My Truth Workbook

A trauma-informed educational wellness worksheet for reflection, choice, self-care, and support.

Use this at your own pace. Skip, adapt, pause, or stop. You are allowed to choose what fits your body, culture, privacy, energy, safety, access needs, and real-life limits today.

This is a reflection tool, not a test. One honest sentence, one checked box, or one small next step can be enough.

A printable reflection and practice resource Created by Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. This worksheet is a free educational wellness resource from My Reflective Collective.

- Use what supports you. Skip, pause, adapt, or connect with a licensed therapist, healthcare provider, advocate, or trusted support if reflection brings something up.

Love Without

Losing You

Know what's healthy. Name what you need. Trust what you know.

You do not need a perfect relationship.

You deserve one where dignity, consent, safety, and mutual care are ordinary.

emergency services.

How to Use This Workbook

This is a compass, not a verdict.

- Use these pages to notice patterns, clarify what matters, and prepare for honest conversation or professional support. A single difficult moment does not define a relationship; repeated patterns, power, impact, repair, and safety matter.
- Answer from your lived experience, not from what you think you should feel.
- Consider patterns over time, including what happens after conflict or after you say no.

immediate danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis support. Copyright Michelle

- Skip any prompt that feels unsafe, exposing, or overwhelming.
- Use a safer device or location if someone may monitor you.
- Bring pages to a licensed therapist or advocate only if you choose.

What I Would Like To Receive From Using My Truth

What I Want To Process, Understand, Or Begin Healing

The purpose is not to diagnose a partner.

It is to hear yourself more clearly.

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Before We Begin: A Note About Truth and Self-Trust

A personal note from lived experience, professional care, and hope.

I created this workbook as a licensed therapist, but also as a person who knows that healing after a toxic relationship is not linear. Recovery can move forward, circle back, surprise you, exhaust you, and still be real. A difficult day does not erase the growth that came before it.

- My professional background gives me language for patterns, trauma responses, boundaries, self-worth, and healthy connection. My lived experience taught me something different: insight is important, but being met with dignity, choice, patience, and practical tools can help a person begin trusting themselves again.

I do not assume that what helped me will fit you. Your history, culture, identity, body, relationships, beliefs, access, and pace belong to you. My hope is simply that even one question, one practice, or one moment of recognition from these pages helps you feel less alone and more able to hear your own wisdom.

This is why the workbook is person-centered and trauma-informed. You may pause, skip, disagree, adapt, return, ask for support, or choose not to answer. You remain the expert on your life.

Pause And Ask Yourself

If you did not have to prove, defend, or minimize your experience, what truth might become easier to hear?

_____

_____ I am not here to tell you who to become.

I am here to offer a steady place where you can remember who you are.

With care, emergency services.

Disclaimer and Safety

A guided wellness experience can complement care; it cannot replace it.

This educational workbook offers general reflection about relationships, needs, boundaries, consent, communication, and well-being. It is not psychotherapy, diagnosis, medical treatment, legal advice, risk assessment, or a substitute for individualized professional care.

- Use it as a companion to your self-growth journey. If strong emotions, memories, symptoms, relationship concerns, or questions about safety arise, pause and connect with a licensed therapist, health-care provider, domestic-violence advocate, crisis service, attorney, or other qualified professional appropriate to the concern.

Couples counseling is not appropriate for every situation and can increase risk when coercive control or abuse is present. Seek individualized guidance from a qualified domestic-violence advocate when safety or control is a concern.

People, Professionals, And Safer Places I Can Contact

- Keep written material only if it is safe to do so.

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What Healthy Love Makes Possible

Healthy does not mean conflict-free; it means both people retain dignity and choice.

In a healthy relationship, care is visible in everyday behavior. Both people can be whole human beings - connected, but not erased.

- I can be honest without fearing punishment, humiliation, retaliation, or abandonment tactics.
- My no, not now, stop, and I changed my mind are respected.

We both have meaningful influence over decisions that affect us.

Privacy and independence can coexist with trust.

Conflict can lead to accountability, repair, learning, or a respectful decision to disagree.

Affection, sex, money, parenting, faith, work, identity, and friendships are not used as tools of control.

I feel free to seek health care, therapy, family, friendship, education, work, and community.

I recognize myself in this relationship.

A healthy relationship should make room for two people - not require one person to become smaller so the other can feel secure.

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The Relationship Spectrum

Look for patterns of equality, attempts to control, and imbalances of power.

Healthy

Unhealthy

Abusive

Respect, equality, honesty, consent, independence, shared decisions, accountable repair.

Pressure, distrust, repeated boundary problems, avoidance, one-sided decisions, hurt without meaningful repair.

Fear, coercion, threats, isolation, stalking, sexual pressure, financial control, intimidation, violence, or punishment for autonomy.

Questions that reveal the pattern Who is allowed to say no?

_____

_____ Who adapts most often - and what happens if they do not?

_____

_____ Can each person have privacy, money, relationships, beliefs, and goals?

_____

_____ Is harm followed by ownership and lasting change, or excuses and repetition?

_____

_____ Do I feel safe telling the truth about the relationship?

_____

_____

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which pattern have I been explaining away because the loving moments are also real? What would I notice if both truths were allowed to exist?

_____

_____ WHAT I NOTICE - INCLUDING FREQUENCY, IMPACT, AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

_____

_____ emergency services.

A Quick Relationship Check-In

Mark often, sometimes, rarely, or not sure. This is reflection, not a score or diagnosis.

I feel respected when we agree and when we disagree.

- I can express needs without being mocked, punished, or ignored.
- My time, body, privacy, work, money, relationships, and identity are treated as mine.

We make important decisions with meaningful input from both people.

Apologies include ownership, repair, and changed behavior.

- I can raise a concern without the conversation becoming entirely about my flaws.

Affection and support are not withdrawn to force compliance.

I have access to transportation, communication, finances, identification, and health care.

I feel more like myself over time, not less.

- I can imagine setting a boundary without planning for retaliation.

The Three Answers That Deserve My Attention

Do not let a total score talk you out of what you know.

One serious safety concern deserves attention even if other parts feel loving.

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Before, During, and After Your body and behavior can hold information your explanations miss.

Before We Connect Or Talk

During Our Time Together

Afterward

What Helps Me Return To Myself

Do I prepare, rehearse, hide, appease, or monitor their mood?

_____
_____ Can I breathe, think, speak, and change my mind?

Do I leave feeling settled, energized, confused, ashamed, depleted, afraid, or responsible for everything?

Are these feelings occasional responses to stress, or a repeated relationship pattern?

Feelings are information, not automatic proof.

Pair them with observable behavior, patterns, and support.

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Equality and Power Love and power live together; health depends on how power is handled.

Differences in income, health, race, gender, immigration status, disability, age, parenting role, housing, social support, or professional authority can shape a relationship. Difference is not automatically harm. The question is whether it becomes leverage or shared responsibility.

Where I Have Choice And Access

Where I Feel Dependent Or Overruled

Who controls money, transportation, housing, documents, technology, or health decisions?

Whose work, rest, friendships, culture, faith, sexuality, and goals receive protection?

Can the person with more access use it transparently and responsibly?

What would make decision-making more equal?

One Conversation, Agreement, Or Outside Support That Could Increase Equality

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Communication That Protects Both People

Good communication is not perfect wording; it is enough safety for honesty and listening.

We can name one issue without collecting every past mistake.

Questions are used to understand, not interrogate or trap.

Either person can request a pause and there is a clear plan to return.

Volume, insults, threats, door-blocking, reckless driving, property damage, or intimidation are not treated as normal conflict.

Both people can summarize what the other meant before defending themselves.

Important conversations lead to a clear next step or respectful uncertainty.

A grounded opening

When _____ happens, I notice _____. The need or value underneath is _____. I am asking for

_____. Are

you willing to talk about what would work for both of us?

A Conversation I Want To Prepare - And What I Need To Feel Safe

Enough

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Conflict, Repair, and Change The clearest signal may be what happens after someone causes harm.

Repair

Not Yet Repair

Names the behavior; listens to impact; takes responsibility without bargaining; makes amends; accepts boundaries; changes the pattern over time.

Explains intent instead of impact; blames stress, substances, trauma, or you; demands quick forgiveness; uses gifts or affection without accountability; repeats the harm.

A Recent Rupture: What Happened, What Was Owned, And What

Changed

What I Would Need In Order To Experience Meaningful Repair

An apology can begin repair.

Consistent behavior is what makes repair believable.

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Trust, Privacy, and Digital Boundaries Trust is not unlimited access to another person.

We can be honest and still have private thoughts, conversations, journals, accounts, and time.

Passwords, location sharing, photos, messages, and devices are discussed rather than demanded.

Neither person uses constant contact, read receipts, social media, or tracking to prove loyalty.

Jealousy can be named without becoming surveillance, isolation, or punishment.

Intimate images are never shared, saved, or threatened without explicit permission.

Digital access can be changed or withdrawn without retaliation.

Digital Access I Freely Choose

Access Or Monitoring I Do Not Consent To

A Privacy Boundary I Want To Communicate Or Restore

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Consent, Affection, Sex, and Reproductive Choice Consent is voluntary, specific, informed, ongoing, and reversible.

A yes to one activity is not assumed to mean yes to another.

Past consent, marriage, gifts, dates, money, or affection do not create an obligation.

Either person can pause or stop without guilt, anger, pressure, threats, or punishment.

Alcohol, drugs, sleep, fear, age, or impaired understanding can make consent impossible.

Contraception, pregnancy, STI testing, reproductive care, and sexual health decisions are not controlled through sabotage, threats, or pressure.

Affection can be requested and declined without becoming a test of love.

What Helps Me Feel Free To Say Yes

What Helps Me Feel Free To Say No Or Stop

Consent is not the absence of resistance.

It is the presence of meaningful freedom and agreement.

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What Do I Need?

Needs are not evidence that you are demanding; they are information about well-being and compatibility.

- Circle or add what matters: safety, affection, honesty, stability, autonomy, play, reliability, sexuality, rest, respect, growth, shared responsibility, belonging, privacy, adventure, faith, family, creativity, health, financial transparency,

repair.

Need And Why It Matters

HOW IT COULD BE MET - BY ME, US, OR SUPPORT Which need is urgent for safety or health?

Which need can I partly meet outside the relationship?

Which need requires mutual participation?

Which difference may be a compatibility issue rather than a communication failure?

No person can meet every need.

A partner should not require you to abandon the needs that keep you safe, whole, and alive.

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Needs, Preferences, Values, and Non-Negotiables Different kinds of importance call for different responses.

Need

Preference

Value

Non-Negotiable

Supports well-being or functioning.

Meaningful, but flexible in form.

A principle guiding how I live.

Required for dignity, safety, consent, or a core life direction.

What Matters To Me - And Which Category Fits Today

Am I asking for a specific behavior, or hoping they will become a different person?

Could two respectful people be incompatible here?

What am I willing to negotiate, and what would self-abandonment look like?

What consequence belongs to a true non-negotiable?

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My Boundary Map

A boundary names what I will participate in and what I will do to protect my well-being.

Boundaries may be emotional, physical, sexual, digital, financial, time-based, conversational, family-related, spiritual, or connected to work, health, substances, parenting, and privacy.

I Am Available For

I Am Not Available For

I May Need Time Or Conditions For

If This Limit Is Crossed, I Will

A boundary is not a method for controlling another adult.

It is clarity about your participation, access, and next action.

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The Response-to-a-Boundary Test A limit reveals information through the response it receives.

A respectful person may feel disappointed, ask questions, or need time. Respect is shown by what they do with those feelings.

Signs Of Respect

Signs To Take Seriously

Listens; seeks clarity; does not punish; accepts no; collaborates where appropriate; changes behavior; respects consequences and privacy.

Mocks, debates, wears you down, guilt-trips, threatens, retaliates, monitors, recruits others, violates the limit secretly, or makes safety depend on compliance.

Boundary script I am not willing to _____. If it happens, I will _____. I am open to _____. I will not continue this conversation while _____.

A Boundary I Am Considering - And How I Will Prepare For The Response

If setting a boundary could increase danger, consult a domestic-violence advocate and prioritize individualized safety planning.

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Standards and Deal-Breakers Standards describe the relationship you are willing to help build and live inside.

Behaviors I Require For Closeness

Behaviors That End Or Reduce Access

Which standards protect dignity, consent, equality, health, children, finances, or safety?

Which consequences are realistic and within my control?

Where have I called a recurring pattern a one-time mistake?

Where might compassion and accountability both be possible?

Who can help me hold a standard when chemistry, hope, guilt, or fear pulls against it?

A standard is not about finding a flawless person.

It is about refusing to normalize what repeatedly harms you.

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Compatibility Is Not a Moral Verdict Two caring people can want lives that do not fit together.

Compatibility may include values, children, monogamy or relationship structure, location, faith, money, sexuality, communication, health, caregiving, lifestyle, substance use, ambition, culture, family involvement, and willingness to grow.

Where We Align

Where We Differ

Differences We Can Respectfully Navigate

Differences That Ask Someone To Abandon

Themselves

Is this a solvable problem, a manageable difference, or a core incompatibility?

Are both people freely participating in the proposed compromise?

Does the compromise distribute cost and care fairly?

What truth becomes clearer when I stop asking who is wrong?

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My Support Map

Clarity is easier when no single relationship holds your entire world.

Emotional Support

Practical Support

Professional Or Advocacy Support

Community, Cultural, Or Spiritual Support

People Who Help Me Think Clearly

Safer Places And Backup Options

Who listens without taking over?

Who can help with transportation, children, pets, housing, documents, or money?

Who understands safety, trauma, culture, disability, sexuality, or legal concerns?

Who should not receive sensitive information?

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If I Am Concerned: The Next 24-72 Hours

Stabilize a small window of time; do not force a life decision during danger or overwhelm.

In The Next Hour: Safer Place, Basic Need, Device, Person, Or Live

Support

In The Next 24 Hours: Information, Appointment, Document, Child/Pet Plan, Or

Boundary

In The Next 72 Hours: Check-In Person, Professional Support, And Signs I Need More

Help

- Keep identification, medication, keys, money, essential numbers, and documents accessible only if safe.
- Use a safer device or location if monitoring is possible.

Do not announce a plan to leave if doing so could increase danger; individualized safety planning matters.

Reduce access to anything I might use to hurt myself or someone else and involve live support.

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My Decision Compass

A decision can be thoughtful without being certain or permanent.

Stay And Observe

Ask For Change

What pattern and time frame will I watch?

What specific behavior, support, or agreement is needed?

Pause Or Create Space

End Or Reduce Contact

What distance would help me hear myself?

What support and safety planning would I need?

What I Know, What I Do Not Know, And What Information Would Help

The Smallest Next Step That Protects My Dignity And Options

You are allowed to gather information.

You are also allowed to take a safety concern seriously before you have perfect certainty.

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- My Vision of Healthy Love

Define the daily experience, not only the person you hope to find or keep.

How We Communicate

How We Handle Conflict And Repair

How Autonomy And Closeness Coexist

How Consent, Money, Care, And Power Are

Shared

How I Want To Feel - And Who I Want To Be - Inside This Relationship

Pause And Ask Yourself

If this vision became ordinary rather than exceptional, what would change in my body, choices, and daily life?

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A Promise to Myself Empowerment can be quiet, practical, and repeated.

- I will pay attention to patterns, not only promises.
- I will treat my needs, limits, body, culture, identity, health, and intuition as worthy of curiosity and care.
- I will remember that compassion for another person does not require abandoning compassion for myself.
- I will seek qualified support when a relationship question exceeds what a workbook can safely hold.

The Promise I Want To Make To Myself Now

I do not need to know the entire road.

I need enough honesty and support for the next true step.

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Grounded Affirmations for Self-Trust

- Choose the words that feel believable enough to practice today.
- My experience deserves my attention, even when I am still making sense of it.

I am allowed to need time, information, privacy, and support.

- My needs are information; they are not proof that I am too much.

A boundary does not make me unloving.

- I can care about someone and still take harmful behavior seriously.

I do not have to earn respectful communication, bodily autonomy, or safety.

Confusion is a reason to slow down, not a command to surrender my judgment.

I am allowed to change my mind when new information becomes clear.

- My healing does not have to be linear to be real.

- I can ask for professional help before I know exactly what to call the problem.

I am learning to trust patterns, actions, and my own lived experience.

I deserve relationships where I can remain fully human.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which affirmation creates relief? Which one creates resistance? What might that resistance be protecting or remembering?

AN AFFIRMATION I WANT TO REWRITE IN WORDS THAT SOUND LIKE ME An affirmation does not need to feel perfectly true.

It can be a direction your self-trust is learning to face.

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Affirmations for Courage and Choice Courage can include staying curious, asking for change, seeking support, pausing, or leaving safely.

- I can take one small step without deciding my entire future today.

I am not responsible for preventing every difficult feeling another adult has.

- I can be compassionate without volunteering for repeated harm.

I am allowed to protect access to my time, body, attention, money, home, and peace.

- I can disappoint someone and still be a good person.

I do not need unanimous agreement to honor a limit that protects me.

Support is not weakness; it is a way of widening my options.

- I can survive the discomfort of telling myself the truth.

I am worthy of repair that includes changed behavior.

I am allowed to build a life that feels steady, reciprocal, and free.

There is no shame in beginning again, returning to support, or revisiting a decision.

Even now, there are parts of me that know how to move toward care.

Pause And Ask Yourself

If I trusted that my worth would remain intact no matter how someone responded, what choice would become easier to consider?

Words I Want Available On A Hard Day

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When You Need Live Help

A workbook can support reflection; live people are needed for crisis, danger, treatment, and individualized safety planning.

Immediate danger or a life-threatening emergency: contact local emergency services. 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988 in the United States for suicidal thoughts, emotional distress, mental-health crisis, or substance-use crisis.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233), text START to 88788, or thehotline.org.

Advocates

can help with individualized safety planning. love is respect: 866-331-9474, text LOVEIS to 22522, or loveisrespect.org for young people and anyone seeking relationship education or advocate support.

RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline: 800-656-HOPE (4673), text HOPE to 64673, or rainn.org/hotline.

StrongHearts Native Helpline: call or text 844-762-8483 for Native American and Alaska Native domestic or sexual violence support.

Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline: call or text 800-422-4453; text GO to begin.

SAMHSA National Helpline: 800-662-HELP (4357) or FindTreatment.gov for mental-health and substance-use treatment information and referrals. 211: call 211 or visit 211.org for local food, housing, utilities, transportation, family support, health, caregiver, and community resources.

If someone may monitor your device or written materials, use a safer device or location and protect your browsing and storage choices.

Numbers, People, And Safer Places I Want Easy To Find

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Where the Three-Volume Journey Begins This compass helps you notice. The next books help you return, reclaim, and build.

Volume One - Welcome Home to Yourself Reconnect with your experience, grief, nervous system, creativity, and inner steadiness.

Volume Two - Reclaiming Your Voice

Turn insight into boundaries, decisions, support, standards, and relationship clarity.

Volume Three - Choosing Peace

Build self-love, whole-person care, healthy connection, practical peace, and a future organized around dignity.

THE PAGE OR THEME I WANT TO CARRY INTO THE SERIES You are not beginning with nothing.

You are beginning with your observations, your values, and a voice worth hearing.

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About Michelle

Professional knowledge, lived understanding, and respect for each person's path.

Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC, is a licensed mental-health counselor whose work centers education, reflection, self-trust, boundaries, trauma-informed care, healthy connection, and practical pathways toward

well-being.

Her perspective is also shaped by lived experience. Michelle knows that recovery after a toxic relationship is rarely a straight line. Healing can include clarity and grief, courage and doubt, progress and returning to old questions.

She

created this collection from the belief that nonlinear does not mean unsuccessful.

Michelle brings an eclectic approach because no single method, worksheet, diagnosis, or story can fully describe a person. Her work draws from psychoeducation, CBT-informed reflection, mindfulness, somatic awareness, creativity, nature, values, self-compassion, and practical planning - always as invitations rather than requirements.

She does not offer her story as a blueprint. She offers it as a hand extended across the distance: a way of saying that change is possible, support matters, and even one useful idea can become part of a reader's own path home.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What kind of guide helps me feel capable rather than managed? What do I want any helper, therapist, author, or loved one to understand about how I heal?

The reader remains the expert on their life.

The work is to offer language, options, dignity, and room for their own wisdom.

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Resources and Sources

- Use live, local help when a worksheet is not enough.

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233), text START to 88788, or thehotline.org. Use a safer device if monitoring is a concern. love is respect: 866-331-9474, text LOVEIS to 22522, or loveisrespect.org for relationship education and advocate support. community resources.

Washington: wa211.org; wscadv.org for local domestic-violence programs; helpmegrowwa.org for family navigation; parenttrust.org or 800-932-HOPE (4673) for parents and caregivers.

Educational sources thehotline.org/resources/healthy-relationships/
loveisrespect.org/resources/boundaries-expectations/
loveisrespect.org/everyone-deserves-a-healthy-relationship/how-to-set-boundaries/
plannedparenthood.org/learn/teens/sex/all-about-consent
joinonelove.org/resources/signs-healthy-relationship/ Resources support informed choice.

They do not replace individualized mental-health, medical, legal, or safety guidance.

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Your relationship with yourself is part of every relationship you build.

May your love include honesty.

May your boundaries protect what matters.

May you never have to disappear in order to belong.

With care,

My Truth

The Reality Anchor

Memory can become fragmented under prolonged stress. A reality anchor separates observable events from interpretation without requiring you to dismiss emotion.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What fact would remain true even if nobody agreed with my explanation?

What I Observed

What I Made It Mean

Date or context Exact words or actions Immediate impact

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Patterns Across Time

A pattern is built from frequency, predictability, escalation, impact, and what happens after harm - not simply from one upsetting event.

Pause And Ask Yourself

If I stopped treating each incident as unrelated, what larger pattern might I see?

Early Pattern

Current Pattern

What intensified?

What improved?

What stayed the same?

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Green, Yellow, and Red Signals Green signals support dignity; yellow signals invite attention; red signals require safety awareness or live support.

Context matters, but impact should not be minimized.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which signal has my body noticed before my mind was ready to name it?

Signal, Example, And Impact

Support Or Response

Green: mutual respect

Yellow: pressure or recurring unease Red: fear, coercion, or danger

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The Cost of the Relationship Relationship strain can affect sleep, work, parenting, finances, health, friendships, sexuality, concentration, and identity.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Where am I paying a cost that nobody else can see?

Area Of My Life

Cost, Change, Or Loss

What has narrowed?

What needs care now?

What could be restored?

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Coercive Control: A Pattern of Restricted Freedom

Coercive control can involve monitoring, isolation, intimidation, rules, financial restriction, threats, or punishment that reduces another person's autonomy.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What choices feel technically available but emotionally or practically unsafe to make?

Choice Or Freedom

Pressure, Consequence, Or Barrier

- Use individualized DV safety planning

Do not confront control if danger may increase Use a safer device when needed

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Financial Autonomy Check

Healthy financial interdependence includes transparency, meaningful input, access to essentials, and freedom from threats or sabotage.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What would I need in order to experience money as shared information rather than leverage?

Access I Have

Access Or Information I Need

Accounts and debts Income and major decisions Documents and emergency funds

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The Relationship Climate for Children Children can be affected by tension, fear, unpredictability, role reversal, loyalty conflicts, or being used as messengers even when conflict is not directed at them.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What are children learning here about love, power, apology, and safety?

What They May Notice

What Protection Or Support Could Help

- Keep children out of adult mediation Seek qualified child/family support Prioritize safety over appearances

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Sexual and Reproductive Autonomy Healthy intimacy protects freely given, specific, ongoing consent and independent access to sexual and reproductive health care.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Can I say yes, no, stop, or I changed my mind without pressure or consequence?

What Supports Freedom

What Undermines Freedom

Contraception and pregnancy choices STI testing and health care Affection without obligation

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Substances and Relationship Safety Alcohol or drug use may intensify risk or conflict, but substances do not excuse abuse. Safety and treatment needs may overlap without being identical.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What becomes more dangerous, confusing, or unpredictable when substances are involved?

Pattern I Notice

Safety Or Treatment Support

Plan transportation Protect children and medications Use emergency help for overdose or danger

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Digital Safety and Evidence Technology can support connection or enable surveillance, impersonation, harassment, location tracking, and financial access. Digital changes should be planned safely.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which device, account, or shared service may reveal more than I intend?

Digital Access Map

Safer Next Step

Review account recovery options Preserve evidence only if safe Seek advocate guidance

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Beliefs I Learned About Love

Family, culture, faith, media, community, and past relationships can shape what we normalize, expect, or fear.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which belief once helped me belong but now asks me to abandon myself?

Belief I Inherited

Belief I Am Choosing

Love requires sacrifice Conflict means failure Leaving means I did not try

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Attachment Curiosity Without Blame

Attachment language can support curiosity about closeness, distance, reassurance, and fear. It should not be used to excuse harm or diagnose a partner from a worksheet.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What do I reach for when connection feels uncertain - and what would secure support look like?

My Protective Response

A More Supported Response

Pursue

Withdraw

Freeze or appease

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Conflict, Incompatibility, or Control?

Conflict involves competing needs; incompatibility involves differences that may not fit; control restricts another person's freedom or safety.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which category best explains the repeated problem - and what evidence supports that?

What Is Happening

CONFLICT, DIFFERENCE, OR CONTROL?

Can both people say no?

Can compromise be mutual?

Does fear shape the outcome?

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Evidence of Accountability Accountability becomes visible through accurate ownership, curiosity about impact, repair, respect for consequences, and sustained behavioral change.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What has changed when nobody is watching and no reward is guaranteed?

Promise Or Apology

Evidence Over Time

Specific ownership Concrete repair Sustained change

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Promises, Potential, and Present Reality Hope can be meaningful, but decisions deserve information about current behavior and demonstrated capacity - not only potential.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Am I relating to the person in front of me or to the future I keep trying to earn?

What Is True Today

What I Am Hoping Will Change

Evidence for hope Cost of waiting Time frame I choose

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Empathy Without Self-Abandonment

Understanding why someone behaves as they do does not require accepting repeated harm or removing consequences.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Where has my compassion for their pain replaced compassion for my own?

What I Understand

What I Still Require

Context is not consent Explanation is not repair Care can include limits

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Readiness for Change Change is more likely when a person names the problem, accepts impact, seeks appropriate help, tolerates limits, and practices different behavior consistently.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Who is currently doing the work of creating change? 0 - not at all 5 - sometimes 10 - consistently

Sign Of Readiness

Self-initiated help Respect for boundaries No demand for quick trust

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Information I Need Before a Decision Clarity may require legal, financial, medical, housing, parenting, immigration, workplace, or advocacy information.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which unknown keeps me stuck because I am trying to answer it alone?

Question Or Unknown

Person Or Source To Consult

Facts before urgency Private consultation Safer information storage

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services.

My Personalized Safety Layers

Safety planning can include immediate danger, emotional crisis, digital privacy, children, pets, transportation, finances, documents, work, and health needs.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which layer would make the biggest difference if circumstances changed quickly?

Safety Layer

Action, Person, Or Backup

911 for immediate danger 988 for U.S. crisis support 800-799-SAFE for DV advocacy

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services.

Asking for Support Without Telling Everything You can ask for practical or emotional help without disclosing more than feels safe or useful.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What is the smallest honest sentence that could open a door to support?

Person And Request

What I Want To Keep Private

Can you listen?

Can I store something here?

Can you check in tomorrow?

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services.

Preparing for Therapy or Advocacy A first conversation can focus on goals, safety, symptoms, patterns, and what kind of help you want. You do not need a perfect timeline.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What would help me leave a first appointment feeling more informed and less alone?

What I Want Them To Know

Questions I Want To Ask

Confidentiality and records Experience with trauma or DV Accessibility and cultural fit

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services.

Evidence of My Capacity Toxic dynamics can obscure competence. Naming what you have navigated can rebuild accurate self-regard without romanticizing survival.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What have I handled, learned, protected, or created that my self-doubt leaves out?

Evidence Of Strength

How I Can Use It Now

A decision I made A resource I found A value I protected

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services.

Fourteen Days of Observation Short, structured observation can reduce all-or-nothing thinking. Record events, impact, repair, and your level of freedom without provoking unsafe situations.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What becomes visible when I collect information instead of arguing with myself?

Daily Observation

Pattern Or Question

No secret tracking if discovery creates danger Keep notes only if safe Seek live help for urgent risk

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services.

Clarity Is a Beginning Clarity does not force one decision. It expands your ability to choose support, boundaries, information, distance, repair, or safety.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What do I know now that I am no longer willing to unknow?

What I Know

One support One boundary One act of self-respect danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health crisis support. Copyright Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC. My Reflective Collective.

More free My Reflective Collective tools Printable links below. The worksheet wording itself is unchanged.

Scan the QR code or use the first link to open this worksheet online.

The online reader can support read-aloud tools and browser translation.

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They are not therapy, diagnosis, medical care, legal advice, crisis care, or individualized safety planning.

Pause or stop any activity that feels wrong, unsafe, inaccessible, or too much.

For immediate danger or a medical emergency, call 911. In the U.S., call or text 988 for crisis support.

Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC | My Reflective Collective

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If there is immediate danger or a medical emergency: Call 911 in the United States or use your local emergency number. For U.S. suicide or mental-health crisis support, call or text 988. For relationship-safety support, contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 800-799-7233, text START to 88788, or visit TheHotline.org from a safer device when possible.

Privacy and safer searching If someone may monitor your device, accounts, internet connection, location, downloads, or browser activity, consider using a safer device and a trusted network. Private browsing may reduce locally saved history but does not make activity invisible. Clearing history can also be noticed. A website Quick Exit button changes the page; it cannot erase browser, download, router, account, employer, school, carrier, or device records. Choose only steps that feel safer in your situation.

Do not store identifying or safety-sensitive answers where another person may find them.

Educational scope and professional limits This resource provides general psychoeducation, reflection, and wellness support. It is not therapy, counseling, diagnosis, assessment, treatment, medical advice, legal advice, crisis response, forensic evaluation, or an individualized safety plan.

It does not replace care from a licensed clinician, healthcare professional, attorney, trained advocate, emergency service, or other qualified professional. Laws, court procedures, services, and risks vary by location and circumstance.

Choice, pacing, and inclusion You may skip, change, discuss, dictate, draw, pause, or stop any activity. No exercise can determine what you experienced, diagnose a condition, prove a legal claim, guarantee safety, or tell you whether to stay, leave, report, reconcile, forgive, or pursue court action. Adapt language and activities for culture, identity, disability, neurotype, age, literacy, sensory needs, and personal preference. Automatic translation can make mistakes; confirm legal, medical, emergency, and safety-critical wording with a qualified person.

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