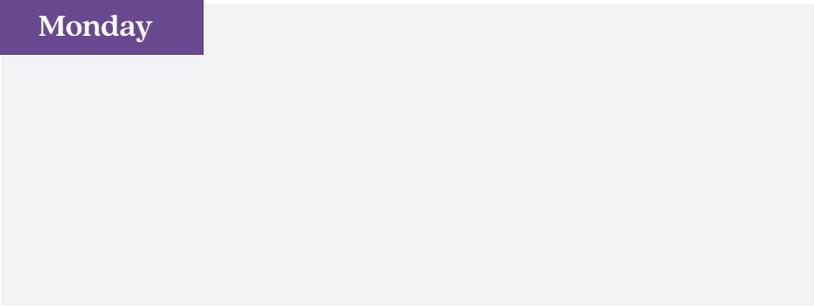
Along with planning, tracking, and goal setting, another activity that engages your frontal lobe and limbic system is reflection. **When your week is over, look back and reflect on the thoughts**

you had that guided your planning. Pick at least one of the following questions that stands out to you and write down your answer:

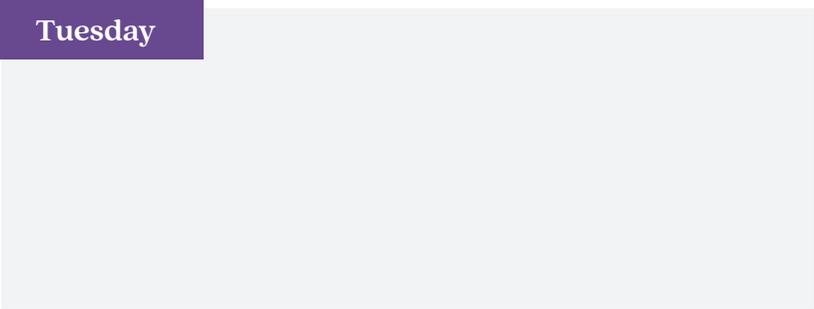
- What is something I enjoyed doing this last week?
- On a scale of 1-10 (1=This week was challenging, 10=This week was great) how was this week? What could I do next week to move my number just one degree higher?
- How did my body feel this week?
- What relationships did I strengthen this week?
- How did I sleep?
- What was my best moment from this week?

Weekly Planning Sheet

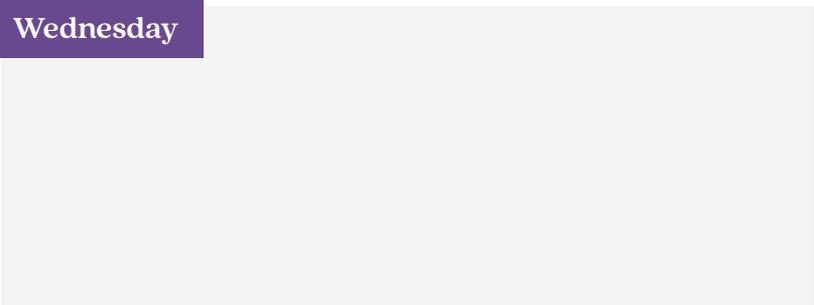
Monday



Tuesday



Wednesday



Thursday

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for notes or reflections for the day of Thursday.

Friday

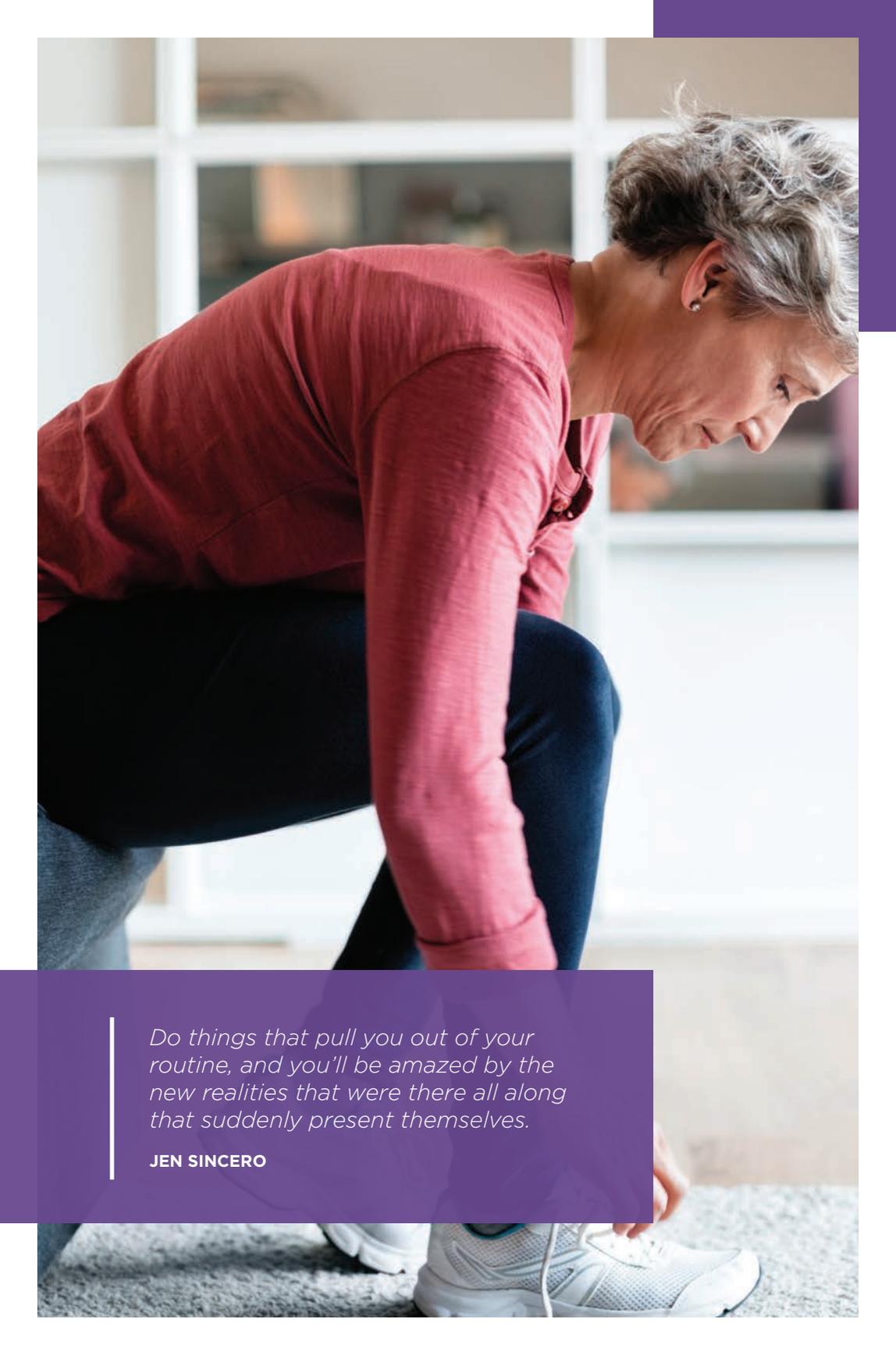
A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for notes or reflections for the day of Friday.

Saturday

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for notes or reflections for the day of Saturday.

Sunday

A large, empty light gray rectangular area intended for notes or reflections for the day of Sunday.



Do things that pull you out of your routine, and you'll be amazed by the new realities that were there all along that suddenly present themselves.

JEN SINCERO

EXERCISE 2

Taking Conscious Action



Almost any activity can take on an automatic nature when we do it often enough. This is an amazing ability your brain has which helps you become more efficient and can help build habits you'd like. However, when you're unaware of your automatic responses, you lose some ability to consciously make a choice. **This exercise will help you become more familiar with your automatic responses and behaviors by interrupting them with something deliberate.** It will likely feel strange at first—even with the smallest of actions—but that awkwardness means you're leaning into a challenge and your brain is adapting to something new.

Activity Steps

- 1. Think of a small and simple task that you do every day.**
- 2. Try to do this task in a way that requires you to think through the action.** If you're not sure where to begin, below are a few ideas:
 - Brush your teeth with your nondominant hand.
 - Take a new route to or from work.
 - Take a new path on your walk.

- Sit in a new spot (at a restaurant, in a classroom, at your work cafeteria, etc.).
 - Walk without swinging your arms.
 - Take the stairs instead of the elevator.
 - Change the order in which you do something (for example, before checking your emails at work, get coffee instead).
 - Eat with your nondominant hand.
- 3. As you carry out your old task in a new way, notice the focus it takes when the action is no longer automatic.**
- 4. Once you've completed your task, write down your answers to the following questions:**
- How did doing this task differently feel? Why?
 - What did I notice?
 - How can I apply this exercise in other areas of my life? How can I be less automatic and more purposeful in the things I do?

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Now that you've practiced adjusting your approach to something small and concrete in your life, you may want to **try applying this exercise to your emotional habits and routines.** Do you have a typical way that you react to certain situations? Is there a way to make your reaction more conscious? For example, if you typically arrive home and yell at your dog for making a mess on the kitchen floor, notice this automatic reaction and try a different way to respond—like taking several deep breaths before coming through the door. Or, if you tend to avoid making eye contact with people in public, try smiling at someone. Notice how this shift in your usual emotional response might feel strange, but now that you're more aware of your subconscious actions you can take a more conscious approach.

Option #2

There are a lot of activities in this workbook where you can apply this concept. A few that you can try are:

- “Assertive Communication” (page 84)
- “Challenging Unproductive Thoughts” (page 90)
- “Practicing Boundaries” (page 120)



There's practically no element of our lives that's not improved by getting adequate sleep.

ARIANA HUFFINGTON

EXERCISE 3

Creating a Sleep Routine



Many survivors of sexual abuse report experiencing difficulties with sleep. As we discuss in the Trauma and the Brain chapter in the *Reclaim Hope* book, the limbic system tends to activate when it's reminded of things connected to past trauma. For many survivors, their trauma or trauma symptoms are connected to sleep and the things associated with sleep, which could lead to disrupted sleep. However, through conscious, deliberate steps you can retrain your limbic system to have more positive and relaxed associations with sleep.

Sleep hygiene is a set of habits, actions, and behaviors that can prepare and train both your mind and body for restful sleep. The activity below is designed to help you develop good sleep hygiene and, when done regularly, these conscious actions can influence your subconscious functions toward better sleep over time.

Activity Steps

1. Reflect on your current nighttime routine. What do you typically do before bed?
Write down a list of your general nighttime practices, whether you think of them as your “routine” or not.
2. **Go through your list and identify what habits you want to keep and what habits you'd like to remove from your routine.**

It might help to go through each step and ask yourself, “Is this helping me relax and prepare for sleep?” Cross out anything that you feel is unhelpful.

- 3. Next, decide if there is anything you want to add into your routine that will be beneficial to your sleep hygiene.** What habits or actions sound relaxing? What will help you establish closure to your day and send cues to your body and mind that it's time to wind down? Here are a few ideas:
 - Take a bath or warm shower.
 - Read a book instead of looking at a screen.
 - Meditate.
 - Mindfully wash your face and brush your teeth.
 - Tidy up.
 - Lay out your clothes for the next day.
 - Write in a journal about your day.
- 4. After you've identified what you want to include in your nighttime routine, organize them into a sequence that seems most appealing to you.** For example, maybe you want to wash your face, brush your teeth, lay out your clothes for the next day, and then meditate.
- 5. Try out your personalized sleep hygiene list when you're winding down before bed.** As you go through your list, think: “I'm closing out the day with this.”

- 6. Adjust your routine as you explore what works best for you.** On occasion, you may want to revisit your list of nighttime routine steps and see if there's anything new you want to try. Remember, this routine exists to serve your needs, and those needs may change and evolve.

Deepen Your Experience

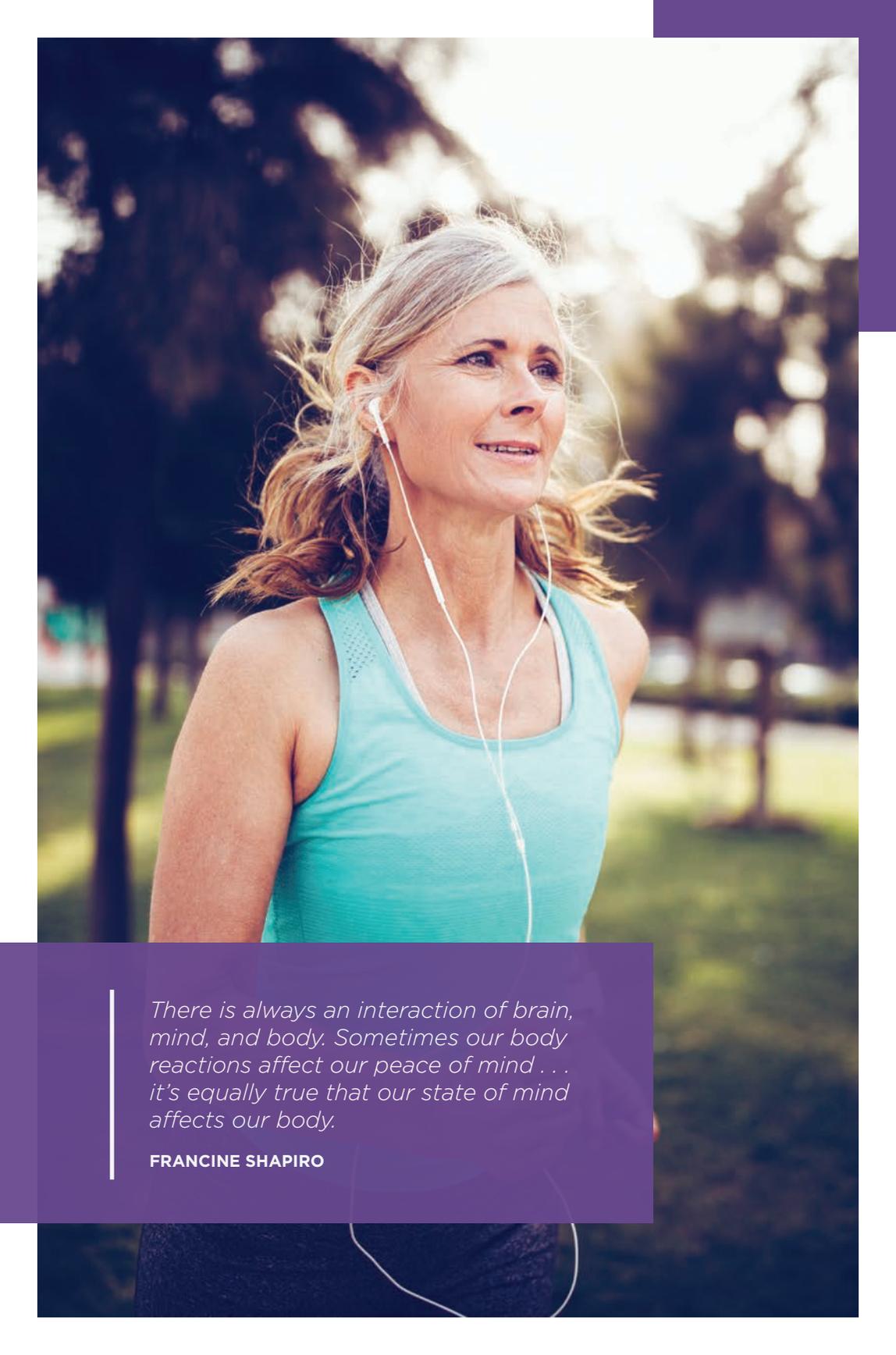
Option #1

You may want to explore adding nighttime writing into your routine. **Nighttime writing is writing down any intrusive or recurring thoughts that might be keeping you from falling asleep or staying asleep.** This helps you to consciously file away those disruptive thoughts in a safe place and may soothe any subconscious worries that lead to sleep difficulties. You can try it out with these steps:

- 1. Keep a notepad next to your bed.**
- 2. Write down any recurring thoughts or worries you might have as you're falling asleep, even if it's just a couple of words.**
- 3. Affirm to yourself that those thoughts have been written down and you can deal them with later.**
- 4. In the morning, review what you wrote on your notepad** to determine if there's anything you need to handle today or write down somewhere more permanent.
- 5. Turn to a blank page for the next night.** Over time you'll be able to look back and see any patterns, new ideas, or important details.



You can learn more about expressive writing on page 70.



There is always an interaction of brain, mind, and body. Sometimes our body reactions affect our peace of mind . . . it's equally true that our state of mind affects our body.

FRANCINE SHAPIRO

EXERCISE 4

Movement and Your Brain

**Disclaimer:**

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

Because trauma lives in the body and the brain, getting your body moving can benefit both your mental and physical health. Physical movement impacts your body's hormones and nervous systems which in turn can positively influence your brain function, energy level, sleep quality, PTSD symptoms, depression, anxiety, and stress levels. Many survivors find that getting their bodies moving provides an amazing opportunity for them to reconnect with their body and work through "stuck" emotions and thoughts.

Even knowing all of these benefits, the limbic system can still make finding the motivation to exercise difficult. **This activity is about recognizing that there is a physical activity out there that you (and your limbic system) will enjoy, physically, mentally, and emotionally.** The key is finding what fits for you and making a plan that will help you incorporate it into your life.



If you're not someone who often exercises, any type of movement that you implement into your life should benefit your body and your brain. However, you should check with your medical professional before engaging in a new form of exercise.



You might also want to refer to the "Movement and Martial Arts" activity on page 112 for more ideas.

Activity Steps

1. **Explore.** What's a type of exercise or movement that you would be open to exploring? Is there a physical activity that you've always wanted to try? For example, maybe you want to try rock climbing or surfing or frisbee throwing. Or maybe you like the idea of simply walking around your neighborhood. Write down some physical activities that sound fun to you or that you would like to do more of.
2. **Try one, then review.** Try out one of the ideas on your list. As you do, notice how your limbic system responds to the activity. How did the exercise make you feel before, during, after, and much later? What thoughts or emotions (if any) were released? If this one didn't work out, don't give up. There are many other ways for you to explore movement and exercise.
3. **Plan and overcome barriers.** If you find something that you do enjoy, plan how to incorporate it into your life. As you begin (or continue) to implement physical activity as a part of your healing, obstacles will arise, and that's okay. First, identify what barrier you have, and then utilize your frontal lobe and find creative solutions to help you overcome it.
 - Example Barrier: "I don't feel like doing this right now."
 - Example Solutions: "Invite a friend to join me and hold me accountable," "Just take one step toward my goal today," or "Find a different activity that still gets me moving, but sounds fun right now."

- 4. Keep trying.** Continue exploring new things or try switching up old ideas to better suit your personal enjoyment and current needs. For example, you might dislike cardio at the gym, but you enjoy breaking a sweat while gardening in your backyard and blasting your favorite song.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Stretching can be a good alternative— particularly if you have health concerns, there's bad weather, or you're short on time. Apply the above method to find stretches you enjoy. Stretching can be particularly effective before going to bed. You could also check out the "Yoga" activity on page 144 for more ideas on different stretches and poses.

Option #2

Incorporate Mindfulness (from Strategy 4) into your physical activity or exercise. If unhelpful thoughts arise, redirect those thoughts to an encouraging mantra, focus on your surrounding environment, or think about an anchor you choose (page 130 for reference).



*Make food choices that honor
your health and taste buds
while making you feel good.*

EVELYN TRIBOLE

EXERCISE 5

Nutrition, Your Brain, and Your Body



It can be easy to think of your body and brain as separate when, in actuality, they are interconnected—especially when it comes to what you eat. For instance, nutrition not only affects your body and how you feel physically but it impacts your brain as well. It can affect your mental state, your judgment, and your ability to focus and think clearly. In turn, your brain can influence what you choose to eat. For example, your food choices may be driven by your limbic system and its emotional ties, cravings, and habits. Other times, when you make more intentional choices about what to eat and how it will benefit you, those choices are more informed by your frontal lobe.

This activity is about observing the food choices you make, how those choices are linked to your limbic system and/or frontal lobe, and how each food choice makes you feel. Tracking and noticing these details will help you better understand how closely your mind and body are connected and how your brain—particularly the limbic system and its emotional ties to certain foods—informs, relates to, and responds to what’s on your plate.

Activity Steps

- 1. Keep track of what you eat for one day.**
It might be helpful to keep a record in a notebook.

2. An hour or two after eating your snack, consider the following questions:

- How did I feel (mentally and physically) immediately after eating my snack?
- How do I feel (mentally and physically) right now?
- How do these feelings compare to how other foods make me feel?
- What role did my limbic system play in this experience? (Was I motivated by boredom, comfort, excitement, celebration, etc.?)
- What role did my frontal lobe play in this experience? (Was I motivated by planning, intention, forethought, etc.?)

3. Use the information you gathered to reflect on the following questions:

- Based on your observations, what foods led to feelings of energy, pleasantness, or satisfaction? What foods resulted in feelings of irritability, lethargy, or discomfort?
- What does healthy nutrition look like for you and where you are right now in your healing journey?
- Are there any changes (big or small) that you want to make after doing this activity? Write them down.
 - i. Example: "Today, for lunch I'm going to eat until my body lets me know that I feel full."*

- ii. Example: "I'm going to intentionally set aside time for a lunch break no matter how busy my schedule is today."*

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

As you observe what you eat, consider the possible external influences in your everyday life (such as the media, family traditions, or subconscious habits) that might affect what you choose to eat. Did you choose to eat something based on something you saw or heard? What messages might the media be sending you about food? In what way might these messages be helpful or harmful?

As you reflect on these questions, write down your thoughts. You may also choose to identify other influences on your relationship with food. Are these influences helpful or unhelpful? How does your frontal lobe or limbic system respond to these influences?

Option #2

Think about the types of food you want to consume more or less of. If you want to make a significant change in your diet or eating habits but aren't sure where to start, consider seeing a professional nutritionist to educate yourself and help you develop a plan.



STRATEGY

1

Awareness

Be Present

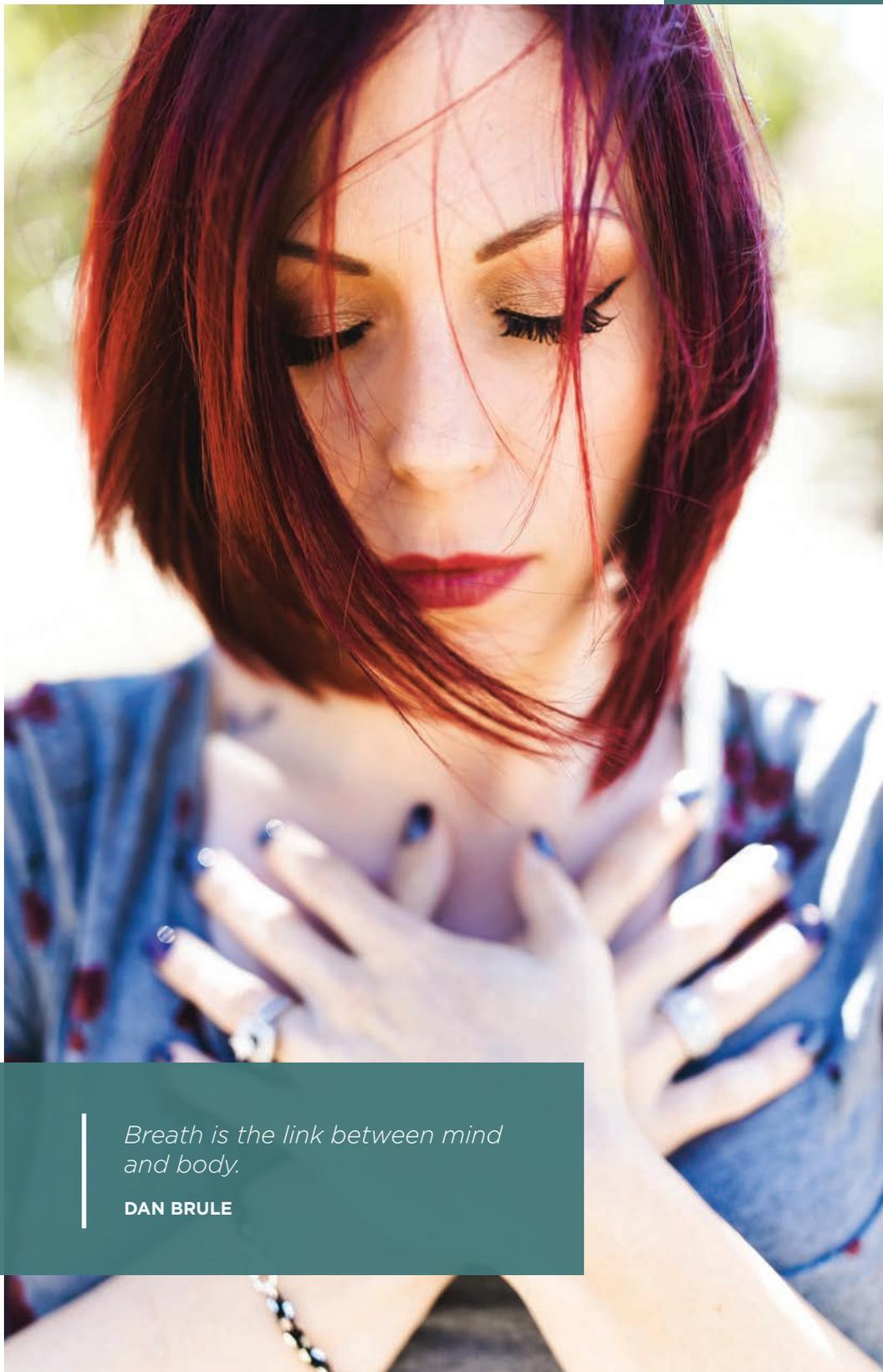
*This journey isn't about becoming
a different person. It's about
loving who you are right now.*

SUZANNE HEYN

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- Awareness is being physically and emotionally present in the moment.
- Awareness allows you to become more attentive to what you are feeling from moment to moment, so you can learn how to manage those feelings.
- Awareness can help combat dissociation—when you mentally transport yourself to somewhere else because where you are is too painful.
- Awareness utilizes grounding techniques to make sure that you are living more fully in the now.





*Breath is the link between mind
and body.*

DAN BRULE

EXERCISE 1

Paced Breathing



Think of your breath as an anchor that holds you to the present moment. Your breathing serves you right now, in this moment. You cannot take breaths for the past or for the future—only for your present needs. **Becoming more aware of your breathing can help you calm yourself and draw your attention to the here and now.** Giving your breath a steady pace to breathe to can help you and your body focus on this moment and the connection with your breath.

This activity is meant to help you become aware of your heartbeat and direct your breathing. As you go through each step, allow yourself to observe your breathing with patience and kindness.

Activity Steps

- 1. Find a peaceful place where you won't be disturbed for about five minutes and lie down on your back.** You can leave your eyes opened or closed.
- 2. Take a moment to get comfortable and focus on your emotions.** Rest a hand on your chest or stomach if it helps you feel calm.
- 3. Inhale through your nose, counting four heartbeats. 1, 2, 3, 4**
- 4. Hold your breath, counting two heartbeats. 1, 2**
- 5. Exhale through your nose, counting six heartbeats. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6**

- 6. Repeat this for five minutes, or if you are using it to help manage a trigger, repeat this as many times as it takes for you to feel grounded in the present moment.** As your heartbeats slow, your breathing will get deeper, continuing to calm you.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

There's more than one way to practice paced breathing. What might be comfortable for someone else might not be the most comfortable for you. Try experimenting with a pace that works best for you. For example, rather than doing the 4-2-6 rhythm as suggested above, you might try 4-3-4. You could also try experimenting with timing, breathing to music, breathing to footsteps, or focusing on a different sensation (e.g., finger tapping). Another option is to trace your fingers as you breathe, tracing upwards along your finger on each inhale and tracing downwards on each exhale.

Option #2

As you practice your paced breathing, try using words instead of numbers to keep track of your pace. Select words or phrases that are meaningful to you and will match the 4-2-6 count. This repeated phrase could also be used as a personal motto or mental anchor that empowers you throughout the day (see the "Choose an Anchor" activity on page 130).

You may need to experiment with the combinations of words you try out until you

find a combination that matches the 4-2-6 pattern and feels right for you. Feel free to add another word or two to your sequence if you find you need more time on either the inhale or the exhale. It may also help to write down your selected words and read them silently as you inhale and exhale.

If you would like more suggestions on empowering words to use, refer to our list on page 172.

Example

Inhale: Peace, Joy, Mindful

Hold breath: Calming

Exhale: I feel hope and courage.



*I think this is how we're
supposed to be in the world—
present and in awe.*

ANNE LAMOTT

EXERCISE 2

Anchoring to This Moment



When you practice Awareness, you are learning to anchor yourself to the present moment. This allows you to be in tune with what you're feeling and experiencing *now*. By doing this, you can be aware of what you need in this moment—whether it's calming your body's breathing, soothing racing thoughts of the past or future, or reminding your limbic system that you are in a safe place.

One technique that can help you connect (or anchor) to the present is actively focusing on details that let you know you aren't currently experiencing something from the past or that might happen in the future. This allows you to separate now from then, and can help you come back to the present where you can take action. Below are eight questions or statements to help.

Activity Steps

- 1. Take a minute to go through the following list of questions.** Pick one that you can practice in this moment and then try out the next time you are experiencing panic, stress, or other uncomfortable feelings. If possible, state the answer out loud to yourself or, if you're around other people, you can recite it in your head.
 - Where am I right now?
 - What's the time, day, and date?

- What temperature does it feel like?
 - What am I doing right now? (“I’m on my way home from work . . .” or “I’m working on a project . . .” etc.)
 - What am I feeling in my body right now? Focus on each sensation.
 - What emotion am I experiencing right now? What words would you use to describe your feelings?
 - Pick a color and notice everything around you that is that color.
 - Pick an object in your line of sight and focus on every detail of that object (the shape, the texture, the size).
- 2. After you’ve asked yourself at least one of these questions and stated the answer out loud, ask yourself, “What do I need in this moment?”**

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

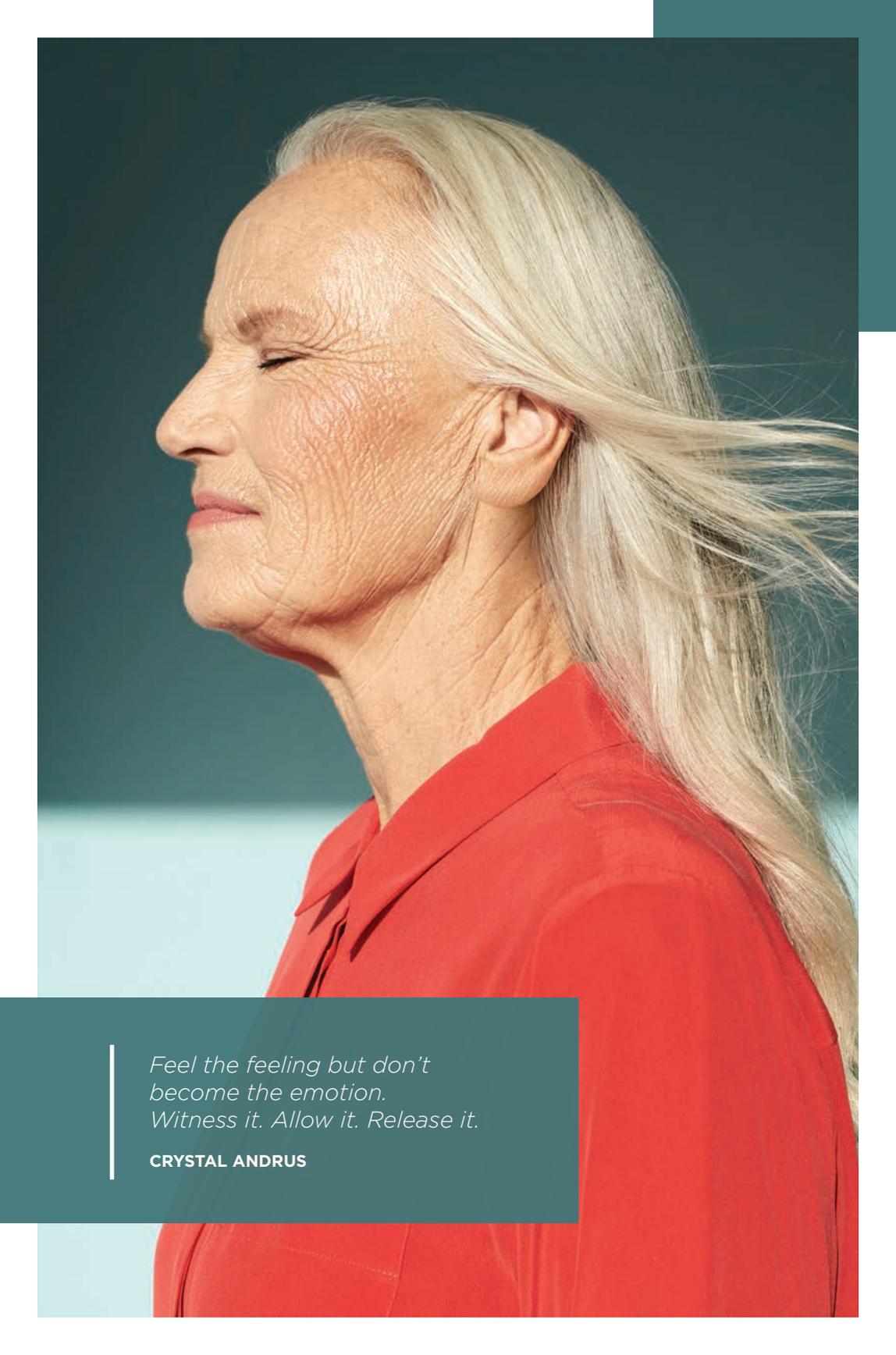
Another option to help you connect to the present is focusing on the details of a person.

Do you know what color of eyes your partner, children, or best friend have? The next time you speak with them, look into their eyes and notice the color. Strive to be fully present with them and expand on the things you notice—the color of their clothes or the way the light shines on their hair. You’ll begin to see things you’ve never noticed.

Option #2

Dive deeper into one of the above questions by pairing it with another activity from this chapter, such as the:

- “Emotion Wheel” activity (page 48), which can help you answer the question, “What emotion am I feeling right now?”
- “Body Scan” activity (page 56), which can help you answer, “What am I feeling in my body right now?”
- “Paced Breathing” activity (page 40), which you can implement while thinking about your answers.



*Feel the feeling but don't
become the emotion.
Witness it. Allow it. Release it.*

CRYSTAL ANDRUS

EXERCISE 3

Emotion Wheel



Oftentimes, it's easy to recognize what causes physical changes in our bodies. For example, lifting weights may cause our arms to feel sore the next day, or tripping on the sidewalk may cause a scraped knee. But sometimes our bodies can experience physical changes as a response to something harder to identify: our emotions. For example, you might feel a rush of blood to the head because you're angry, or your hands might shake because you're excited.

It's also possible to experience multiple emotions at one time, even emotions that seem to be opposites of each other. For example, if you find an important picture on your phone that you thought had been deleted, you may feel both relieved that the picture wasn't lost and annoyed at the stress you had gone through thinking it was lost in the first place.

Every emotion you experience is important—even the ones you don't enjoy—because it's trying to tell you something. Perhaps your stomach knots up when you attend certain family events because you feel anxiety about those interactions. **Building Awareness by labeling the different emotions you are experiencing, both mentally and physically, will help you understand how the world around you makes you feel and why you may be feeling that way.**

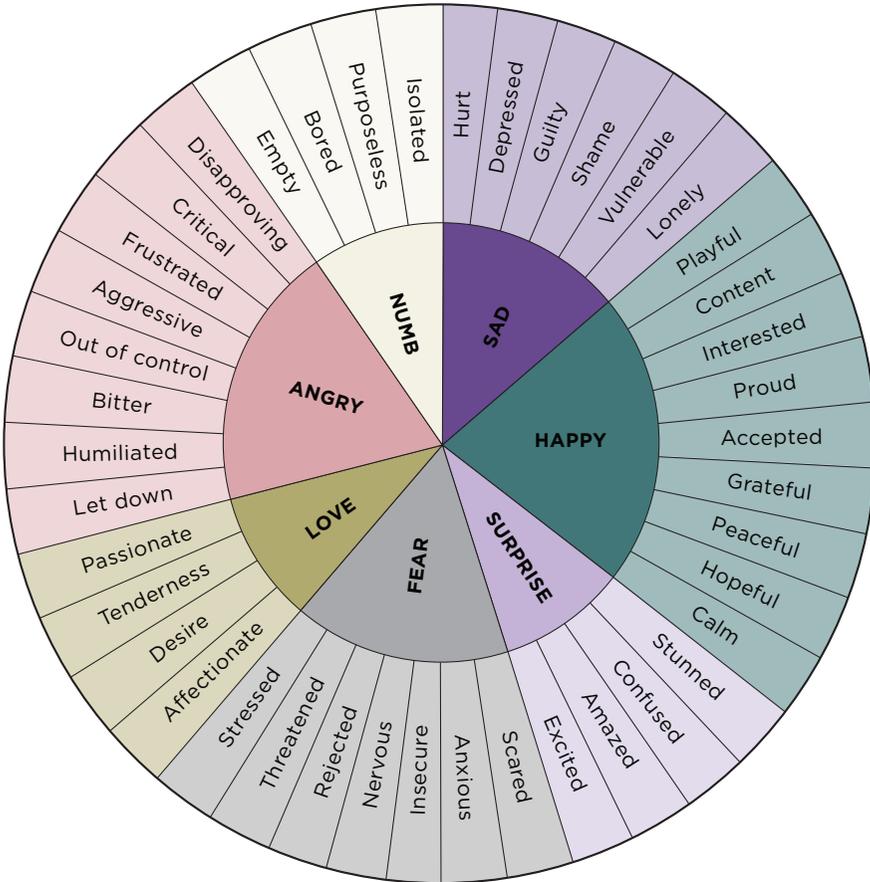
Activity Steps

Use the Emotion Wheel and the questions below to identify the emotions you are currently experiencing. You aren't trying to "fix" or change your emotions, only become more aware of them.

- What do I feel in my body? Where does this emotion show up physically?
- What word or words would I use to describe my emotion(s)?
- Is there anything happening around me that is connected to the emotion?
- When did I start feeling this emotion?
- How does this feeling change as time goes on?

If you'd like to add an emotion that's not included in our Emotion Wheel, feel free to write on the graphic.

Wheel of Emotions



Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

After each check-in, you might want to mark down the emotions you feel in a chart or calendar to create an emotion tracker. This tracker can help you identify emotional patterns, combinations, and the possible causes behind them.

To take it a step further, you could use your tracker to identify the six emotions you experience most frequently. You can then place those six emotions in a more personalized Emotion Wheel and visually represent each emotion with different shapes and/or colors (see example on the following page). We recommend you leave a space in this wheel for pleasant emotions that you may gradually become more aware of or experience alongside other emotions.

Option #2

Deepen your understanding of your emotions by describing how they make you feel in an “It feels as if” statement. Exploring them in this way can help you find new ways to describe your emotional experience(s).

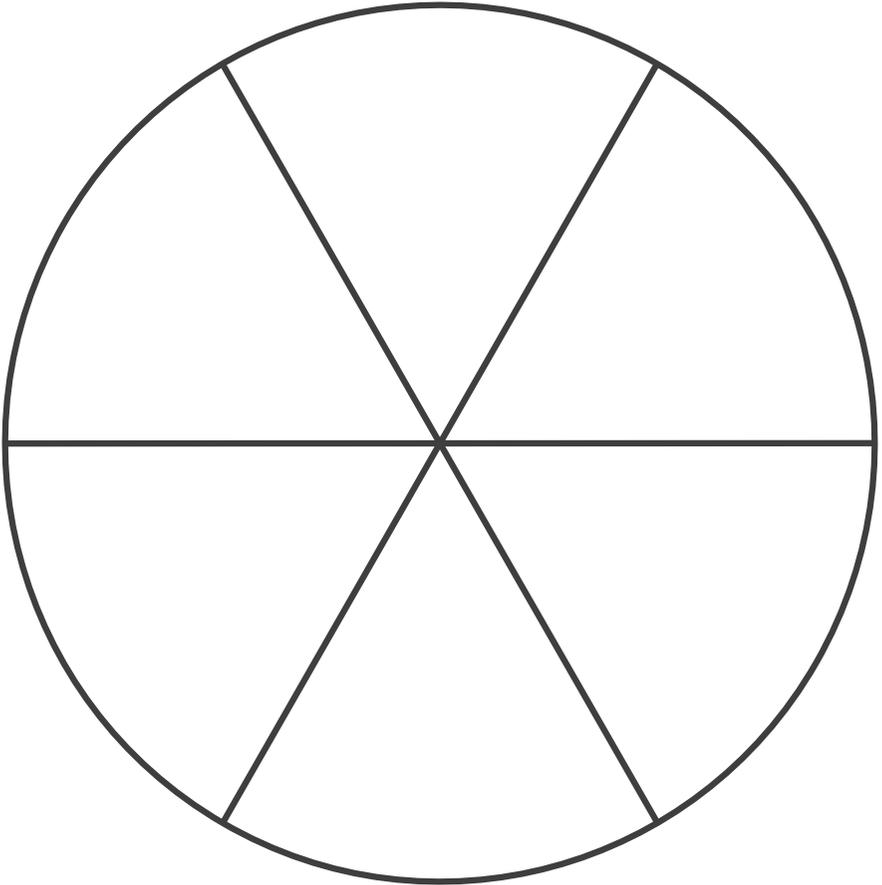
Examples:

- **Restlessness:** It feels as if a jolt of electricity is surging through my legs.
- **Guilt:** It feels as if I’ve swallowed a brick of ice that’s never going to melt.
- **Excitement:** It feels as if a hummingbird is fluttering in my chest.

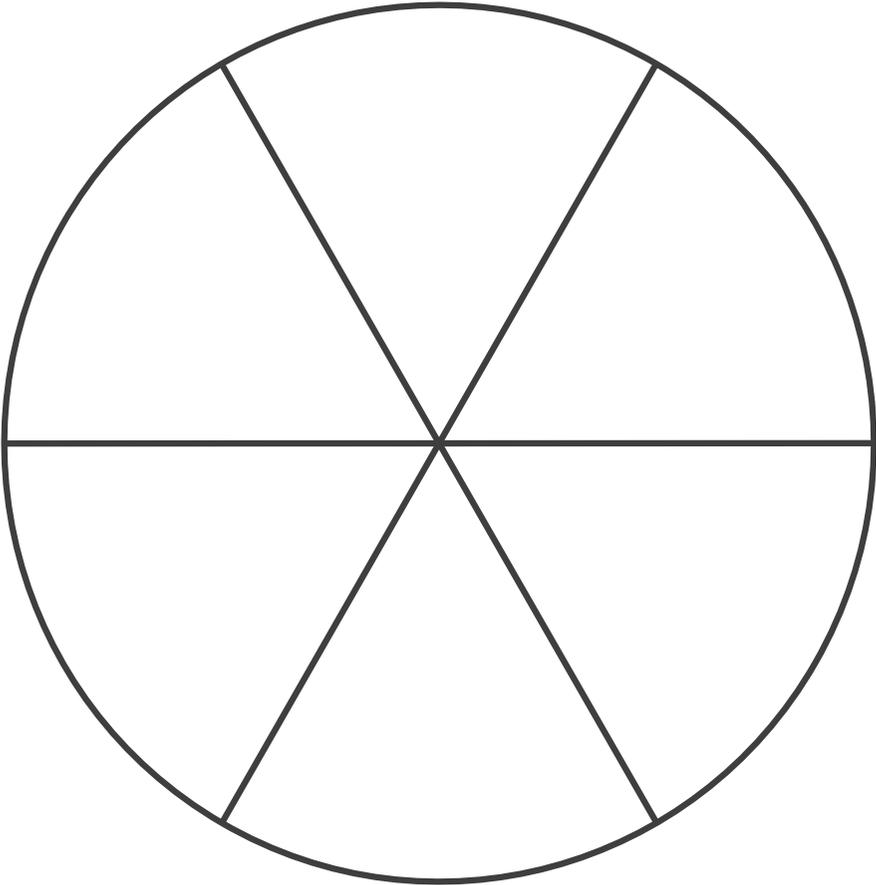
Example:

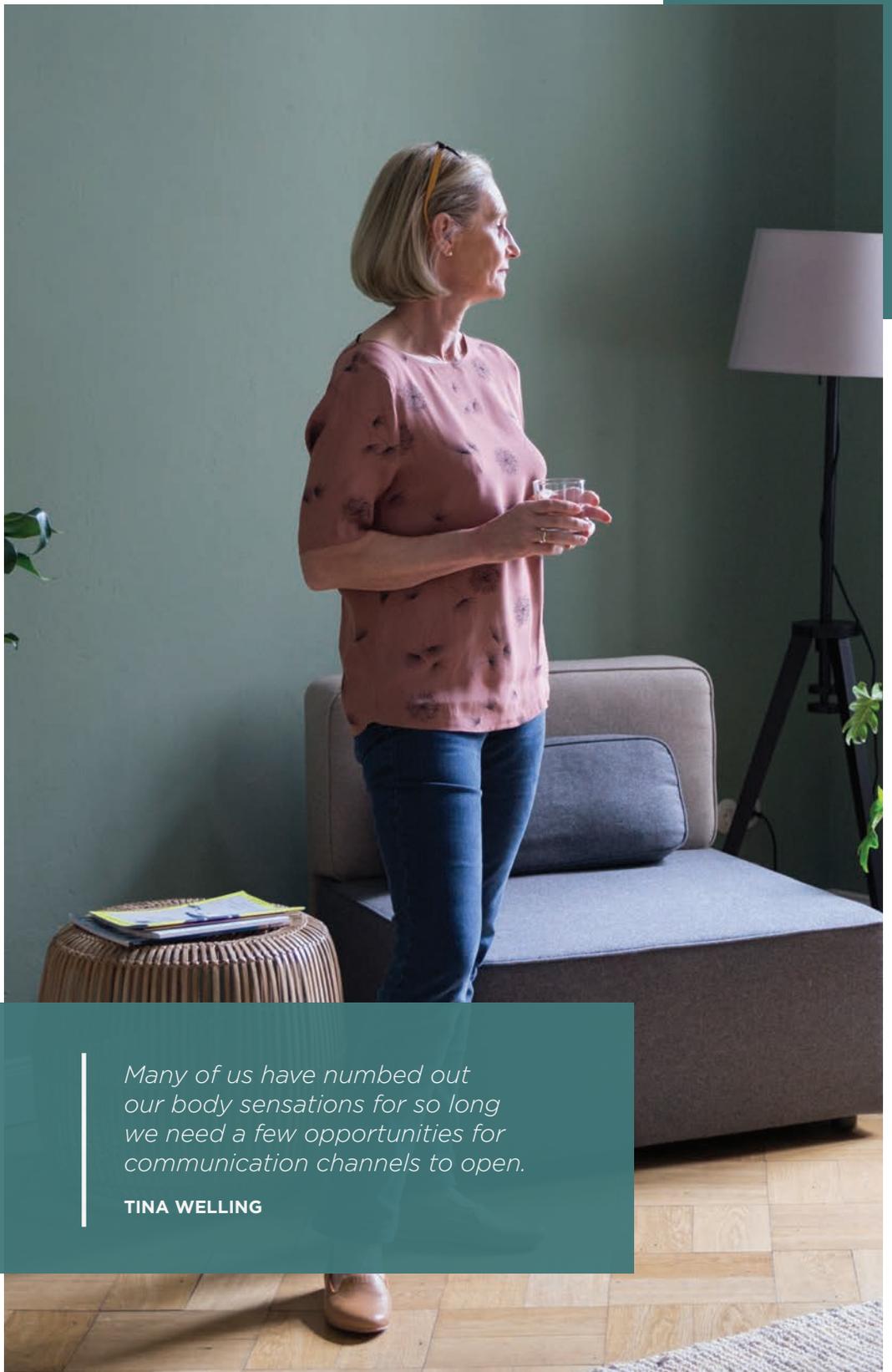


My Emotion Wheel



My Emotion Wheel





*Many of us have numbed out
our body sensations for so long
we need a few opportunities for
communication channels to open.*

TINA WELLING

EXERCISE 4

Body Scan



Trauma can create disconnection between your mind and your body. Initially, this disconnection may have helped you cope with the abuse and overwhelming sensations you experienced in your childhood. As an adult, disconnection can make it difficult to fully heal and thrive. Connection with your body is still possible, especially when you can help your body and mind feel safe.

The purpose of a body scan is to help you reconnect—to get to know your body so you can work with it instead of against it on your healing journey. Body scans help build Awareness in the various sensations, emotional responses, and intuitions your body experiences. It can also help reassure you that you are not fixed in a permanent, traumatized state. Although you may sometimes feel discomfort, body scans help you stay present and pay attention to how the sensations in your body shift and change.

Activity Steps

1. **Settle into a comfortable position, preferably in a place where you won't be disrupted.**
2. **Take note of your surroundings, including the space, temperature, sounds, and smells.** Approach this exercise from a place of curiosity, rather than judgment.

3. **Start with your breath.** Note the rising and falling of your chest, the swell of your lungs. After a few breaths, expand your focus to other areas of your body.
4. **Slowly scan from toe to head.** Give each part of your body a chance to be noticed:
 - Toes, balls of your feet, heels, ankles, calves, knees, thighs and hips.
 - Fingers, palms, wrists, forearms, biceps, and shoulders.
 - Stomach, lungs, heart, chest, and neck.
 - Forehead, cheeks, jaw, and muscles around your eyes.
5. **Notice if there are any areas where stress or tension is being stored.** Likewise, take note of any areas that feel relaxed.
6. **Once you finish, give yourself a moment to reflect on your body's current state.**
7. **After the body scan, consider the following questions:**
 - What do you notice in your body?
 - Do you notice any differences in one part of your body compared to another part of your body?
 - Do you notice your body feeling any different than it did during your last body scan?

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

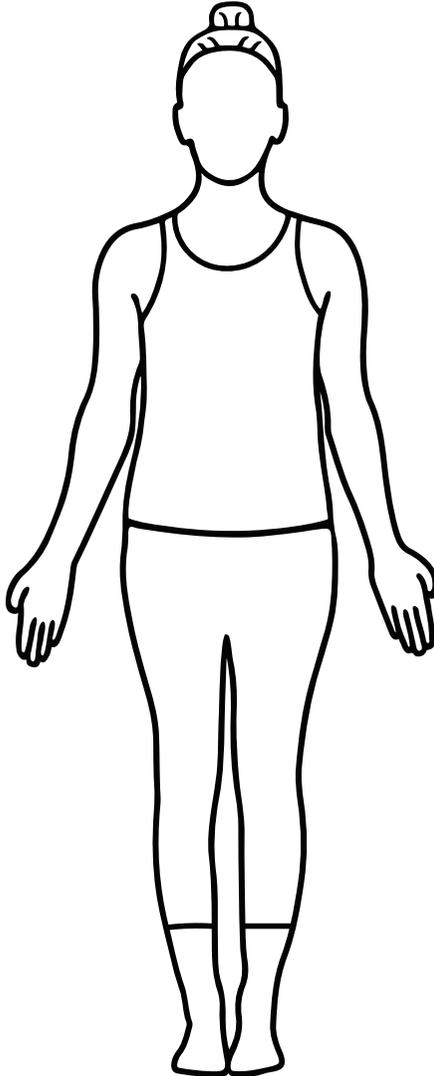
During the body scan, you may choose to use visualization to give shape to what you're feeling. For example, you could choose a color that represents how each body part feels. Illustrate the various colors of each area in the body outline provided on the next page. You could then assess if any colors have changed since your last body scan.

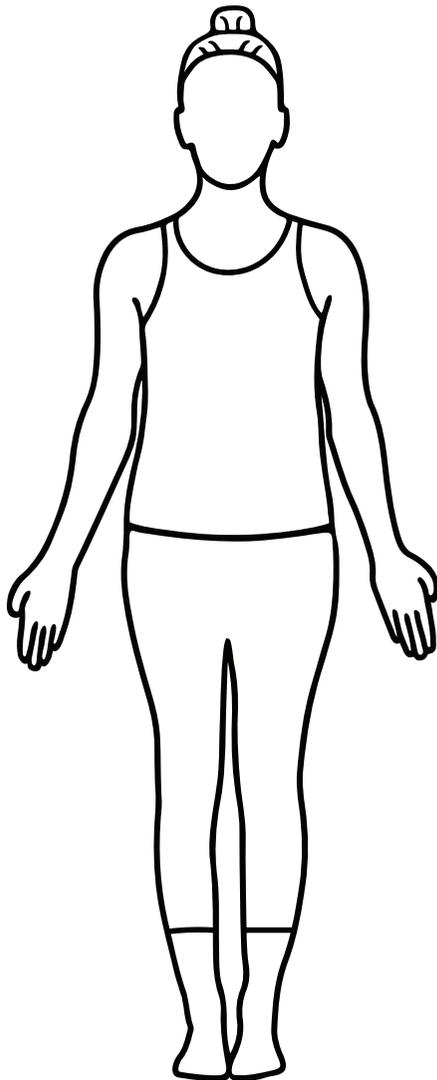
Option #2

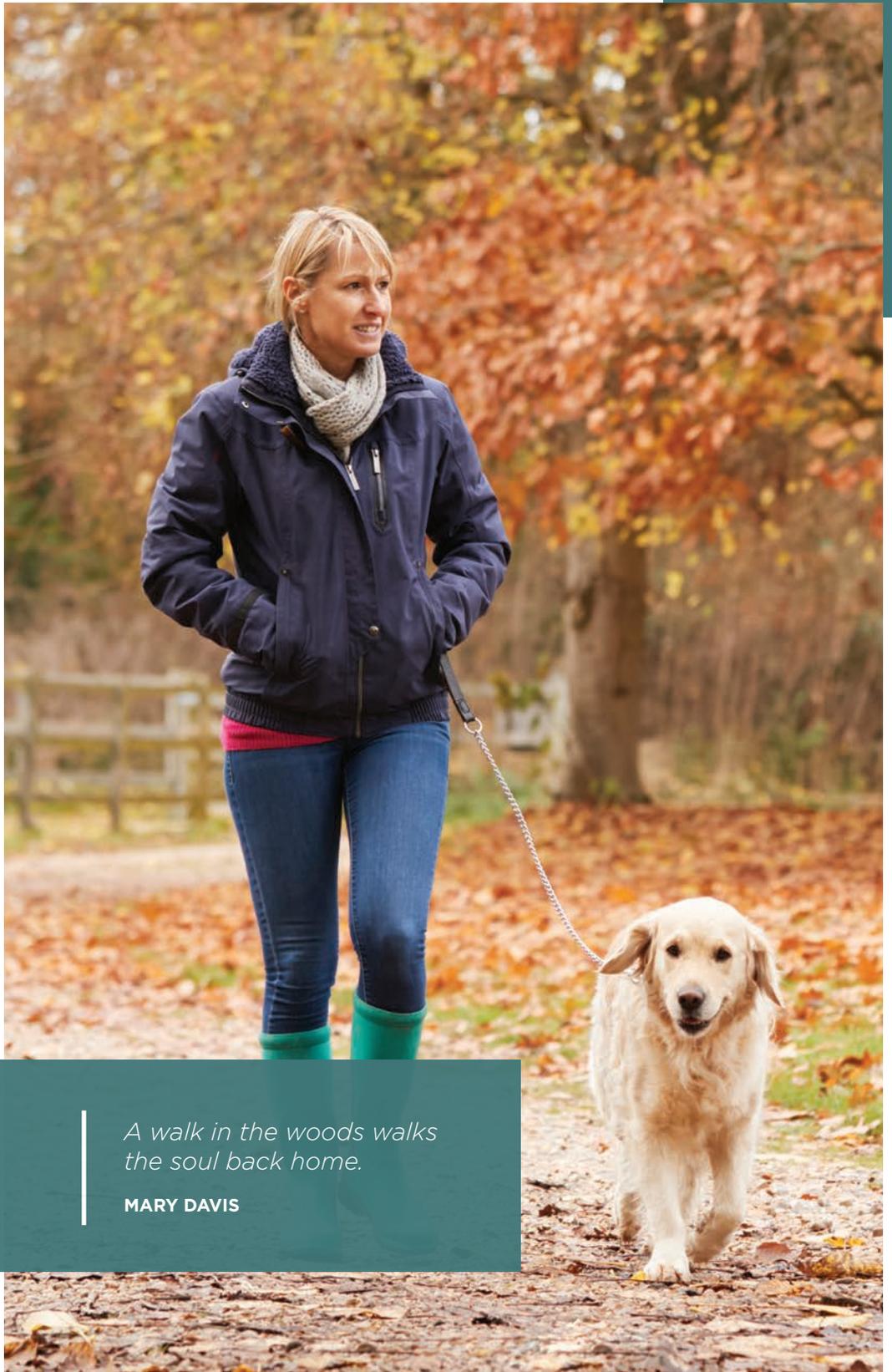
Create a more personalized body scan that will better suit your preferences and the areas of your body you feel need the most attention. You can also record yourself reading the body scan steps so that you are guided by your own voice.

Body Scan

Circle, color, or otherwise illustrate different areas of your body based on your overall impressions and sensations of your body scan.







*A walk in the woods walks
the soul back home.*

MARY DAVIS

EXERCISE 5

Walking with Awareness

**Disclaimer:**

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

Walking can be a powerful part of your healing journey, benefiting both your physical and mental health. When you incorporate the principles of Awareness into your walking, it becomes even more powerful. **The simple action of taking a walk becomes healing as it strengthens the connection between your mind and body.** It also gives you the chance to quiet any stressful thought patterns by focusing only on the present—the setting around you, the senses you experience on your walk, the movement of your body, etc.

In this activity, you get to determine your own pace. If all you can do is walk around the block, that's where you start. The distance you cover or the time that you spend on your walk is not as important as utilizing Awareness as you go. Walking provides a consistent rhythm in your feet, a calming effect that can help with depression and anxiety, and an opportunity to step away from multitasking. In addition, when you walk outdoors you experience a change in environment and a chance to allow your surroundings to recharge your senses.

Activity Steps

- 1. Begin by taking a few deep, cleansing breaths and notice how you feel.** Notice the weight of your feet on the ground and the sensations of your feet.
- 2. Say to yourself, “I’m going on a healing walk.”**
- 3. While walking, do one of the activities below.** Keep in mind that the activities are not intended to be done at the same time. Do one and then move to another.
 - **Carry a pen and paper.** Take notes about what you see, hear, or discover on your walk. You may be surprised by the insights you gain.
 - **Practice breathing techniques.** Notice your breathing as you walk. Build on what you practiced in the “Paced Breathing” activity on page 40 by counting your breaths in time to your steps. You could also imagine pleasant thoughts or feelings being inhaled and unpleasant thoughts or feelings being exhaled.
 - **Notice your surroundings.** Expand your Awareness of your surroundings by focusing on one sense at a time. What do you see, hear, smell, or feel? Pay special attention to details you might have otherwise missed.
 - **Use positive affirmations.** Combining positive statements and physical movements supports the healing process. Come up with encouraging things to say while you walk, such as, “I am strong,” “I am loveable,” “I’m grateful for...” Repeat the affirmation over and over as you walk. You may notice you walk taller, breathe deeper, and inhabit your body more fully.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Ask someone you trust to join you on your walk.

Their presence can bring new energy and a greater sense of security during the activity. You might share with them that one of the purposes of your walk is to practice Awareness. Consider discussing your sensory observations as you walk, such as the color of the sky, the feel of the breeze, or the rhythm of the sounds around you. Or, you can choose to enjoy the company of the other person while you personally incorporate moments of Awareness on your own.

While connecting with your walking partner(s) is always encouraged, don't be afraid of silence as you each take time to absorb your surroundings and work to stay connected to the present moment.

Option #2

Try switching up where you go on your walks.

Apply what you practiced in the "Taking Conscious Action" activity on page 20 into a more deliberate and intentional action. Exploring alternative routes will provide new details and settings for you to observe and will challenge you in a healthy way. As you test new routes, stay attuned with weather, road conditions, and general safety of the area. If hazards such as bad weather prevent you from walking outside, feel free to walk indoors or only walk a short distance.



STRATEGY

2

Acknowledgement

Accept Your Truth

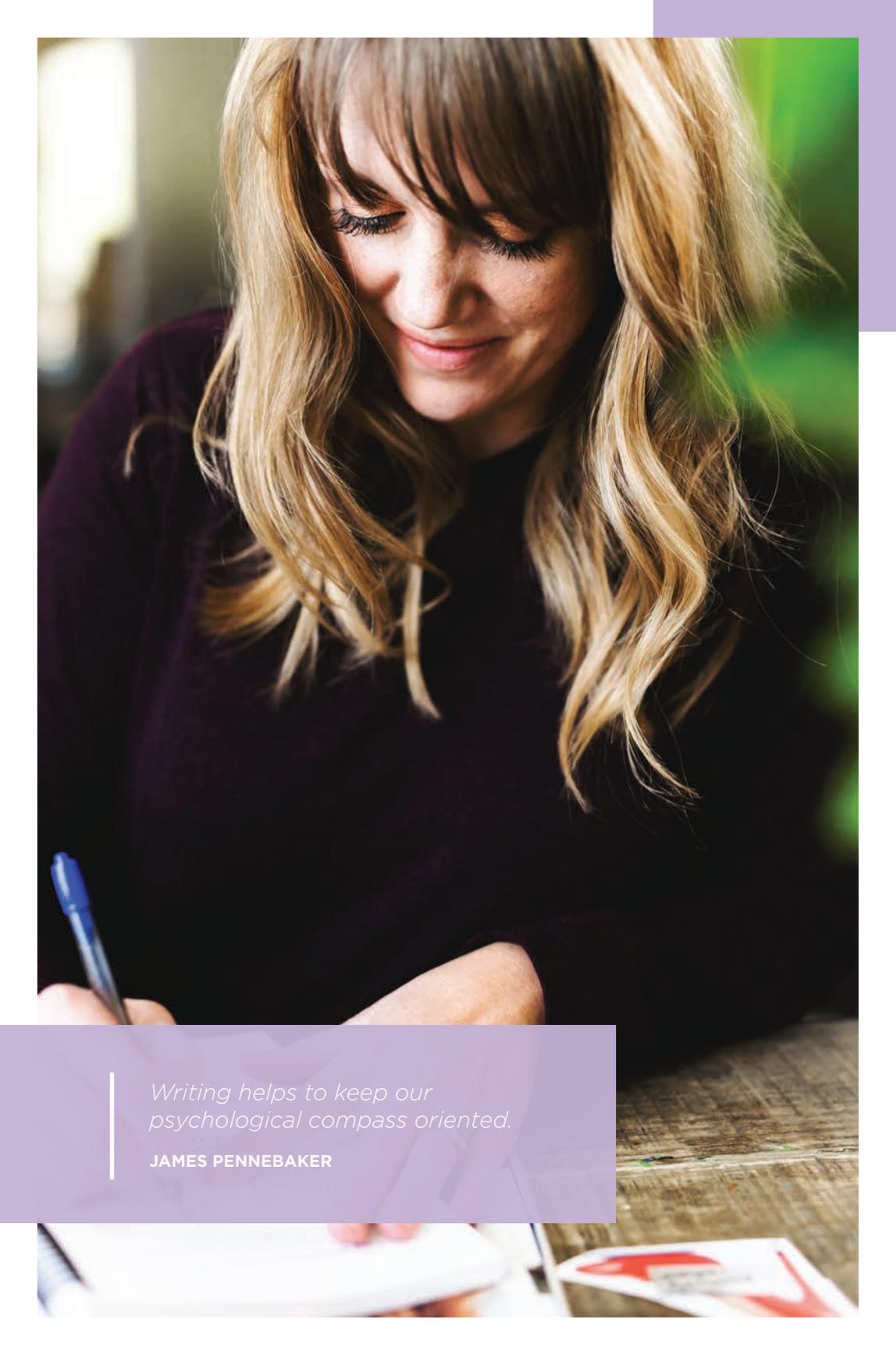
Real life isn't always going to be perfect or go our way, but the recurring acknowledgement of what is working in our lives can help us not only to survive, but surmount our difficulties.

SARAH BAN BREATHNACH

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- Acknowledgement is recognizing the reality and impact of your past trauma.
- Acknowledgement allows you to accurately see where you currently are so that you can determine the next steps you can take on your healing journey.
- Acknowledgement helps you temper limbic system responses by turning automatic responses into conscious action and bringing your truth into the light.
- Acknowledgement is often best applied with the help of another person like a trusted friend, family member, or therapist.





*Writing helps to keep our
psychological compass oriented.*

JAMES PENNEBAKER

EXERCISE 1

Intro to Expressive Writing



Expressive writing is writing freely about whatever is on your mind. It's an exercise that has been studied as a tool for trauma recovery spanning back to the 1980s and can be used for any situation or struggle you may be going through. Want a new outlet to explore the emotions and anxieties you are experiencing? Putting your thoughts into written words can release tension and pain that may be otherwise difficult to express. It may even reveal emotions you weren't aware of. Expressive writing can also enable you to sort emotions and experiences into an order or pattern that helps you make sense of them. In her book, *Writing as a Way of Healing*, Louise DeSalvo explains this further:

"We receive a shock or a blow or experience a trauma in our lives. In exploring it, examining it, and putting it into words. . . We come to feel that our lives are coherent rather than chaotic."
(43, 45)

Activity Steps

There's no right or wrong way to do expressive writing, but here's one way to try.

- 1. For 20 minutes a day for the next four days, write about something you've been thinking about.** It can be anything, as long you feel ready to write about it. Some examples might be:

- A recent argument
- A current relationship
- An upcoming event
- A past experience
- A recurring dream
- Changes occurring in your life



* As outlined in
Opening Up
by James W.
Pennebaker and
Writing as a Way
of Healing by
Louise DeSalvo

2. **Before you begin writing, here are a few tips*:**

- Find a quiet, comfortable place where you won't be distracted.
- Write continuously for the full 20 minutes, even if you feel you have nothing to write about. You can even write "I have nothing to write about," but don't stop writing.
- If you write about a specific event, be sure to include your feelings about that event.
- Give yourself permission to remember and to feel, as long as you can do so safely.
- Don't worry about spelling, grammar, sentence structure, organization, etc.
- Write for yourself and don't allow the idea of anyone else reading it to make you censor your thoughts or feelings.
- If you start to feel triggered, take a break to practice some self-care. After your break, feel out if you'd like to finish the activity to create closure, return to it

later, or work on it with someone else, like your therapist.

- Don't use these writing sessions as a substitute for taking action, seeking therapy, or seeking medical care. Although this can be helpful when done with therapy.

3. After the time is up, it might be helpful to reflect on your writing session with the following questions:

- Do I want to continue writing past the set time because I feel I've opened a door I don't want to close yet?
- Should I write about this same topic next time, or am I ready to shift toward another topic?
- How did I feel as I was writing? Do I feel any different now than before I started?
- What do I want to do with this writing? Keep it? Throw it away? Burn it? Art journal over it?

References

Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Stories Transforms Our Lives by Louise DeSalvo

Opening Up by Writing It Down: How Expressive Writing Improves Health and Eases Emotional Pain by James W. Pennebaker

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

After a few days, a week, or a month, revisit one of your pieces of expressive writing and rewrite it. What similarities or differences do you notice between the rewritten version and the original?

Option #2

If you feel this structure works for you, feel free to utilize it in other writing activities in this book, such as:

- “What Can I Control?” (page 100)
- “Anchor Through Writing” (page 134)
- “Looking Ahead” (page 170)

A photograph of two women with curly hair embracing each other. The woman on the left has grey curly hair and is wearing a blue denim shirt. The woman on the right has dark curly hair and is wearing a colorful, off-the-shoulder top with a butterfly and floral pattern. They are standing in front of a white wall with horizontal siding. A purple decorative bar is at the top right of the image.

*In healthy relationships,
you will find joy.*

NEDRA TAWWAB

EXERCISE 2

Assessing a Relationship



An important aspect of your healing journey is the circle of people with whom you share your life. The influences and examples of those closest to you play a major role in shaping your experiences, habits, priorities, perceptions, and healing. **As you take an honest look at the health of your relationships, you can better identify the strengths of your relationships as well as areas that may need some improvement.**

Below are five important attributes of healthy relationships:

- **Respect:** a deep understanding and admiration towards someone; being considerate of someone's feelings.
- **Safety:** having a high degree of trust with the other person; feeling protected and comfortable with that person.
- **Authenticity:** trusting that you can be your most honest, genuine self around the other person without judgment, punishment, or pressure to behave differently.
- **Support:** believing that love and caring, sympathy and understanding, and/or esteem and value are available from the other person.

- **Communication:** being able to honestly and assertively convey or share thoughts, ideas, and feelings with the other person, ability to express and respect boundaries.
- **Other:** What other attribute is really important to you in a healthy relationship?

Activity Steps

1. **Select an important relationship in your life (an intimate partner, a family member, a friend, a coworker, etc.).**
2. **Evaluate the health of this relationship in each of the categories below.** Rank where your relationship is at in each category on a scale of 1-10 (1 = very low, 10 = very high).
3. **Fill in the sixth category with an additional principle that is important to you.**
4. **After ranking each category of the relationship, answer the questions that follow.**

Example

| Relationship: <i>Linda</i> | | | | | |
|----------------------------|----------|--------------|----------|---------------|--------------|
| Respect | Safety | Authenticity | Support | Communication | <i>Trust</i> |
| <i>7</i> | <i>8</i> | <i>5</i> | <i>4</i> | <i>6</i> | <i>6</i> |

| Relationship: | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------------|--|
| Respect | Safety | Authenticity | Support | Communication | |
| | | | | | |

| Relationship: | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------------|--|
| Respect | Safety | Authenticity | Support | Communication | |
| | | | | | |

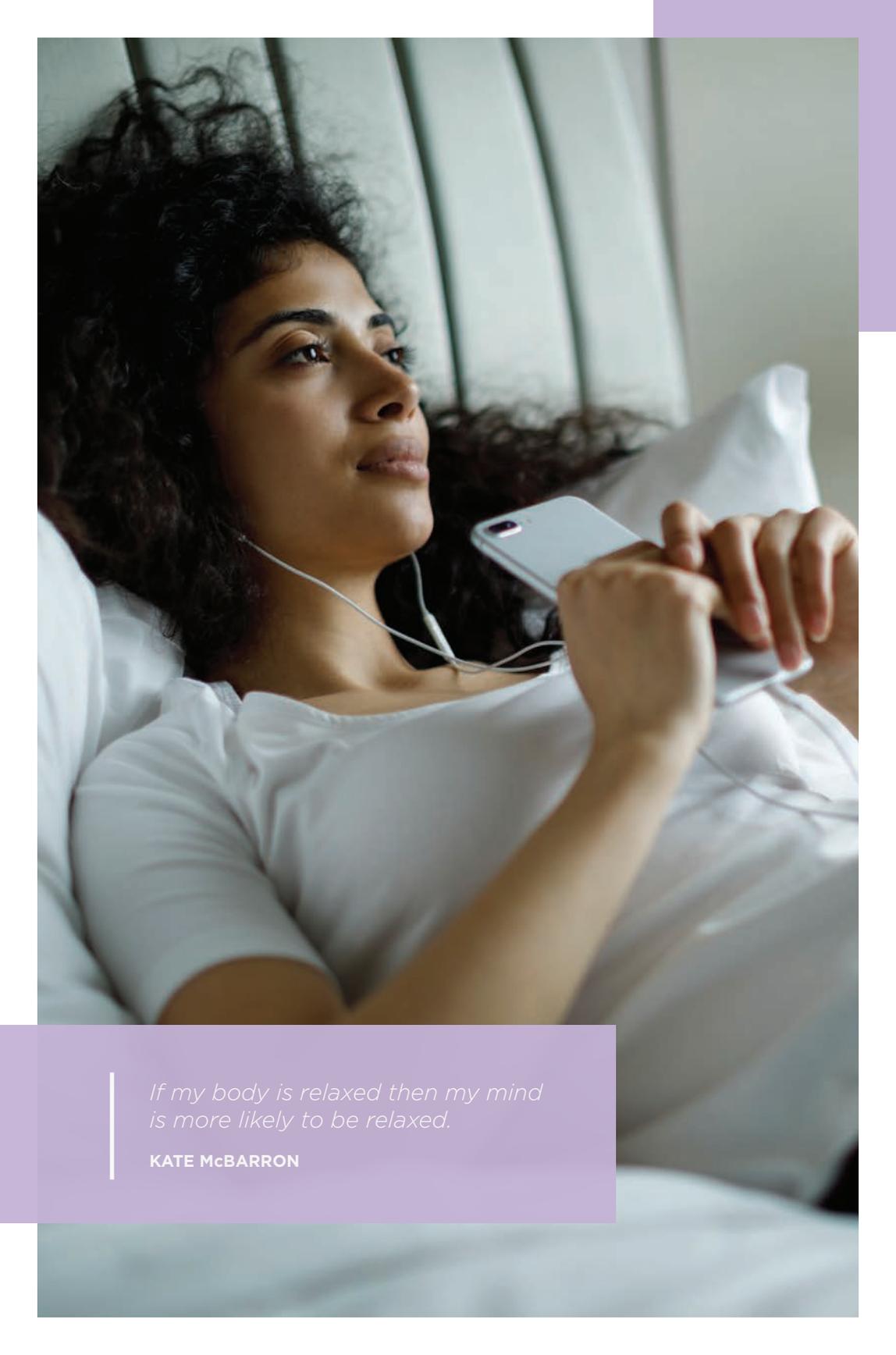
| Relationship: | | | | | |
|---------------|--------|--------------|---------|---------------|--|
| Respect | Safety | Authenticity | Support | Communication | |
| | | | | | |

- What do you notice about this relationship?
Is there anything that surprised you?
- How would you like this relationship to be different?
- What's one action you can take this week to move toward the relationship you desire?
- How has your relationship changed since the last time you did this activity? (if applicable)

Deepen Your Experience

Return to this scale later with either a different relationship or with the same relationship.

Observe how the rankings have changed or shifted over time as you've put your actions into practice.

A woman with dark, curly hair is lying in bed, looking upwards and to the right. She is wearing a white, short-sleeved shirt and has white earphones in her ears. She is holding a white smartphone in her hands. The background shows a white pillow and a light-colored headboard.

*If my body is relaxed then my mind
is more likely to be relaxed.*

KATE MCBARRON

EXERCISE 3

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR)


Disclaimer:

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

Sometimes survivors experience a difficult relationship with their physical self. For example, they might struggle to see the positive aspects of their body. Even though it may be difficult, take the time to appreciate all parts of your body, even the parts you may not usually have positive feelings about. It can be as small as, “Today my skin helped me feel the warm sunlight,” or “This muscle helped me to climb the stairs today.”

In this activity, you can practice Acknowledgement with a relaxation technique called Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR). This will help you to reconnect with your body and notice the positive ways your body helps you. PMR works by flexing and relaxing different muscle groups. You can get the most out of it by doing it about 15–20 minutes a day, but if all you have is three minutes, you can still take time to contract, relax, and appreciate your body.



Be careful when tensing the muscles in your neck, near your spine, or in any areas where you have been previously injured. Speak to a doctor if you have any concerns before you begin.

Activity Steps

PMR can be done in five simple steps:

1. **Settle into a comfortable position, sitting or lying down.**
2. **Flex a muscle or muscle group for 5–7 seconds to help you become aware of that part of your body.**
3. **As you release and relax your muscles (about 20–30 seconds), imagine a feeling of appreciation flowing towards that specific body part.**
4. **Repeat as needed for each muscle group (up to five times).**
5. **After you have finished tensing and relaxing, take a moment to notice what your body feels like.** Think back to each part you tensed and relaxed. How have these parts helped you today?

For more guidance, you can follow this sample script:

Point toes of your right foot toward your face and then away. Tense the thigh and calf muscles of your right leg.

Hold . . . relax.

Point toes of your left foot toward your face and then away. Tense the thigh and calf muscles of your left leg.

Hold . . . relax.

Tense both legs.

Hold . . . relax.

Tighten the muscles in your hips and backside.

Hold . . . relax.

Tighten your chest, stomach, and back muscles.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze your right hand into a fist.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze your left hand into a fist.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze both hands into a fist.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze your right hand into a fist, tense your right arm, and bring your forearm toward your body.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze your left hand into a fist, tense your left arm, and bring your forearm toward your body.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze both hands into fists, tense both arms, and bring your forearms toward your body.

Hold . . . relax.

Raise both shoulders.

Hold . . . relax.

Clench your jaw and push your tongue to the roof of your mouth.

Hold . . . relax.

Squeeze your eyes shut and scrunch up your facial muscles.

Hold . . . relax.

Raise your eyebrows.

Hold . . . relax.

Tense your entire body.

Hold . . . relax.

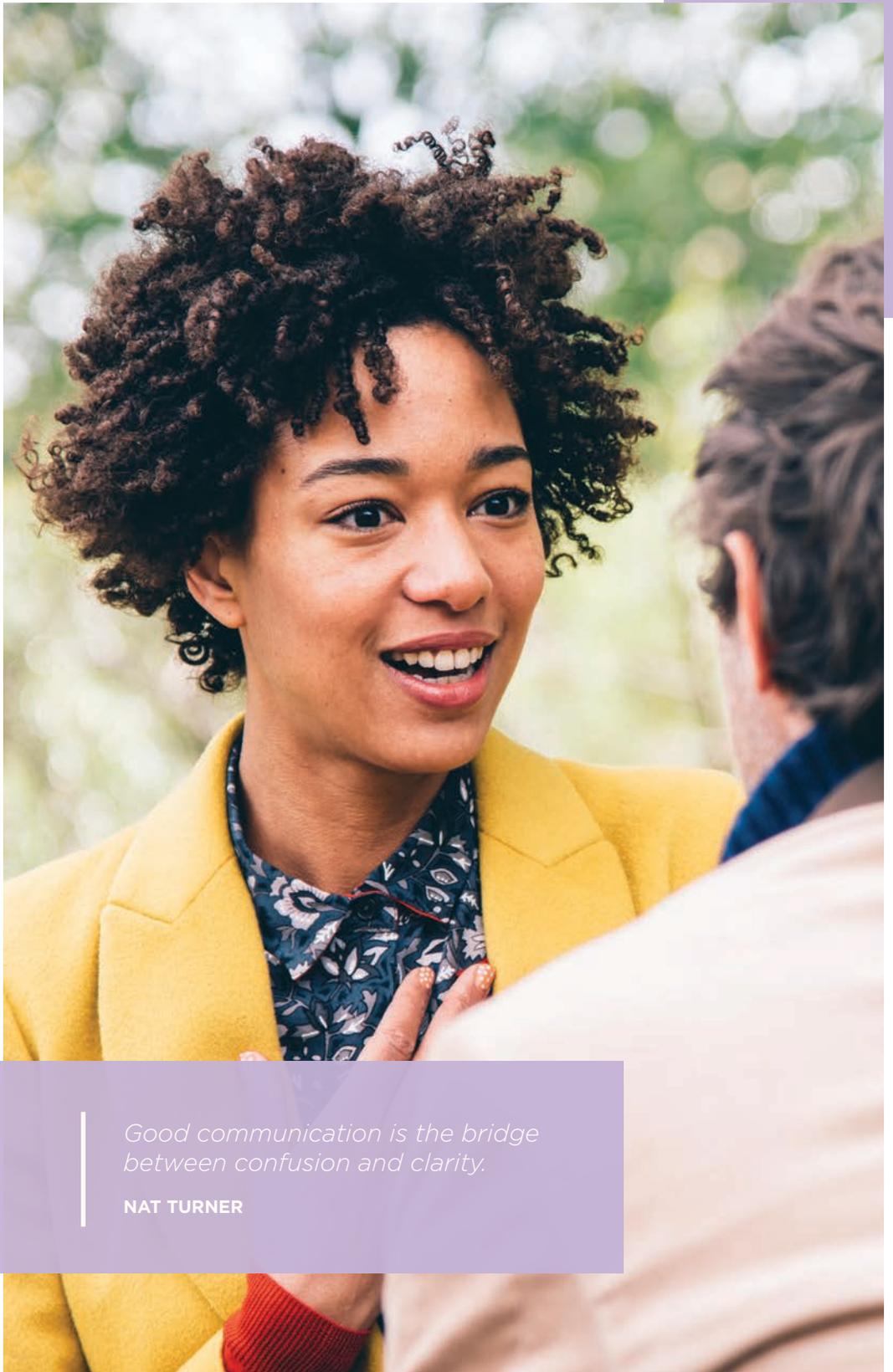
Feel or imagine a sense of appreciation for your entire body as you consider how your body has helped you today.

Deepen Your Experience

After doing this exercise several times, you may want to create your own personalized PMR script.

You can modify this script to focus on areas of your body you feel are most important to you in this moment. Perhaps you want to focus on more general areas of your body (e.g., legs and feet). Or maybe you want to focus on more specific areas (e.g., right thigh muscle). For more ideas, an in-depth list of muscle groups, along with additional information about PMR, is available on our website.

You can write down your personalized script in a notebook or audio-record it into your phone so that your own voice guides you through the exercise.



*Good communication is the bridge
between confusion and clarity.*

NAT TURNER

EXERCISE 4

Assertive Communication



Assertive communication is the ability to honestly express your opinions, attitudes, and rights in a way that conveys your needs or wants without neglecting the rights of others. This type of communication is about setting healthy boundaries (which you'll learn more about in the next chapter), being firm, delivering messages clearly, and acting with respect, fairness, and empathy. It also allows you to acknowledge both your feelings and the feelings of others.

A key part of assertive communication is to acknowledge what isn't working in your relationship (see "Assessing a Relationship" activity on page 76). Only after you identify why you are upset can you take the steps to change it. Sometimes this means acknowledging truths about your own behavior and taking ownership of your choices before you approach another person. Sometimes it means looking to change the way you interact with another person. This activity can help you look at a specific situation with open eyes and honestly acknowledge your truth.

Activity Steps

Think of a situation in your life where you want to communicate a concern or problem to another person. Write out possible statements you can make to express your concern based on the steps below. **Example:** *A friend is frequently late when you get together.*

Your situation: _____

1. Ask if this is a good time.

“Is now a good time to talk?”

2. Use empathy/validation.

Listen and work to understand the other person’s feelings.

“It sounds like you have a pretty busy schedule, which can make it difficult to be on time.”

3. State your concern.

Describe your difficulty/dissatisfaction and tell why you need something to change. Use the “I feel” statements.

“I feel like my time isn’t important to you when you’re running late and don’t keep me in the loop.”

4. Identify what you want or what you’re willing to negotiate.

This is a specific request for a specific change in behavior, circumstance, or situation. Speak specifically to the behavior rather than the person (labeling).

“I think I would feel less frustrated if you let me know when you’re running behind.”

5. Give the other person a chance to respond.

Listen and reflect back. Creatively problem solve together.

“Maybe, in the future, you could text me if you think you’ll be more than ten minutes late.”

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Use roleplay with someone you trust to practice using assertive communication. This will vocalize your concern and the possible solutions and/or compromises that could be made with another person.

Option #2

Many survivors struggle with saying no to the people in their lives. You may have concerns that you'll be perceived as rude or aggressive, that it makes you selfish, or that it might upset the other person and make them feel rejected. The most common reason survivors don't say no is believing that others' needs are more important than their own. When you practice assertive communication, you can say no when you need to and still feel respectful and respected.

- 1. Think of a situation in your life where you need to say no.** Go over this list of reminders to empower yourself to say it without guilt.
 - Other people have the right to ask, but I have the right to refuse.
 - When I say no, I am not rejecting that person, only their inquiry.
 - When I say no to one thing, that allows me to say yes to another.
 - By honestly expressing my feelings, it makes it safe for others to do the same.

- My needs are important, and it's important for me to set healthy boundaries.

2. Now that you have reviewed the list, create a statement using the steps of assertive communication you can use to say no. Once you have written down your statement, practice saying it out loud.



The world as we have created it is a process of our thinking. It cannot be changed without changing our thinking.

ALBERT EINSTEIN

EXERCISE 5

Challenging Unproductive Thoughts



Because your brain wants to be efficient, sometimes it takes helpful mental shortcuts. For example, it may predict the length of your commute today based on what traffic was like yesterday. Sometimes, however, the shortcuts can become unhelpful or unlikely to reflect reality. For example:

Me: *I have a headache.*

Mind's unhelpful shortcut: *It's probably a brain tumor. I saw a news story about them yesterday.*

Everyone's brain takes these "shortcuts" from time to time, also called "cognitive distortions."

Recognizing when your brain is taking a shortcut can help you evaluate if your brain's shortcut is actually helpful or not. Here are five types of unhelpful cognitive distortions that survivors commonly experience.

1. **Thinking in Extremes:** seeing things in black and white with no in between, as well as jumping to worst-case scenarios.
 - *"It's impossible for me to connect with anyone."*
 - *"I'm always alone and I never get to do things with friends."*
2. **Stuck in a Single Event:** taking one instance and expecting all current and future situations to be similar to that instance.

- *“The person I just disclosed my abuse to responded cruelly. I shouldn’t tell anyone about my abuse ever again because they will have the exact same reaction.”*

3. Filtering out the Positive: acknowledging positive experiences but then rejecting them as meaningless.

- *“I didn’t experience any setbacks today, but that’s probably just a fluke.”*
- *“I received good feedback on that, but it’s only because they didn’t read it closely enough to see all my mistakes.”*

4. Jumping to Conclusions: making assumptions about the future or what other people are thinking based on your current emotions, past experiences, or small bits of information.

- *“I’ll never be able to trust anyone.”*
- *“Others see me as damaged.”*

5. Making It Personal: assigning blame to yourself or assuming the situation is about you.

- *“She seemed upset. It must be something I said.”*
- *“They changed that policy. It was probably because I was late two months ago.”*

Activity Steps

For guidance, the activity will provide a sample script with an example of an unhelpful thought, challenging questions that can help you analyze it, and possible answers to those questions.

1. Identify

Write down any unhelpful thoughts you may be experiencing.

Thought: *(ex. I'll never be able to trust anyone.)*

Identify the cognitive distortion:

(ex. black-and-white thinking, jumping to conclusions)

2. Explore

Examine those thoughts through a list of questions to determine whether those thoughts are helpful or unhelpful.

Challenge Questions:

Q. Do I know for certain that this is true?

"I'm not 100% certain that I'll never be able to trust someone."

A.

Q. Am I 100% certain of the consequences?

"Not 100%, no. I'm not 100% certain of most things."

A.

Q. What is the evidence of this fear or belief? *“I’ve been hurt, betrayed, and abused in the past. People are capable of terrible things. And I just can’t be entirely sure that someone won’t try to hurt me again.”*

A. _____

Q. What is the evidence against this fear or belief? *“There are a couple people in my life who have generally been there when I needed them. They have said before that they care about me and their actions show it.”*

A. _____

Q. How can I be sure I know the answer? Do I have a crystal ball? *“It feels like I know what’s going to happen based on the past, but I guess I don’t actually know what can happen. I guess maybe I’m not completely as sure as it feels.”*

A. _____

Q. Is it possible the opposite could happen? What would be the outcome? *“I could decide to trust someone, and they don’t treat me the way I’ve been treated in the past. We could build a healthy, strong relationship that supports us both.”*

A. _____

Q. Is my negative prediction driven by the intense emotions I'm experiencing?

"Yes. I'm currently experiencing anxiety, fear, and distrust—and annoyance at my anxiety, fear, and distrust."

A. _____

Q. What is the worst that could happen? What could I do to cope if it did?

"I decide to trust someone, and they let me down. It would be painful, even heartbreaking. I would probably cry a lot, talk to my therapist, and write about it in my journal before burning the pages. I could probably get through it though. I mean, I have before."

A. _____

Q. If someone I cared about had this problem, what would I tell them?

"I'd probably tell them that they deserve to have healthy relationships and feel close to others. I'd tell them that if they're really that anxious, they can take their relationships slow, at a pace that's comfortable for them. I would also tell them to be patient with themselves and remember to take care of themselves first."

A. _____

Deepen Your Experience

You can **return to this activity on a regular basis** to record new thoughts you're experiencing and use the activity's questions to determine whether those thoughts are helpful or unhelpful.



STRATEGY

3

Power Through Surrender

Let It Be

*Maybe let it go isn't always the
answer. Maybe sometimes the
answer is let it be.*

EMMA GRACE

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- Power Through Surrender is coexisting in a positive way with intrusive trauma responses.
- Power Through Surrender allows you to learn a new way to respond to reflexive thoughts, emotions, and triggers rather than fighting a losing battle with the limbic system.
- Power Through Surrender helps you determine what you can and can't control and is a process that is practiced over time.
- Power Through Surrender enables you to identify your trauma voice and strengthen the frontal lobe to manage your limbic system's responses.



A woman with dark hair in a bun, wearing sunglasses and a light blue denim jacket, is sitting on a concrete ledge outdoors. She is looking off to the side. The background shows a paved area, palm trees, and a building with white columns. A yellow diamond-shaped sign is visible in the distance. The image has a soft, natural light quality.

The only thing you can really control is how you react to things out of your control.

BASSAM TARAZI

EXERCISE 1

What Can I Control?



Let's take a minute to discuss the word **control**. Having control over something means that YOU can determine what happens. For example, you can't control if it will rain tomorrow, but you can control how you prepare for it. Similarly, when setting healthy boundaries in a relationship, you can't control how the other person responds to your boundaries. However, you CAN control which boundaries you choose to enforce. Control, in the simplest terms, is about YOU since ultimately that is where you have the most power to cause change.

A key part of Power Through Surrender is being able to surrender the things you can't control and focus on the things you can. Taking an inventory can help. Once you see clearly what you can and can't control, you may see areas where you'd like to shift your focus.

Here are some examples:

| Things I CAN'T Control | Things I CAN Control |
|-------------------------|---|
| My triggers | How I prepare for and respond to triggers |
| What others think of me | What I think about myself |
| My past | My relationship to the past |

Activity Steps

1. Write in the first column the things in your life that you *can't control*.
2. Write in the second column the things in your life that you *can control*.
3. Consider the questions that follow to understand your experience better.
4. As you move forward, create reminders for yourself about letting go of the things in the left column and focusing more on the things in the right column.

| Things I CAN'T Control | Things I CAN Control |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

- Are you spending too much time and effort on something you ultimately can't control?
- Are there things in your life that are creating unnecessary stress? Can you let some of those things go?
- Are there any items on the list that surprise you?

Deepen Your Experience

Take a look at your “Can Control” column. **Write or illustrate ideas of what you can do to put your “Can Control” into action.**

Examples

Writing a Story

1. *Whenever I go to the store near my house, I get triggered. One of the employees reminds me of my abuser and I start to panic. While I can't control the trigger directly, I can prepare for that situation by wearing my “remember to breathe” bracelet to help me manage the trigger if it happens again. I can also practice self-compassion after the trigger.*

2. *I feel like my coworkers talk about me behind my back. I can't control how they feel about me, but each morning I'm going to repeat five things that I love about myself so that I can determine my own worth.*



*Embrace the seasons and cycles of
your life. There is magic in change.*

BRONNIE WARE

EXERCISE 2

Mental Imagery



Sometimes you may experience distressing thoughts or emotions (like anger, resentment, pain, or cravings) that you want to immediately push away and avoid. You may fear that such painful thoughts and emotions might never go away, so you fight against them even harder. And, you may have found that the harder you fight, the stronger the emotions and thoughts seem to come back.

Instead of getting caught in the struggle of push-and-pull, you can establish your ability to move forward by letting go of the struggle itself. Interestingly, as you give up the attempt to control difficult thoughts or emotions, you may observe them changing naturally over time.

This cycle of change can be seen all around you, especially in nature, like in the rise and fall of tides, the coming and going of clouds, and the changing of seasons.

Imagine for a moment a tree developing new leaves and buds in the spring. The flowers and leaves mature and change. Eventually there will come a time when it needs to let go of its flowers and leaves in order to make room for new growth in the next season.

Difficult thoughts and emotions are like the buds on the tree. They are important and need to be felt... for a season. Then, when the emotions have served their purpose, you may

find yourself ready to let them go and enter into a new season of growth. It's useless to try and force the tree to change out of season, just like trying to force your thoughts and emotions to change can be counterproductive. **Just as trees make room for new growth by letting go of old leaves, being able to let go when the time is right for you can make room for new growth that may be just around the corner.**

Power Through Surrender is not about getting rid of distressing emotions but regaining your power by coexisting with them in positive ways, no matter the season you're in.

Activity Steps

- 1. Find a place in nature near you.** This might include a nearby park, a small garden, a plant in your house, a tree or some shrubbery on your street, a bridge over a stream, etc. For this particular example, we'll use a patch of grass.
- 2. Once you're by a patch of grass, consider the current state of your emotions.** Is there something you're holding onto that you'd like to let go? Is there something you are trying to push away? Is there a recent thought, feeling, or memory that you're trying to process?
- 3. After you've identified something specific, kneel down and pluck a piece of grass from the patch.**
- 4. Stand up and hold tight to the piece of grass.** Imagine that it's the distressing emotion, thought, or memory. You might even imagine actual words or images on the piece of grass to describe what you're feeling.

5. **Continue holding onto the piece of grass as long as you feel necessary.**
6. **When you're ready, let go of the grass.** Watch it fall or float away as you envision yourself letting go of the thought, feeling, or memory you're holding onto.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

After you complete the activity, **reflect on your experience by answering one or more of the following questions:**

- How did you feel the moment you let the piece of grass go?
- Are there other memories, feelings, or experiences you are currently holding on to that may not be helping you?
- Are there any you feel you should still hold onto for now? Are there any you feel you should let go?
- If the piece of grass you were holding represented a positive memory, feeling, or experience, what would you want to do with it instead of letting it go?

Option #2

In cases when you might have limited time or access to nature, you can **use your imagination to mentally guide you through this activity.** On the following page is an example of a mental imagery exercise which you can read through, record yourself reading, or have someone read aloud to you.



While this specific example is centered around a tree in a forest, feel free to select a different example in nature if it better suits you.

Find a place free from distractions and assume a comfortable position. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.

- *Imagine you are walking through a forest in the middle of the afternoon, feeling the dappled rays of sunlight on your face.*
- *You hear the rustling of leaves, the creaking of branches, and the chirping of a nearby bird.*
- *As you walk, breathe in the forest air, inhaling the scent of pine, fresh soil, and moss.*
- *After filling your lungs completely, you exhale, feeling refreshed.*
- *Up ahead you notice a large oak tree. Its countless leaves are a vibrant, bright green as they flutter in the breeze.*
- *You approach the tree and feel its comfortable shade, smelling the sweetness of its sap.*
- *You reach out and touch the trunk. The bark is rough and warm in the afternoon sun.*
- *You settle down on the soft grass with your back gently resting on the trunk as you look up at the leaves and branches above.*
- *Imagine that the leaves represent any distressing emotions, thoughts, or experiences you are holding on to.*
- *Watch as the leaves slowly change color over time and notice the crispness in the air.*

- *You continue to watch as the leaves wither and crinkle, barely clinging to the tree's frosty branches.*
- *More time passes and, one by one, you see the dried leaves fall away from the tree, carried away on the breeze.*
- *You look up and notice the bare branches —notice the many shapes and forms the branches take as they create the stage for the next season to begin.*
- *Then, you notice new buds starting to blossom where the discarded leaves once grew.*
- *This new growth represents a new season of experiences to be lived and felt.*
- *Continue to watch as the buds blossom until you are ready to slowly return to the room, keeping with you the feelings of peace and calm.*
- *Remember that you can return to this space in the forest any time you'd like.*





Movement is the song of the body.

VANDA SCARAVELLI

EXERCISE 3

Movement and Martial Arts

**Disclaimer:**

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

Because trauma lives in both the brain and the body, one thing that can help strengthen your healing is to find ways to release the tension and stress that might be stored in areas of your body. One effective way is through martial arts. For example, when you practice Muay Thai, a form of martial arts that combines breathing and movement, you are releasing muscle tension, focusing your breathing, building strength, developing power and control, and expanding confidence in your body's ability to act.

It may be uncomfortable to do some of these moves if the limbic system interprets the movements as signals that your body needs to collapse and/or freeze. You might feel a flood of emotion. Or you might discover you have a fear of being too powerful. Instead of fighting against these feelings or trauma responses, you can learn to allow them to be there and still complete the movement. Ultimately, this enables you to achieve Power Through Surrender by reconnecting with your body, staying in control, and being present in the moment.

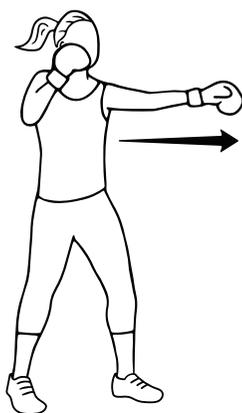
Activity Steps

Use the steps and illustrations below to practice the basic movements of Muay Thai. These moves can be done at any fitness level and in a variety of locations—from the gym to the backyard to your own bedroom.

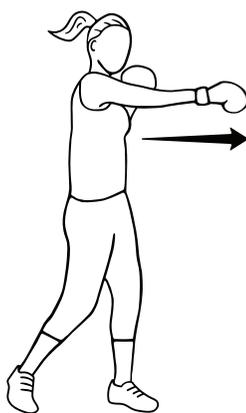
Before you begin, here are a few tips:

- Start slow. It will feel strange at first, even if you are doing the moves correctly.
- Breathe out with each movement.
- Shaking is normal. If it happens, don't worry or fight against it.

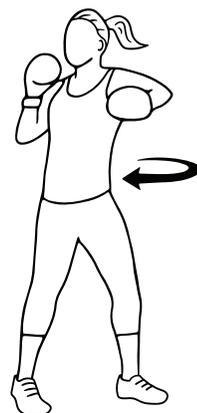
1. Try each of these moves ten times:



Jab



Cross



Hook

- ### 2. Next, try building and combining these moves together.
- These punches can be combined into any order you like, or you can

try this suggested build of moves to start with:

- Jab
- Jab, Cross
- Jab, Cross, Hook
- Jab, Cross, Hook, Cross

- 3. Now try each move slowly and very deliberately.** Focus your attention on the different muscles you're using, how much control you have, your body position, your breathing, where your body is moving through your surroundings, etc.



If a movement becomes too overwhelming or feels unsafe, take a step back to allow your frontal lobe to calm your limbic system. When you feel ready, you can come back and try again, noticing any differences as you work again through the movement.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

For additional information and moves, you can also **check out our video about Muay Thai** at yuniquefoundation.org/a-guide-to-muay-thai/

Option #2

You don't have to be limited to Muay Thai.

There are many other types of martial arts that you might want to try such as boxing, kickboxing, karate, or Tae Kwon Do. Look for local recreation centers or gyms that encourage control of movement and breathing. When finding a gym or a class, consider talking with the instructor beforehand about any trauma-informed adjustments that can be made to match your needs.



The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.

ARISTOTLE

EXERCISE 4

Expressive Art Journaling



You may have heard the advice to put what you're feeling and experiencing into words—whether by talking to someone or writing it in a journal. But sometimes it can be difficult to express your emotions through words only, especially while going through the healing process.

Luckily there are additional ways to express how you're feeling that don't necessarily involve a lot of words—like art journaling. **Art journaling is simply creating a visual representation of the emotions you are currently experiencing using words or images.** You can use any variety of tools and materials to create your visual in any medium you prefer (drawing, painting, collage, etc.).

Activity Steps

- 1. Think about the emotion(s) you are currently experiencing.**
- 2. Visually express these emotions in an art journal using different colors, images, shapes, textures, materials, words, etc.** You may wish to assign each color you use an emotion or meaning. For example, some people associate the color yellow with joy and optimism, while others associate the color blue with loyalty, sensitivity, and serenity. The same can be done with shapes, images, and other materials.

- 3. As you art journal, focus on your body's movements, sensations you experience, and changes in your emotions.**
- 4. With art journaling, there are no rules.** Don't worry about editing your work or holding it to any specific standard. Just express what you're feeling.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Consider exploring your emotions on a deeper level by representing how you relate to other emotions, experiences, and contexts. For example, you can express the same emotion in different mediums (watercolor, colored pencil, paint, crayon, etc.) to notice the differences. You may also consider making a collage as one of your art journal pieces to see how your emotions fit together.

Option #2

Once you've completed your visual from the main activity, **transform your piece into something else to represent how your emotions change, shift, or develop on your healing journey** (or how you would like them to change as you heal). If you aren't sure how to begin, a list of ideas is provided below.

- Turn the paper into a sculpture or origami.
- Burn the piece (safely) to symbolize release.
- Paint over it and turn the work into something new.

- Shred it into strips to be used to papier-mâché.
- Cut it into shapes that you can use as pieces in other art.
- Tear it into confetti to celebrate your journey.



It is necessary, even vital, to set standards for your life and the people you allow in it.

MANDY HALE

EXERCISE 5

Practicing Boundaries



Power Through Surrender is coexisting with experiences and feelings that are uncomfortable or painful. For example, having healthy boundaries in relationships is essential for healing, but can come with many difficult feelings. **A boundary is a line or a limit that separates what you're okay with from what you're not.**

Think of it like a fence with a gate. Everything inside the fence is what you like and want to embrace in your life. Everything outside the fence is what you don't like and don't want to be part of your life. The best kinds of fences have gates that allow room for flexibility in who can come in and go out to honor changing relationships, circumstances, and healing. While rigid fencing can lead to isolation, weak fencing can lead to trespassing. This activity can help you find the balance with your boundaries to help you work through, and Power Through Surrender can help you reinforce them.

At times it can feel awkward to hold and maintain boundaries. You might feel selfish, guilty, or embarrassed. Power Through Surrender can help you accept those uncomfortable feelings and moments and hold to your boundaries.

Activity Steps

1. **Think of a specific relationship in your life and write it down on one of the spectrums provided on pages 123-124.**



If you have a boundary at either end of the spectrum, remember that moving toward the center is a process. Be patient with yourself as you set your boundaries one at a time.

2. **Circle one of the boundaries listed below that you'd like to focus on and write it down on one of the spectrums provided on pages 123–124.** If you think of a boundary that isn't mentioned, write down that boundary instead.
 - Physical
 - Intellectual
 - Emotional
 - Spiritual
 - Time
 - Sexual
3. **On the spectrum, place a mark where you feel your boundary is at currently.**
4. **Place a star where you would like your boundary to be.**
5. **Write down on the action lines one thing you can do or say to move toward that goal.**

Example:

Relationship: My Boss

Area: Time



Action: *Have a conversation with my boss that communicates why I don't feel comfortable working on the weekends while still showing that I'm flexible. I could say something along the lines of: "I understand you have more work that needs to be done. Where would you like me to prioritize my time?"*

| Rigid | Healthy | Weak |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses rigid boundaries to push people away. • Uses boundaries to try and control other people. • Not open to hearing others' viewpoints. • Overprotective of personal information. • Isn't willing to appropriately adapt boundaries to different contexts. • Says no to things simply because they are outside of their comfort zone. • May seem detached. • Believes own boundaries are more important than other's boundaries. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stands up for personal values and doesn't compromise out of fear or doubt. • Consistently communicates and reinforces boundaries. • Is firm, but not rigid, in reinforcing personal boundaries. • Respects own boundaries and boundaries of others. • Develops emotional closeness at a pace that is comfortable and best suits the healing journey. • Shares personal information appropriately with others. • Willing to try new things as long as values aren't compromised. • Places trust in those who have earned it. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doesn't set boundaries for fear that others won't approve. • Are controlled by other people's behaviors and opinions. • Accepts abuse or disrespect from others because they feel it's what they deserve. • Overshares details of past trauma with others, even new acquaintances. • Feels it's their job to fix everyone else's problems. • Doesn't say no to others, even when feeling uncomfortable or emotionally overwhelmed. • Believes the boundaries of others are important but don't apply to them. • Reinforces boundaries inconsistently or doesn't reinforce boundaries at all. |

Relationship: _____ **Area:** _____



Action: _____

Relationship: _____ **Area:** _____

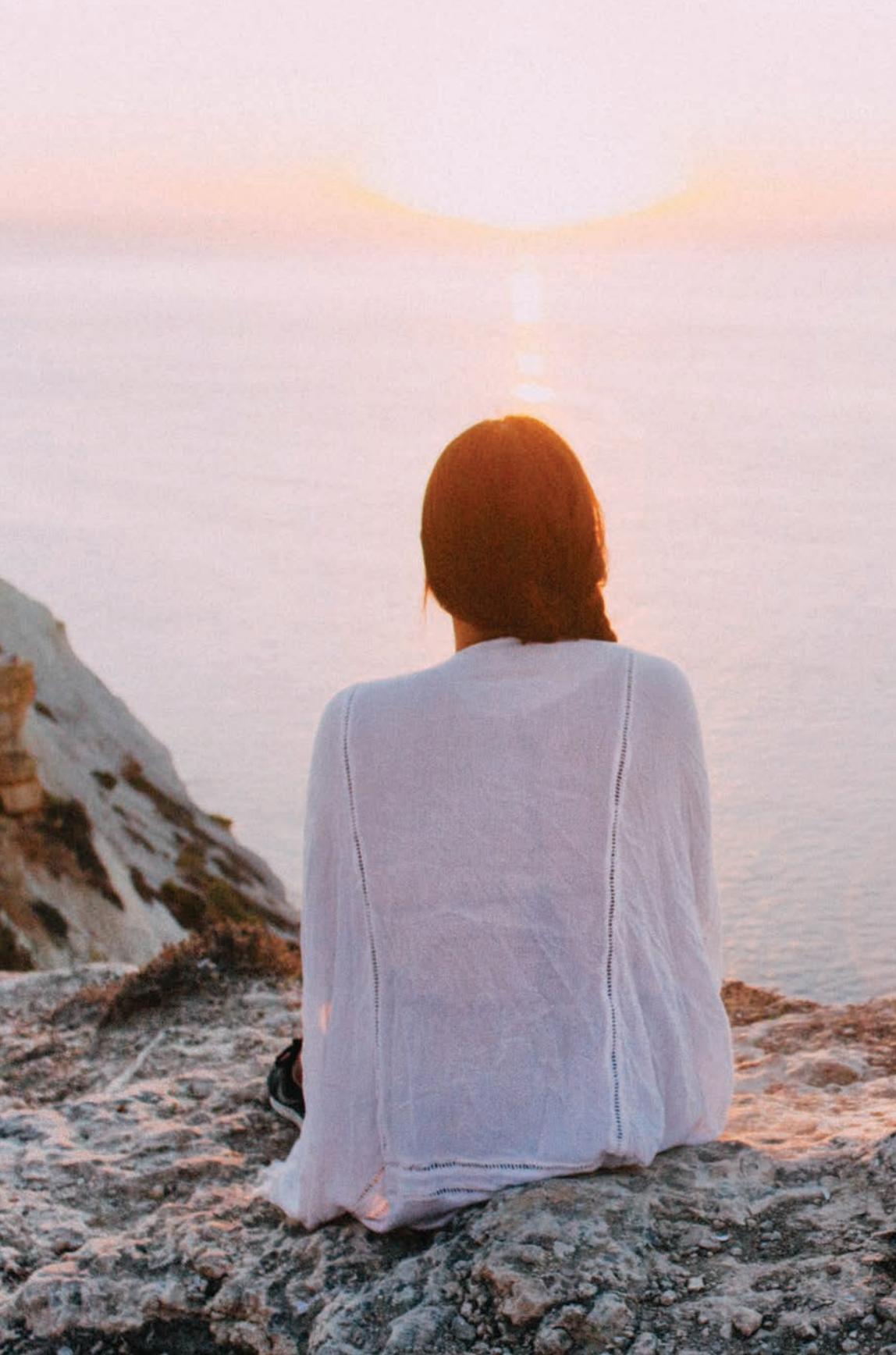


Action: _____

Relationship: _____ **Area:** _____



Action: _____



STRATEGY

4

Mindfulness

I Choose

*Mindfulness gives you time. Time
gives you choices.
Choices, skillfully made,
lead to freedom.*

HENEPOLA GUNARATAN

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- Mindfulness is focusing on empowering thoughts and choosing healing actions.
- Mindfulness may help your frontal lobe and limbic system work together in a more functional way.
- Mindfulness requires practice that can be done in a number of ways (e.g., yoga, mindful breathing, mindful eating, etc.).
- Mindfulness may help you manage feelings of shame.





*All you need is one safe anchor
to keep you grounded.*

KATIE KACVINSKY

EXERCISE 1

Choosing an Anchor



Trauma recovery is often focused on managing the things that can trigger panic, shame, or other uncomfortable emotions. Fortunately, there are things in this healing journey that may also bring you feelings of comfort, joy, and empowerment. For one person it might be a quote, word, or phrase. For another, it might be the lyric to a song or a favorite memory. No matter how small, these things carry meaning and inspire positive associations for you.

In this activity—and throughout all of these Mindfulness exercises—you’ll practice focusing your attention on an anchor. **An anchor is anything that you purposefully choose to bring you back to the present during times of distress and remind you what’s important to you.** It can be a thought, quote, emotion, sensation, word—whatever has meaning to you. When you notice your thoughts drifting in an unhelpful direction, you can gently redirect your attention back to your anchor and the empowerment and healing it represents.

Activity Steps

- 1. Choose what you’d like your anchor to be.** It can be anything that has meaning to you and that you’d like to focus on. For example, if you know today will be an overwhelming day, you might choose the word “calm.” Or, perhaps you want to choose a color that represents the kind of day you’d like to have.

2. **Write down your anchor on a sticky note.** Put the note someplace where you'll see it every day. The bathroom mirror may be a good place.
3. **Focus on your anchor at least once each day.** Direct your attention toward your anchor and the empowering thoughts and actions with which you associate it. You might also try saying your anchor out loud once a day. It may feel a little awkward at first, but you'll be surprised by how effective it can be.
4. **Update your anchor to match your needs.** Your anchor never has to be set in stone. What works as an anchor for you now may not be as useful to you later. Change up your anchor depending on your situation, goal, or focus in life. You get to choose, so your anchor can be whatever you need it to be.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Consider using positive affirmations as your anchor. Positive affirmations are sentences that you say to yourself to remind you of your value, how far you've come, and how capable you are of continuing on your healing journey. Some examples might be:

- I am enough.
- I'm learning to love myself.
- I choose happiness.

- I am moving forward on my healing journey one choice at a time.
- I have strength and power to take on whatever comes my way.
- I can do hard things.
- I am grateful for this day and the many possibilities it affords.
- I am taking care of my health.

Option #2

You may want to choose an anchor that is tangible. It may be something that you can hold and carry around in your pocket or a piece of jewelry that you wear. Once you've identified your object of choice, decide where you'd like to keep it, whether it's in your pocket, on your desk at work, on your nightstand, etc. Throughout your day or during tough moments, touch or hold your anchor to bring you back to encouraging thoughts and feelings.



Writing to heal requires no innate talent, though we become more skilled as we write, especially when we pay careful attention to the process of our writing.

LOUISE DeSALVO

EXERCISE 2

Anchor Through Writing



Our minds naturally wander throughout our day—while driving, working on a project, or sitting down in a quiet moment. Wandering thoughts are useful in noticing what is on your mind, but being able to deliberately redirect your thoughts can better help you explore your emotions, feelings, memories, and ideas, as well as help you build the ability to maintain focus on what you find most important.

In this activity we'll use writing as a tool to help you develop Mindfulness through focusing your writing on an "anchor." As discussed in the previous activity, *an anchor is a thought, emotion, sensation, or object used to purposefully bring your attention back to the present after you notice your mind has wandered.*

Activity Steps

- 1. Find a comfortable place where you are not likely to be too distracted.** Establish an end goal by setting a timer or deciding a word count or page count that you'd like to reach.
- 2. Pick the anchor you would like to focus your writing on.** If you are struggling to select an anchor, here are a few ideas that might help:
 - The pressure of your feet on the floor.

- Sounds that come and go in the space around you.
- An item you are using for this activity (the paper you're writing on, the pen you're holding, the chair you're sitting in, etc.).
- An encouraging thought, emotion, word, or idea (e.g., "I have the capacity to heal").
- A specific memory of a time you felt empowered.

3. Write down everything you can about the anchor you've selected. For example, if you picked a sensation to focus on, you can write everything related to that sensation—where you feel it in your body, how it changes from moment to moment, feelings you have toward that sensation, and how it's impacted by different things around you.

4. When you notice your thoughts have wandered (because they will), gently note that without judgment and redirect your focus to your anchor. When you lose focus you may also choose to bring your writing back to your first sentence or rewrite the name of your anchor. If there is a thought you are struggling to detach from, you may also try making the distracting thought your new anchor and purposefully give it your full attention.

5. Give yourself a moment to appreciate the writing you've achieved before choosing what you'd like to do with it. Here are a few ideas:

- Save your writing and add on to it later with a new anchor.
- Create a plan to apply or implement any insights you've had.

- Discard or destroy your writing as a release.
- Share your writing with others who are supportive.

Deepen Your Experience

After you've finished your writing, go back and pick out any empowering words, phrases, or sentences you find. Use the words you've singled out to transform your writing into something new. Some suggestions include:

- Turn your writing into a “black-out” poem. Identify the specific words or phrases that you'd like to highlight and cross out or color through all of the remaining words.
- Make a poem using the most empowering words you wrote.
- Select one word and place it on your vision board or in your art journal. (See “Expressive Art Journaling” on page 116 and “Creating a Vision Board” on page 178 for more information.)
- Create a new piece of art using the word(s) you selected above.
- Choose one stand-out word to be your anchor when you do this activity again.



When you eat mindfully, you slow down, pay attention to the food you're eating, and savor every bite.

SUSAN ALBERS

EXERCISE 3

Mindful Eating



Although it might seem strange at first, Mindfulness can be applied to everyday activities, like eating. Often, eating can become an automatic, mindless habit—eating because you have to, eating to escape from something, or eating simply because you’re bored. Instead, mindful eating is about feeling empowered by choosing what you eat, what you want your relationship with food to be, what thoughts you focus on while eating, and the healing actions you can pursue based on those thoughts.

As you eat with Mindfulness, you choose your relationship with food that is founded on empowerment, rather than shame. With mindful eating there are no “good” or “bad” foods and you are not “good” or “bad” because of your food choices. Ultimately, mindful eating helps you connect with what your body is telling you and respond to those signals with healing actions. To begin, all you need is a bit of curiosity and something to eat.

Activity Steps

1. Set the stage.

- **Consciously select which food item you’d like to explore.** If possible, try to slow down for a few minutes with that food item—whether you’re in your car, at home, on vacation, or in the café at work.

Sit down with your food, but don't start eating yet.

- **Choose an “anchor” (as discussed in the first activity of this chapter) you connect with.** Redirect your thoughts back to this anchor when your mind wanders as you eat—like a sensory detail, a healing word or thought, or a body sensation.
- **Take time to consider and appreciate all the people who made it possible to have this food.** This list might include the farmers, the store clerk, and whoever prepared it for you or taught you how to prepare it.
- **Using the Awareness strategy (Chapter 2), bring yourself into the present moment with your food.** Note its colors, smell, texture, and how it makes you feel. Notice any urges or thoughts that may surface about the food.

2. Deliberately experience.

- **Imagine you're discovering this food for the first time.** Deliberately bring the food up to your mouth, making note of all the muscles you are using to do so. When you feel ready, take an intentional bite of your food. Notice how your body responds to the food and allow yourself to purposefully explore flavors and savor the food before swallowing.

- **You might have noticed changes in your emotions or thoughts as you took a bite.** This can include anything from happiness to guilt to anxiety to satisfaction. Without judging those emotions and sensations, simply note that they are there and gently bring yourself back to your anchor.
- **When you choose, continue to intentionally eat the food one bite at a time.** Make each action deliberate and return to your anchor between bites.

3. Check in.

- **Check in with your body to see what it needs.** For example, you might ask yourself: How does this food make me feel physically and mentally? Do I want to keep eating or am I finished? Am I comfortably full or does my body need more?
- **Based on your check-in, choose what action you'd like to take.** This might mean continuing, or giving yourself permission to stop, even if there's food left.

4. Reflect.

- **Consider the following questions:** What does your body feel like now compared to when you first began to eat? How did being intentional about eating change the experience?
- **Finish with a moment of purposeful appreciation for the experience your food and body had.**

Deepen Your Experience

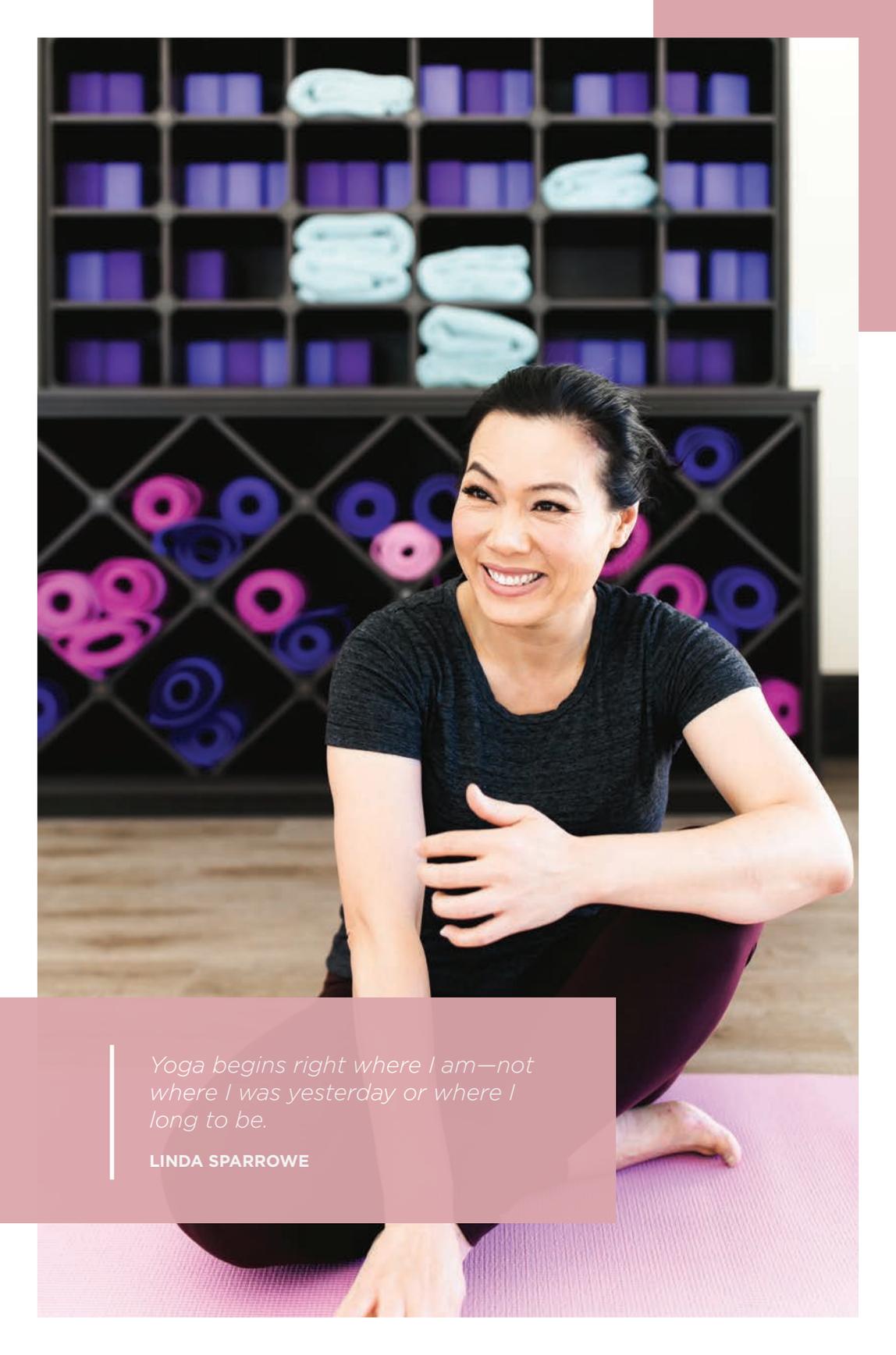
Option #1

Mindfulness can be applied to a full meal or in the preparation of a meal. Use Mindfulness to intentionally choose actions and foods for your meal that best serve you in your healing. As you prepare the food, enrich your experience through setting the stage to be in the moment, deliberately experiencing the preparation of the food, checking in with yourself as you work with the food, and reflecting on the experience and changes in your body when you are done and ready to eat.

Option #2

Mindfully eating doesn't mean eating alone.

Try turning this into a group activity by sharing a meal together with a group and brainstorm all the different people who were involved in making the food possible for you all to enjoy, as well as discussing the different sensations and experiences you have with that food. For example, one person may really connect to the smell of an orange, while another may better connect with the texture. You could try this with friends, a partner, family members, a group of coworkers on lunchbreak, etc.—whatever is comfortable for you.



*Yoga begins right where I am—not
where I was yesterday or where I
long to be.*

LINDA SPARROWE

EXERCISE 4

Yoga

**Disclaimer:**

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

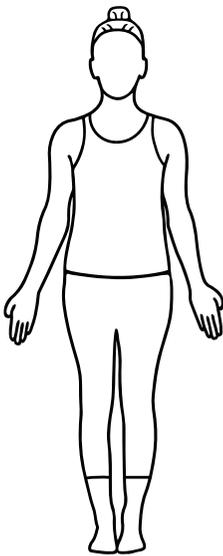
Yoga is a technique that can help you make peace with your body and reconnect with it in a positive way. **Practicing yoga regularly not only helps you stay grounded in the present, but can also help give you encouraging anchors to focus on.** Doing this type of intentional movement can help to relieve trauma that may have been stored subconsciously and internally for years.

With yoga, you can do certain stretches and poses nearly anywhere that feels comfortable to you, whether it's in a class, in a hotel room during a trip, or in your own backyard. Yoga practices are also easily accessible online, with sources ranging from illustrations to instructional videos to apps. Search out what's available and discover what types of yoga poses work best for you. This activity will focus on three of the most common, easy-to-learn poses.

Activity Steps

Use the illustrations below to practice each pose. Before you begin, here are a few tips:

- Find a comfortable place where you won't be interrupted.
- Wear something you feel you can move around in.



Mountain Pose



Warrior Pose 2



Child's Pose

- Be mindful of your breathing as you practice each pose. If you notice you're holding your breath, gently remind yourself to continue breathing.
- Hold each pose for whatever amount of time feels comfortable for your body. Don't push too hard.
- As you hold each pose, focus on your personal anchor, whether it's a word, color, memory, or your own breathing.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Rest in your mind as you practice each pose.

Think of a place that you associate with a pleasant emotion such as comfort, joy, safety, peace, or calmness. Perhaps this place is a scene from a favorite memory. Or perhaps it's a fictional setting from a book, film, or TV show. Whatever it may be, envision the place in your mind, recalling the details. What do you see? What sensations are you experiencing? Is there anyone else there with you or are you by yourself?

Option #2

Trauma-informed yoga classes are a great way to practice yoga with a group.

What makes a yoga class trauma-informed? Some may have it right in their description, but even a regular yoga class can still be trauma-informed if you know what to look for, ask for, and expect. On the next page are a few steps to take to ensure that the class you attend is the best for you.

Steps to Finding a Trauma-Informed Yoga Class

- 1. Talk to the instructor ahead of time.** Explain to the instructor that you are a trauma survivor or, if that makes you uncomfortable, explain that you have a few questions or requests that will make the class a better experience for you. This will include whether or not you'd like to be touched or physically assisted during class, whether tools like yoga straps will be used, and if you are allowed to leave class if you feel anxiety or become uncomfortable. You can also ask the instructor if they will be walking around the room or doing hands-on assists, or if people will be coming and going out the door.
- 2. Arrive a little early.** Give yourself a chance to acclimate to the new environment, especially if this is your first yoga class. Place yourself near the door in case you need to leave early. Take a few minutes to practice Mindfulness before the class starts, allowing you to begin the class with an anchor in mind.
- 3. Don't push too hard.** If something doesn't feel good to your body that day or brings up negative emotions, make a conscious choice whether you will pull back or breathe through it. Remember, you have control over how mindful or how challenging you want each pose to be—regardless of what the instructor may say. Ultimately, yoga is up to your level of comfort.
- 4. You have options.** Some trauma survivors can feel overwhelmed when they feel like they have no choice during a pose. If you are uncomfortable you can stop, leave a

pose early, or make modifications. You can always stop. Put your mental and physical health first. By honoring where your body and emotions are that day, you'll leave feeling more connected and with a better experience than if you do things out of pressure or obligation.

5. Count to yourself if the instructor doesn't.

Many trauma survivors can dissociate or lose time if they're in pain or uncomfortable. To prevent this from happening in yoga, you can slowly count to yourself to stay connected to the present moment and in that particular yoga pose.

6. Remember that healing is a process. Yoga is a tool on your healing journey. Make sure you are utilizing it in a way that helps you heal without hindering your progress. If you think your yoga class is not helping, switch to a different one. It's okay to try different classes until you find one that fits your needs. Do what you feel is best for you so that yoga can become an additional anchor rather than a source of distress.

A woman with dark, wavy hair is looking out a window. She is wearing a maroon top with white lace-up details and a necklace. The background shows a window with a view of a city and a brick wall with a lantern.

*Meditation practice isn't about
trying to throw ourselves away and
become something better.*

PEMA CHODRON

Activity Steps

- 1. Choose an anchor to focus on, such as a word, image, or quote that you find meaningful.**
- 2. Find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed and pick a time of day that works best for you.** Some people prefer mornings, others prefer nights; experiment with what feels most effective for you.
- 3. Choose a specific amount of time to meditate.** You might start with five minutes and, over time, work your way up to whatever your desired amount of time will be, or adjust based on what you feel you need that day. Setting a timer may help, that way you're not constantly checking the clock.
- 4. Relax, with eyes opened or closed, and focus on the word(s), image, or sensation(s) you've selected as your anchor.**
- 5. Breathe slowly and fully.** Find the speed that works for you (or you can refer to the "Paced Breathing" activity on page 40 as a guide).
- 6. When your mind wanders, notice what your mind is interested in examining, then bring it back to your anchor.** Be patient with yourself, refocus, and keep going.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Try switching up when, where, and how you meditate. Below are some ideas and examples:

- **Your location**
If you tend to meditate outside, try meditating in a library.
- **Your anchor**
If you usually focus on a physical anchor like breathing, pick out a word or phrase to focus on next.
- **Time duration**
If you meditate for five minutes one day, try meditating for ten minutes the next day.
- **Your physical position**
If you usually meditate lying down, try meditating sitting up.
- **Who you're with**
If you've already meditated by yourself, try meditating with another person or a group of people.
- **The details of your meditation space**
If you've meditated in silence, try meditating with calming music.
- **The pace of your breathing**
If you usually breathe 4-2-6, try 3-2-4

The options are endless! Find what works best for you.

Option #2

You could also try a more guided form of meditation by using a meditation app or podcast. There are many excellent options to choose from, and you can check out our list of recommendations below:

- *Headspace: Meditation and Sleep*
- *Calm: Meditate, Sleep, Relax*
- *Stop, Breathe, and Think*
- *Take a Break!: Meditations for Stress Relief*
- *Live Awake Podcast*



STRATEGY

5

Faith

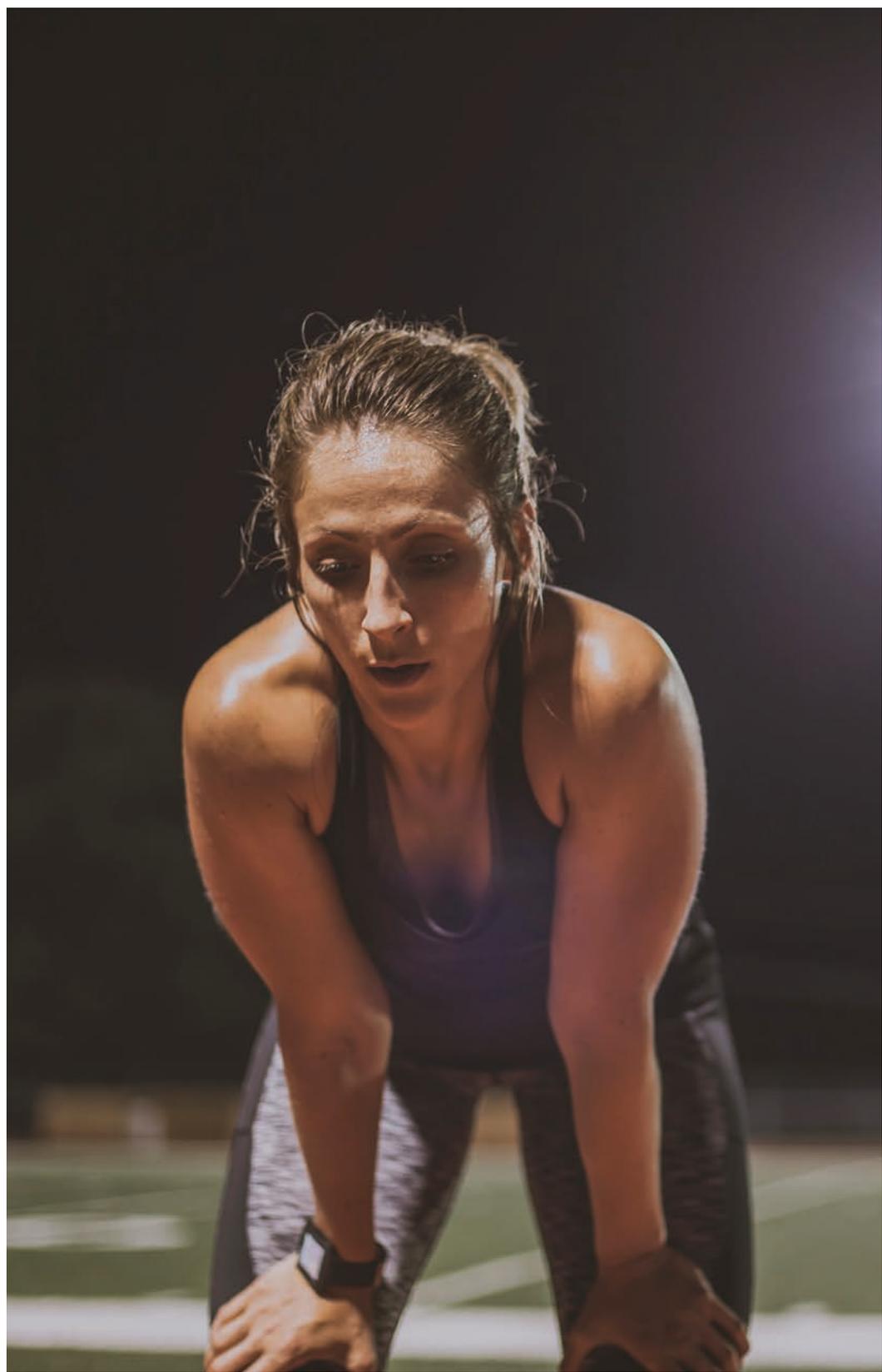
I Believe in Me

In my own journey, I chose to take the expectations out of my healing and instead turned to trusting that each action I took indeed help me feel happier and healthier.

SHANNON KAISER

A Brief Reminder From Your Reading

- Faith is acting on a strong belief that you can heal.
- Faith can be practiced in the now to influence what happens in the future.
- Struggle can be used as a springboard for growth.
- Progress and growth take time and effort.





Turn toward that self-critical part of you with kindness and compassion. Thank her for the hard work she has done to help you survive.

EMILY NAGOSKI AND AMELIA NAGOSKI

EXERCISE 1

Celebrate Your Victories



While much of Faith is about believing in your future, it's also about believing that you are victorious today. Because your healing journey is an ongoing process, personal victories achieved along the way can go unnoticed. You might have days where you feel you've made very little progress in your healing. You might get frustrated and impatient, focusing on the doubts, struggles, and setbacks you've experienced. These kinds of thoughts and feelings can happen instinctively, which is why it's important to practice self-compassion and recognize that no matter where you are or what you've done (or haven't done), you are strong and resilient now.

This activity is about highlighting your present strength, courage, and impact. It's about noticing the good things you are already achieving every day and practicing self-kindness in the face of difficulties.

Activity Steps

- 1. At the end of the day, look back and identify at least three victories for that day.** This could be anything you see as a triumph, no matter how small it might seem. Some examples could be:
 - I got out of bed.
 - I finished a project.

- I took a deep breath to ground myself.
- I made progress on something important to me.
- I gave myself a compliment.
- I told my kids I loved them.
- I ran an errand.
- I spent time outside.
- I noticed something beautiful.



You can get more out of this activity by making it a daily practice. However, anytime is a good time to appreciate your personal triumphs.

2. Keep track of your positive observations by writing them down in a journal.

For a more visual experience, you might try recording your daily triumphs on the images provided on pages 161–162. Or, you could mark your triumphs by coloring in a new section for each victory you celebrate. Once you fill in the pages provided, you can print off more pages at yuniquefoundation.org/coloring-pages/ You could also try incorporating your positive observations into art journaling (see activity on page 116).

3. Take a moment after listing your three triumphs to appreciate your actions from the day and celebrate.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Use the observations you've collected to write a self-compassionate letter to yourself.

In this letter, write down what you appreciate about yourself. Some suggestions might be completing each of the following prompts in a positive way:

- I understand that . . .
- I know that you feel . . .
- My guidance to you is . . .

Option #2

Use the Emotion Wheel from the Awareness chapter to explore what emotions you felt as you wrote down your triumphs. Did they change from before to after you thought about your triumphs? Did they change over time as you practice seeing your strengths?

I'M NOT
AFRAID OF
storms,
FOR I AM
LEARNING HOW
TO SAIL MY
ship.





SHE
believed
SHE COULD,
SO SHE
did!





*Every struggle is like mud—
there are always some lotus
seeds waiting to sprout.*

AMIT RAY



EXERCISE 2

Post-Traumatic Growth



Imagine that your healing journey is like that of a flower. A lotus flower, though buried in muck and mud, has the capacity to rise through the darkness to beautifully bloom and thrive above. Its seeds can lay dormant for hundreds of years, but still experience “rebirth” when placed in just the right conditions. Similarly, working through the struggle and difficulties of trauma can lead to unexpected growth and strength on the other side. This is called **post-traumatic growth**, which is defined as the **positive changes that occur as a person works through their healing journey after trauma.**

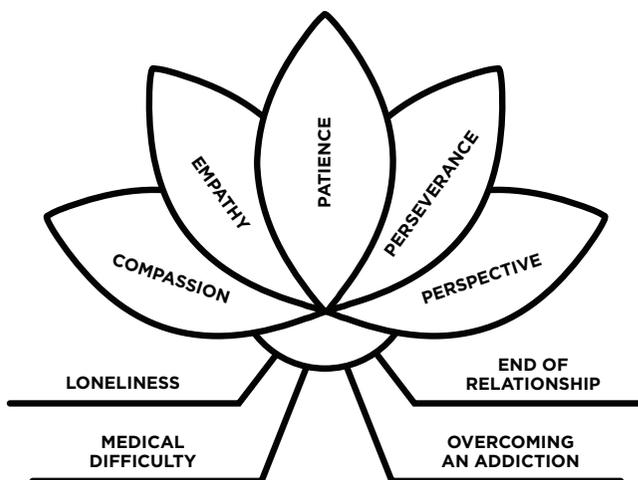
Sometimes these strengths aren’t easy to appreciate or see in the moment, but cultivating the strategy of Faith not only helps you believe in your ability to grow and heal in the future, it also helps you recognize your strengths and the growth that you’ve already developed. By seeing the triumphs, ways you’ve grown, and positive action you’ve taken amidst your struggles, you can shift your perspective from looking back with hopelessness to looking forward with Faith.

As a survivor, you already have strength, but this activity will help you think through other ways you may have grown on your healing journey so far.



Everyone grows in different ways and at different times, and no one is required to grow from difficulties. Here, you have the power over your own story.

Take a look at the lotus flower below. On the roots of the flower are examples of struggles someone might experience. On each of the petals are examples of strengths that can be developed amidst those struggles.



Activity Steps

1. **Print off a copy of the lotus flower from our website or trace one of the lotus flower images (available on pages 167–168) into your notebook.** Or, if you'd rather, gather a handful of sticky notes and place them onto the top half of a blank page to represent your petals.
2. **Identify a challenge or struggle you have worked through or are currently working through.** (It may be helpful to start with something more minor before thinking through a larger one.) Write this beneath the roots of your lotus flower image or on the bottom-half of your blank page.

3. Fill in the petals with potential growth.

Consider areas in which you may have grown (or would like to grow) as you worked through or are working through the challenge. Write these down on the petals of the lotus flower or onto each of your sticky notes.

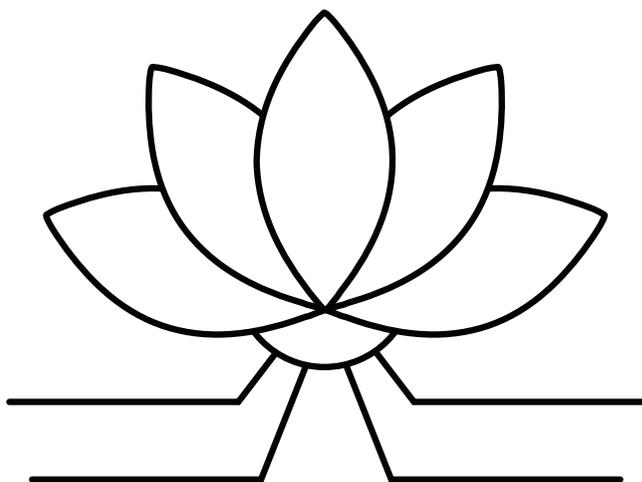
Below is a list of areas of potential growth you can consider if you are struggling to get started. This list isn't comprehensive, so feel free to add your own!

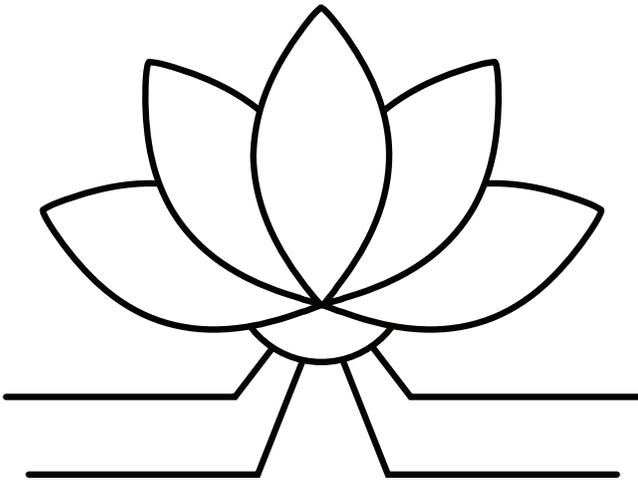
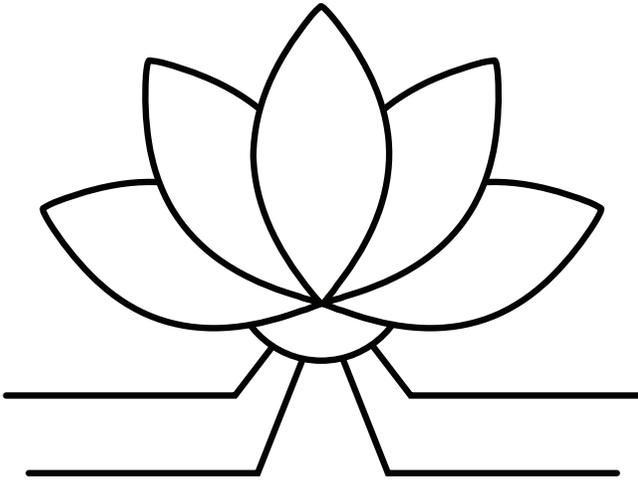
- Personal strength
- Connection with others
- New possibilities
- Spiritual change
- Appreciation of life
- Self-discovery
- Emotional regulation
- Treatment of others
- Enhanced family closeness
- Self-understanding
- Sense of belonging
- Life satisfaction
- Will to live
- Greater belief in self
- Compassion
- Increased faith in people
- Lifestyle changes
- Optimism
- Empathy
- Resilience
- Perseverance
- Patience

4. **Appreciate your growth.** Once you feel satisfied with how many petals you've filled, take a moment to appreciate the amazing qualities you have today that help you continue making steps forward in your healing journey.

Deepen Your Experience

You can apply the metaphor of the lotus flower toward Mindfulness and the thoughts you choose to focus on. The roots can represent a difficult thought that you have been struggling with and would like to change in order to make room for new growth. (Example: *"I can't be around my family because it's too painful."*) The petals can represent the reframed thought that will empower your hope and healing (Example: *"I can choose to be around people in my life who make me feel safe and loved, and I am capable of establishing and maintaining boundaries."*)







*Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?*

MARY OLIVER

EXERCISE 3

Looking Ahead



A key part of Faith is recognizing that things won't stay the same forever. It's about looking ahead and seeing new potential—seeing a future that is different from the way it's “always” been, or the way it will “always” be. Sometimes it can be easier to look ahead if you have something that you are looking toward—something that you care about or will bring you joy.

This activity will help you identify the things that matter to you. In doing this, you can have a clearer vision of what you're journeying toward. Whatever you identify as important to you can serve as reminders to why you're embracing the belief that healing is possible. It can also help you make decisions by aligning the choices you make with what matters most to you.

Activity Steps

- 1. Imagine a typical, average day in your life when everything goes right.** This doesn't mean a day when you win the lottery or go on vacation. Rather, it's a day that includes your normal routine, but still becomes memorable as one of the best days you've had. This could be a day that occurs tomorrow, next week, next month, next year, etc.
- 2. Picture what happens during this day, starting from when you wake up to when you go to bed.**

- Where do you go?
 - What do you do?
 - How do you interact with others?
 - Who do you spend your time with?
 - What experiences do you have?
 - What details make it a good day?
- 3. As you think about these questions, write down a description of your day.**
 - 4. When you finish your description, reflect back on your ideal “normal” day.** What insights does it give about what matters most to you? What everyday things bring you the most joy?
 - 5. Write down a list of at least three things you learned.** Keep that list someplace where you can refer to it when you need a reminder.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Another way to look ahead is by imagining your future self sending you a message. Below is a brief visualization that can help:

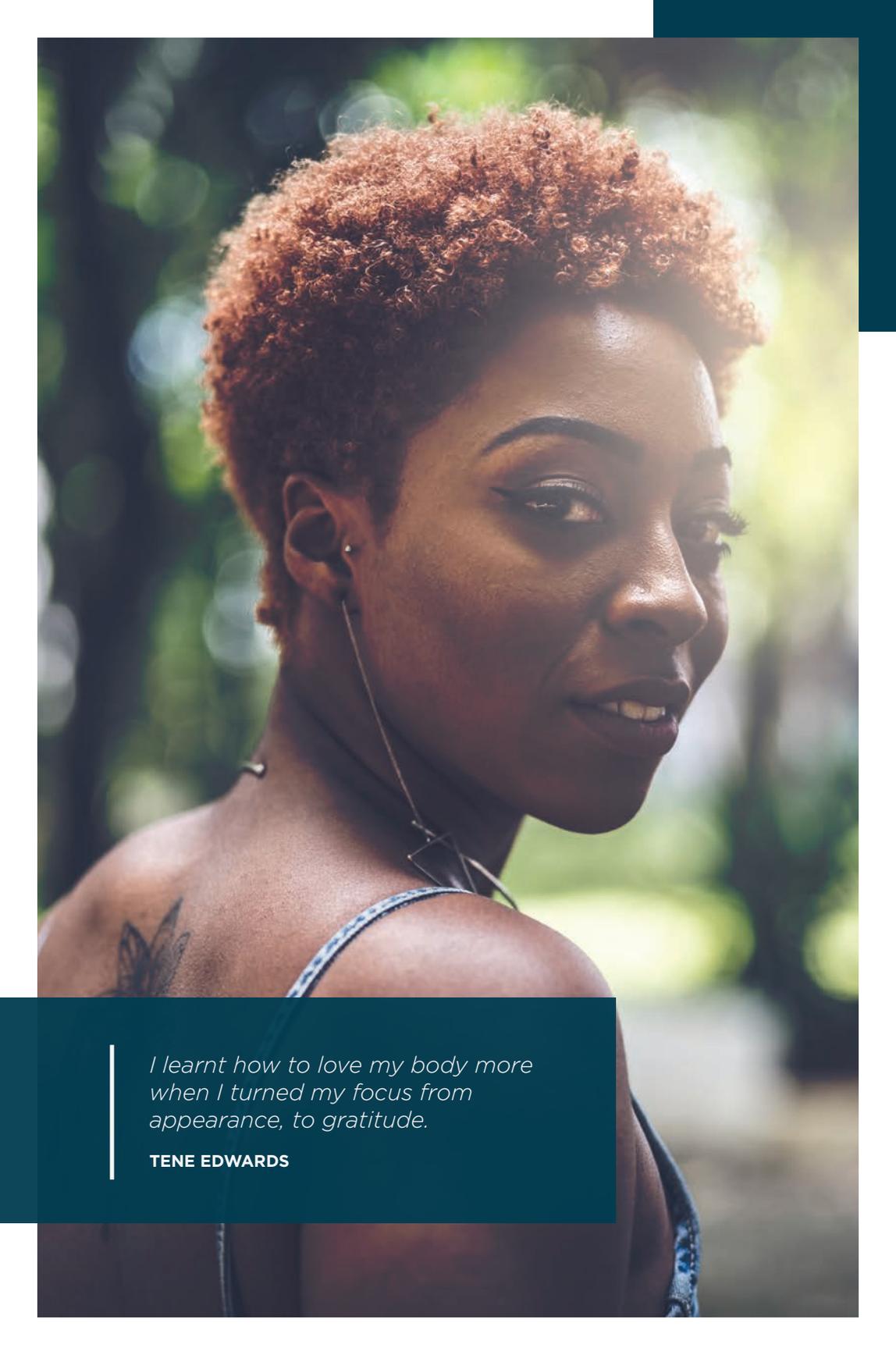
“Close your eyes and imagine you are standing on a beach looking out toward the horizon dividing the sea and sky. You spot a rowboat arriving ashore. Your future self steps out of the boat and walks towards you. As they come closer, you see that they’re carrying a small box

that they are holding with care. They hand you their gift, which is a message of wisdom that can help in this very moment. You open the box and look inside. What does the message say?”

Option #2

If you'd prefer more guidance or inspiration on identifying what matters the most to you, the list of words below may provide you with more ideas. **Review the list and circle any words that might stand out as meaningful to you.**

- Acceptance
- Achievement
- Adventure
- Ambition
- Authenticity
- Authority
- Balance
- Beauty
- Belonging
- Challenge
- Comfort
- Commitment
- Compassion
- Confidence
- Connection
- Contribution
- Courage
- Creativity
- Dependability
- Determination
- Discipline
- Discovery
- Duty
- Empathy
- Excitement
- Fame
- Family
- Freedom
- Forgiveness
- Friendship
- Fun
- Gratitude
- Health
- Honesty
- Hope
- Humility
- Humor
- Independence
- Intellect
- Integrity
- Intuition
- Knowledge
- Leisure
- Love
- Loyal
- Open-minded
- Opportunity
- Optimism
- Originality
- Passion
- Patience
- Peace
- Perseverance
- Pleasure
- Popularity
- Power
- Purpose
- Relationships
- Reliability
- Respect
- Resilience
- Responsibility
- Safety
- Self-Acceptance
- Self-Esteem
- Self-Respect
- Selflessness
- Sexuality
- Skilled
- Solitude
- Spirituality
- Stability
- Tolerance
- Tradition
- Wealth



*I learnt how to love my body more
when I turned my focus from
appearance, to gratitude.*

TENE EDWARDS

EXERCISE 4

Your Body Will Thank You

**Disclaimer:**

Not all exercises are suitable for everyone. If you are concerned about whether the exercises in this movement activity are right for you, do not do them unless you have cleared it with your physician. These exercises can result in injury. If at any point during your exercise you begin to feel faint, dizzy, or have physical discomfort, you should stop immediately. You are responsible for exercising within your limits and seeking medical advice and attention as appropriate. The Yunique Foundation is not responsible for any injuries that result from participating in this activity.

Have you ever done something for your body in the past that you feel grateful for today? For example, you might have gotten a full night's sleep so you could focus on a task the next day. Or perhaps you took a walk around the block and felt more invigorated afterwards. Such everyday actions not only help you to feel better physically but also help to heal the trauma that is stored in your body. **Applying the strategy of Faith to helping your body heal from trauma sometimes means doing things today that you might not see immediate benefits from, but that your future self will look back on and thank yourself for.**

Activity Steps

1. **Envision your future self and cultivate a feeling of kindness toward them.**
2. **Ask yourself, "What is one thing I could do today for my body that my future self would thank me for?"**

3. Take action on at least one thing you can do today.

Here are some tips to help select an action and plan when you're going to do it:

- Write it down in your calendar as a plan so you don't have to decide what to do when the moment comes (and potentially make excuses not to do it).
- If you don't have a lot of time or are looking to start somewhere, you can start with something small but meaningful—like taking a few centering breaths at stop lights as you drive or taking the stairs instead of the elevator to an appointment.
- If you feel stuck, here is a brief list of ideas you can try out:
 - » Stretch before going to bed.
 - » Go on a short walk (either on your own or with a loved one).
 - » Dance in your kitchen.
 - » Give (or receive) a meaningful hug.
 - » Turn housework into a workout.
 - » Take the stairs.
 - » Lift a few weights.
 - » Eat something nutritious.
 - » Set aside some time to exercise.
 - » Order a water instead of a soda.
 - » Go to bed early.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

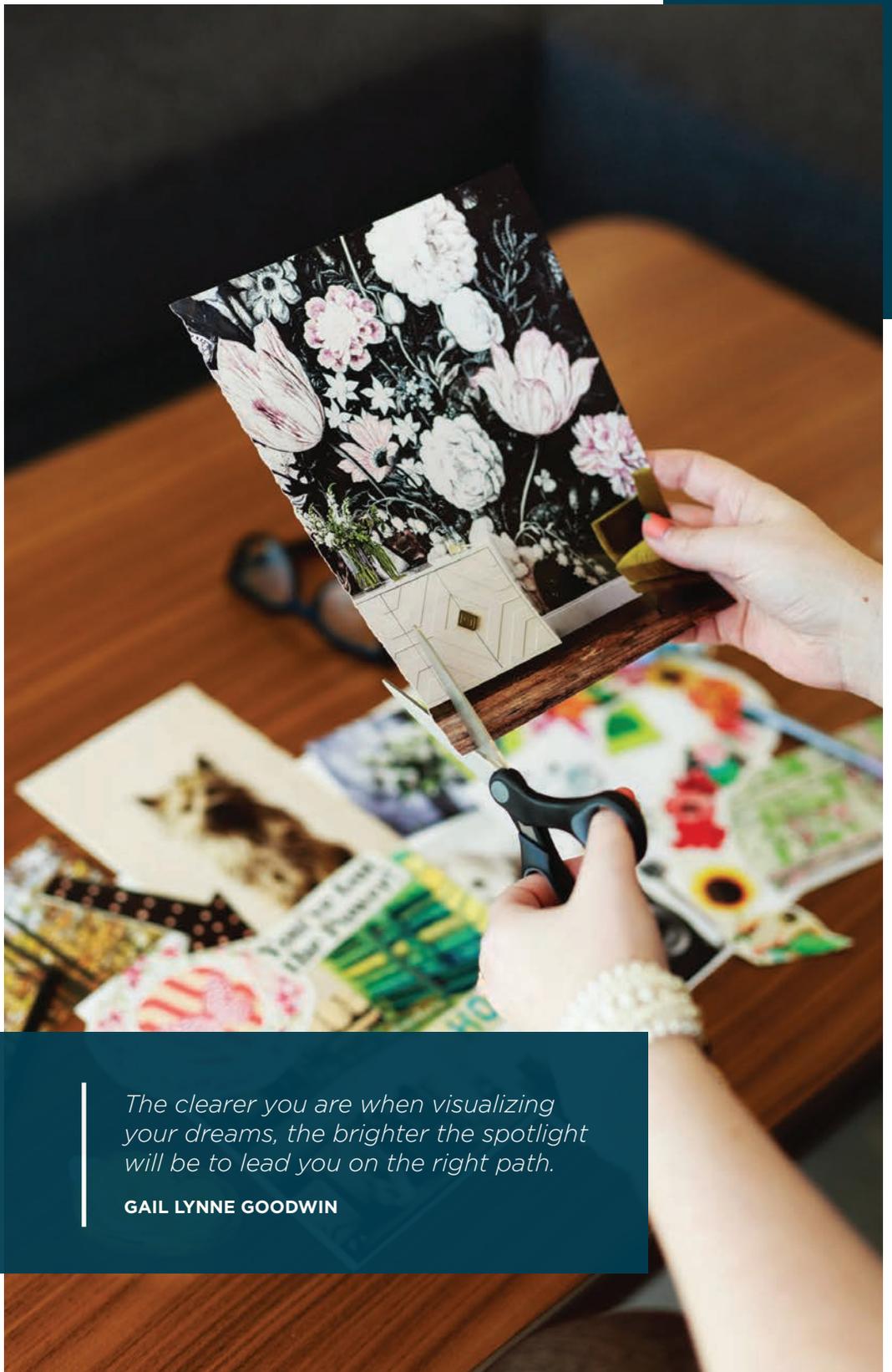
Try pairing your “one thing” with another one of the 5 Strategies. For example:

- Pair a five-minute walk with the “Paced Breathing” activity on page 40.
- Pair a stretch before bed with the “Progressive Muscle Relaxation” activity on page 80.
- Pair eating a nutritious snack with the “Mindful Eating” activity on page 138.
- Pair going to bed early with the “Creating a Sleep Routine” activity on page 24.

Whatever you try, utilizing more than one strategy in your daily actions will provide a more enriching experience.

Option #2

Write a short letter to your past self thanking them for an action they took that benefited you today.



The clearer you are when visualizing your dreams, the brighter the spotlight will be to lead you on the right path.

GAIL LYNNE GOODWIN

EXERCISE 5

Creating a Vision Board



As discussed in the “Looking Ahead” activity on page 170, without understanding the things that matter most to you, you may not have a clear idea of where you want to go or who you want to be. While writing down the things you care most about is important, another way to be proactive in looking ahead is by visualizing your future—literally.

A vision board is a collection of images that illustrate what you want your life to look like.

Vision boards can give you a place to think through your dreams, allow you to really SEE what they could look like, and give you a daily reminder of what is important to you. Keep in mind, its mere existence can't alter your future. To turn your vision board dreams into reality, you have to take action!

Activity Steps

- 1. Decide where you want to put your vision board.** Vision boards can be made in a variety of ways, like a bulletin board in your bedroom, a collage in your journal, a folder on your desk at work, or even a desktop background on your computer. Whatever you choose, make sure it's somewhere you'll see it on a consistent basis. Once you know the size and space you'll be working with, it will make the next steps easier.

2. **Gather images.** Find images that embody what you want, literally or figuratively. For example, if you want to grow a better relationship with someone, you can put a potted plant to represent that growth. Or you might put an image of the two of you together. There are no rules for what you should or shouldn't put. For ideas, you may want to refer to the list of what matters most to you from the "Looking Ahead" activity on page 170.
3. **Put the images together.** Do you want your images to look like a collage with no white space? Do you want images that are all the same shape and size? Spend time organizing the images in a way that feels the most comfortable for you.
4. **Put the date on it.** If creating a vision board resonates with you, you may find yourself creating them more often. Putting the date, even just the month and year, on each one will help you see how your dreams have changed, how you've accomplished your goals, or the ways you've grown over time.
5. **Put it where you'll see it.** You started with an idea of where you wanted it, now is the time to hang it up or put the file on your computer so that you can see it every day and remind yourself what your goals and dreams are.



While having a vision board can be a powerful step in the right direction, it's not going to accomplish your dreams. Only you can do that by using your vision board as motivation and inspiration to set some goals.

Deepen Your Experience

Option #1

Create a vision board that focuses on one particular area of your life. For example, you could create a vision board specifically for relationships in your life. You can have multiple vision boards, or you can create a new one anytime you feel the need. If you find them inspiring and empowering, you could create one for work and one for home. You could have a few throughout your house that display different things you'd like to focus on (for example, hanging a vision board about your relationship with your significant other in your bedroom, or placing a nutrition-focused one in your kitchen).

Option #2

Use your vision board to set a new goal. Remember, a goal is something realistic and measurable that you set out to accomplish. You can start small and start today by answering the question below:

What is one thing I can do this week to get closer to my vision?

**IT IS GOOD TO HAVE AN END
TO JOURNEY TOWARDS, BUT
IT IS THE JOURNEY THAT
MATTERS, IN THE END.**

Ursula Le Guin



the
younique
FOUNDATION