My Voice 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.

A Companion To Welcome Home To Yourself

Reclaiming

Your Voice

"Healing also means learning to hear yourself clearly - and trusting what you hear." Practical tools for boundaries, anger, patterns, decisions, support, and healthier relationships.

Volume Two

My Voice

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Before We Begin: Why Your Voice Matters

A note about reclaiming expression without losing safety There are many ways a voice becomes quiet. Sometimes it is interrupted, doubted, punished, overwhelmed, or trained to keep the peace. Sometimes silence is not weakness at all; it is a protective response that helped a person move through something difficult.

As a licensed therapist, I have seen how language can reduce shame and make choices more visible.

Through

my own nonlinear healing after a toxic relationship, I also learned that reclaiming a voice is not simply speaking louder. It is recognizing what you know, deciding what deserves privacy, asking for what matters, and choosing when safety requires distance or support.

This workbook will not tell you what to say or require confrontation. It offers scripts, boundaries, reflection, planning, and rehearsal so your voice can become more available to you. Culture, identity, disability, power, safety, and access all shape how expression looks.

If even one page helps you trust a sentence that belongs to you, that is meaningful movement. Your pace is part of your voice.

Your voice does not need to sound fearless. It only needs enough room to become yours again.

With care,

Reclaiming Your Voice

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Why This Workbook Was Given to You - and How to Get the

Most From It

- Use it as a guided experience, not a test of whether you are healing correctly.

This volume may have been offered because insight alone does not always change a relationship pattern.

The

pages help translate understanding into boundaries, decisions, support plans, standards, and new ways of responding.

To get the most from a chapter (cid:127) Begin by rating distress from 0 to 10. If it is already high, choose grounding or live support first. (cid:127) Read the education once, then complete only one prompt or worksheet section. (cid:127) Notice thoughts, feelings, body sensations, urges, and values - not only the story

in your head. (cid:127) End with one small action, a pause, and an ordinary transition back into your day. (cid:127) Discuss what surfaced with a qualified professional when needed.

Useful work can be incomplete.

A page that helps you notice one true thing has already done something.

What would make this volume useful, safe enough, and personal for me? _____

_____ _____

_____

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What I Want from This Volume

After learning what this volume offers, choose what you want to carry into it.

You have learned that this volume focuses on patterns, boundaries, decisions, communication, standards, support, and expression. Choose what you want your voice to make more possible.

What I Would Like To Receive From Using My Voice

What I Want To Process, Say, Practice, Or Reclaim

You may return to these answers. What you need from the workbook can change as you learn, heal, and hear yourself more clearly.

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Disclaimer and Safety

Know the scope of this workbook and protect choice, privacy, and well-being.

This is an educational workbook created for guided reflection and general wellness support. It is not psychotherapy, diagnosis, medical treatment, legal advice, or a substitute for services from qualified professionals.

- Use it as a companion to your self-growth journey. It may complement - but does not replace - care from a licensed therapist, medical provider, or other qualified professional. If strong emotions, memories, symptoms, health concerns, or safety questions arise during these guided wellness experiences, pause and connect with an appropriate health-care provider, licensed mental-health professional, crisis service, or advocate.

CBT-style prompts, mindfulness, somatic awareness, expressive art, nature-based reflection, values work, and complementary wellness practices may not be appropriate for every person or moment. Adapt, skip, or stop any activity based on health, disability, medication, allergy, trauma history, culture, sensory needs, and

professional guidance.

Outside the U.S., use local crisis or emergency services.

If someone is threatening, stalking, monitoring, isolating, coercing, or harming you, consider individualized safety planning with a domestic violence advocate or qualified professional. Leaving can increase danger in some abusive relationships.

- My emergency, crisis, advocacy, medical, and trusted-person contacts Keep written material only if it is safe for you to do so.

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Right Now: An Anxiety Grounding Menu

- Choose one small interruption that helps you reconnect with the present.

  _____
  _____ Do not force calm or complete every item. Stop anything that increases panic, pain, dizziness, numbness, or

distress.

Orient and interrupt the loop (cid:127) Name five rectangles, four colors, three sounds, two textures, and one clue that tells you where you are. (cid:127) Read nearby words backward, name an animal for each letter, or count down by an unusual number. (cid:127) Let your eyes slowly trace the room's edges while your head stays comfortable.

- Use sensation and movement (cid:127) Press your feet into the floor, push your palms into a wall, or squeeze and slowly release a towel. (cid:127) Hold a cool object or use cool water on your hands or face only if temperature changes are medically safe.

Avoid

extreme cold. (cid:127) Hum, chew gum, or try a mint or sour flavor if safe for swallowing, allergies, teeth, and sensory needs.

Borrow steadiness (cid:127) Text: I do not need solutions. Can you stay with me for ten minutes?

_____
_____ (cid:127) Change rooms, sit near a doorway, step outside, watch something familiar, use a blanket, or care for a plant or animal.

- Try one option for 30 to 90 seconds.

Did it help me feel even 5% more present, supported, or able to choose?

_____
_____

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My Next 24-72 Hours

Stabilize a small window of time instead of solving everything at once.

In the next hour: basic need, safer place, grounding step, or person to contact In the next 24 hours: one appointment, practical task, boundary, or support

In the next 72 hours: check-in person and signs I need more help

Quick safety plan (cid:127) My warning signs: _____ (cid:127) People and safer places: _____ (cid:127) Professional, crisis, medical, or advocacy support: _____ (cid:127) How I will reduce access to anything I could use to hurt myself or

someone else:

_____

Live help 911 immediate danger | 988 U.S. crisis support | 800-799-SAFE (7233) or text START to 88788 for domestic-violence support Washington practical and family support: call 211. Parent Trust Family Help Line: 800-932-HOPE (4673).

Eastern

Washington/North Idaho directory: thefigtree.org.

If you may act on thoughts of suicide or harming someone, cannot stay safe, face violence, overdose, or another immediate danger: contact emergency services now.

- Use a safer device or location if another person may monitor you. Keep this page only if it is safe.

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Whole-Health Check-In

Emotional well-being and physical health influence one another.

- Use this as a conversation starter, not a universal schedule. Medical, dental, laboratory, and screening needs vary by age, history, symptoms, medications, pregnancy status, disability, risk, and access. Ask qualified clinicians what is appropriate for you.

Review or schedule Primary-care or preventive visit Medication, supplement, and side-effect review Blood pressure, vital signs, and recommended vaccines Age- and risk-appropriate cancer and infectious-disease screening Sexual or reproductive health care, if relevant Vision and hearing care Dental exam, cleaning, pain, gums, or other oral-health concerns Sleep, pain, nutrition, movement, and substance-use concerns Mental-health symptoms and support Follow-up on referrals or prior abnormal findings Bloodwork or other tests specifically recommended by my clinician Appointments, questions, records, and follow-up to track Do not assume that every lab test is needed every year. Review screening and monitoring with the clinician who knows your health history.

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Washington Crisis and Support Resources Know which live resource fits the need, and use a safer device if privacy is a concern. 911 - emergencies threatening life or property Call or text 911 for immediate physical danger, violence or serious injury, fire, overdose, unconsciousness, or a suicide attempt in progress. 988 - crisis and emotional distress Call or text 988 or chat at 988lifeline.org. Washington's 988 Lifeline is free, confidential, and available 24/7 for suicidal thoughts, mental-health crisis, substance-use concerns, or emotional distress. Veterans: press 1. Native &

Strong:

press 4 or text N8V to 988. 211 - community and practical needs Call 211 or text your ZIP code to 898211 for help finding food, shelter, transportation, health care, rent or utility assistance, disability services, and other local resources. Hours vary.

Domestic violence and relationship safety Find Washington advocacy programs at wscadv.org. National Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-799-SAFE (7233), text START to 88788, or visit thehotline.org. An advocate can help with personalized safety planning.

Washington links doh.wa.gov/988 hca.wa.gov/mental-health-crisis-lines warecoveryhelpline.org A worksheet can organize your thinking.

It cannot replace emergency, medical, advocacy, or crisis response.

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Finding Local Support - Washington and Nationwide

- Use a navigator when you do not know which program fits the need.

Availability and eligibility change. Confirm details directly with each service.

Anywhere in the United States 211 / 211.org - local referrals for food, housing, utilities, transportation, health care, family support, caregiver support, and basic needs. family logistics.gov/state-resources - family support, financial assistance, Head Start, disability supports, and family resources by state or territory. findtreatment.gov - confidential locator for U.S. mental-health and substance-use treatment.

thehotline.org - domestic-violence support and safety planning; 800-799-SAFE (7233), or text START to 88788.

Across Washington

wa211.org / 211 - statewide service referrals. helpmegrowwa.org - family navigators for food, health, basic needs, and child development in every county. parenttrust.org / 800-932-HOPE (4673) - Family Help Line for parents and caregivers. wscadv.org - domestic-violence programs and advocacy.

Eastern Washington and North Idaho thefigtree.org - online directory of community, family, health, food, housing, senior, cultural, faith-community, and emergency resources.

Directories help you find options.

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What This Companion Adds

The first workbook helped you soften, grieve, ground, and create. This one helps you act on what you are learning.

Healing is not only an inner feeling. It also appears in the choices you make, the limits you protect, the support you accept, and the relationships you allow close to you.

This workbook focuses on areas that often need more structure:

(cid:127) recognizing patterns without blaming yourself (cid:127) using anger as information (cid:127) setting boundaries and tolerating the guilt that may follow (cid:127) rebuilding confidence in your decisions (cid:127) creating practical plans for contact, triggers, and support (cid:127) identifying green flags and standards for future relationships You are not becoming harder.

You are becoming easier for yourself to protect.

- Use these pages in any order. Skip anything that feels too activating. If you are in danger, being monitored, or planning to leave an unsafe relationship, individualized help from a domestic violence service or qualified professional may be safer than using a written workbook.

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Your Feelings Make Sense

Validate the feeling without giving every impulse control of the next choice.

1. What am I feeling beneath the strongest emotion?

2. What happened that makes this response understandable?

3. What does the feeling need: witness, protection, rest, expression, or action?

4. Which action would care for me tomorrow as well as today?

Validation says, "This makes sense." Growth adds, "And I can choose what happens next."

What Deserves Validation

What Supports My Healing

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Understanding Trauma Bonds

Name why attachment can intensify when care and harm are unpredictably mixed. _____ _____ _____ _____

1. When did closeness, apology, relief, or affection follow fear, conflict,

withdrawal, or harm?

2. What promises or good periods kept hope alive?

3. What did I begin doing to restore the good version of the relationship?

4. Which needs became tied to the same person who was also causing pain?

Trauma bond is a commonly used term, not a verdict about your strength.

Intense attachment can be shaped by cycles of harm, relief, hope, and renewed connection.

The Cycle I Experienced

What Can Interrupt It

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Why Breaking Free Can Feel So Hard

Replace "Why didn't I just leave?" with a fuller, more compassionate picture.

1. What fears, threats, finances, children, housing, health, culture, or

responsibilities affected my choices?

2. How did isolation or lowered confidence reduce my options?

3. What love, loyalty, memories, or hope made leaving painful?

4. What support or resource would have made choice feel safer?

Difficulty leaving does not prove you wanted the harm. It reflects the complexity of attachment, safety, resources, hope, and survival.

What Made Leaving Hard

What Helps Freedom Hold

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The Relief-and-Hurt Cycle Understand why unpredictable connection can keep attention locked on the relationship.

1. What usually happened before distance or conflict?

2. What form did the hurt, withdrawal, pressure, or confusion take?

3. What reunion, apology, affection, or promise created relief?

4. How long did the relief last before the cycle restarted?

Relief can feel like proof of love when the same relationship created the distress. Seeing the cycle helps separate intensity from safety.

Cycle Cues

Ways To Break The Loop

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Longing Is Not an Instruction Make room for missing them without treating longing as a command to return or reach out.

1. What exactly do I miss: the person, routine, belonging, hope, chemistry, or

relief from loneliness?

2. Which part was real, and which part was potential?

3. What need is longing pointing toward today?

4. How else could that need receive care?

You can miss what was meaningful and still remember what was harmful.

What I Miss

What I Also Know

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When the Mind Becomes Obsessive

Respond to rumination with structure instead of shame or endless analysis.

1. What question is my mind trying to solve repeatedly?

2. Is there new information, or am I revisiting the same evidence?

3. What feeling appears if I stop analyzing for ten minutes?

4. What time-limited ritual could contain this: journal, voice note, walk, call, or

worry window?

A looping mind is often seeking certainty, justice, or safety. You can thank the protective intention and redirect the process.

The Loop Says

My Redirect Plan

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From Bitterness to Discernment Honor anger and injustice without letting the person who hurt you occupy your future.

1. What truth does my bitterness refuse to let anyone minimize?

2. What boundary or standard can carry that truth instead?

3. What would releasing mental argument make room for?

4. What is one life-giving focus that belongs entirely to me?

Letting bitterness loosen does not excuse what happened. Discernment keeps the lesson without requiring you to carry the poison.

Truth I Will Keep

Weight I Can Release

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The Pattern Is Not Your Identity

See repeated dynamics without turning them into a verdict about you.

1. What happened repeatedly?

2. What did you do to prevent, repair, or survive it?

3. What did the pattern teach you to expect?

4. What would a healthier pattern look like?

Patterns are learned maps. A map can be updated.

Pattern I Recognize

Pattern I Choose Next

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A Reality Check After Confusion

Separate observable events from explanations, blame, and self-doubt.

1. What was actually said or done?

2. What meaning did I immediately make of it?

3. What did my body notice?

4. What facts would a neutral witness confirm?

Clarity does not require the other person to agree with your memory.

Observable Facts

Interpretations Or Fears

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Triggers: Then and Now

Honor why something activates you while locating yourself in the present.

1. What happened just before the reaction?

2. What old situation does it resemble?

3. What is different about today?

4. What choice or support is available now?

A trigger is an alarm. It deserves attention, not automatic obedience.

What Belongs To Then

What Is True Now

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Anger Has Information

Listen for the boundary, grief, value, or unmet need beneath anger.

1. What feels unfair, crossed, dismissed, or unsafe?

2. What is anger trying to protect?

3. What action would be effective rather than destructive?

4. Where can the energy move safely?

Anger can be a messenger without becoming the driver.

What Anger Is Saying

What Wise Action Says

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The Boundary Inventory

Notice where your limits are clear, porous, rigid, or still forming. _____

_____

_____ _____

_____

1. Where do I say yes while feeling no?

2. What behavior leaves me depleted or resentful?

3. Which limit already works well?

4. Which boundary would create the most relief?

A boundary describes what you will do; it does not control another person.

What I Will Allow

What I Will Do If Crossed

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Boundary Scripts You Can Borrow

Practice language before a difficult moment arrives.

1. I am not available for that.

2. I need time before I answer.

3. I will continue this conversation when we can speak respectfully.

4. That does not work for me.

5. If this continues, I will leave/end the call.

Clear can feel unkind when you were trained to overexplain. Clear is still kind.

Script I Can Use

How I Will Follow Through

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When Guilt Follows a Boundary

Learn to distinguish discomfort from wrongdoing.

1. Did I act against my values, or did someone dislike my limit?

2. Am I responsible for this feeling, or only aware of it?

3. What would I tell a friend who set the same boundary?

4. What can I do while guilt rises and falls?

Feeling guilty is not the same as being guilty.

Guilt'S Accusation

The Balanced Truth

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Needs Are Not Demands

Name what supports your well-being without shame. _____

_____ ____

_____

_____

1. What helps me feel safe?

2. What helps me feel respected?

3. What helps me recover after stress?

4. Which needs can I meet myself, request, or seek elsewhere?

Having needs does not make you needy. It makes you human.

Need I Can Name

Possible Ways To Meet It

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Your Values Compass

- Let values guide you when emotions and opinions pull in many directions.

1. Which qualities matter most in how I live?

2. Which values were compromised in the relationship?

3. What action would align with one value today?

4. What value do I want my future relationships to protect?

Values point toward direction, not perfection.

What Matters To Me

How I Can Live It

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Rebuilding Decision Trust

Practice choosing without demanding absolute certainty.

1. What facts do I know?

2. What does my body signal when I imagine each option?

3. Which choice best protects my values and future self?

4. What is reversible, and what needs more time?

A good decision can still contain grief, doubt, or discomfort.

Evidence For Yes

Evidence For No/Not Yet

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Contact and No-Contact Planning

- Choose a level of access that supports safety and recovery.

_____

_____

1. Is contact required for children, property, work, or legal reasons?

2. Which channel and schedule reduce emotional exposure?

3. What topics are off-limits?

4. Who can support me before and after contact?

No-contact is not punishment. Limited contact is not failure. Choose what is safest and workable.

Contact Rules

Support And Exit Plan

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Digital Boundaries

Reduce the ways technology can reopen the wound.

1. Which notifications, accounts, photos, or memories trigger a spiral?

2. Do passwords, location sharing, or device access need review?

3. Who can help with practical technology changes?

4. What will I do instead of checking?

Digital distance can give your nervous system room to settle.

Digital Change

Replacement Support

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Build a Support Map Create a network with different kinds of help.

1. Who can listen without taking over?

2. Who helps with practical tasks?

3. Who brings steadiness or laughter?

4. Which professional, community, legal, or crisis resources belong on the map?

Support works best as a web, not a single thread.

People And Resources

What I Can Ask For

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The Setback Plan

Prepare for hard days without treating them as erased progress.

1. What signs tell me I am becoming overwhelmed?

2. Which three actions help first?

3. What should I avoid doing during a surge?

4. Who will I contact if I cannot stabilize alone?

A hard day is information, not a return to the beginning.

Early Warning Signs

My Response Plan

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Repairing Self-Abandonment

Notice where you leave yourself to preserve connection. _____

_____

_____

_____

1. When do I silence, shrink, perform, or overgive?

2. What am I afraid will happen if I stay with myself?

3. What would loyalty to myself look like in that moment?

4. What one sentence could bring me back?

You can care about connection without disappearing inside it.

How I Leave Myself

How I Return

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The Relationship Spectrum

Learn to recognize healthy, unhealthy, and abusive patterns without demanding a perfect label first.

1. Healthy: Is there equality, respect, honesty, trust, privacy, and room to be

separate?

2. Unhealthy: Are pressure, dishonesty, recurring disrespect, jealousy, or

struggles for control becoming patterns?

3. Abusive: Is there intimidation, coercion, isolation, threats, surveillance,

blame-shifting, or power used to remove choice?

4. Where did the relationship tend to sit, and did it move across the spectrum

over time?

A relationship does not need to be physically violent to be harmful. Patterns, power, impact, and safety matter.

Behaviors I Observed

Where They Fit On The Spectrum

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Conflict, Incompatibility, or Control?

Distinguish ordinary relationship difficulty from patterns that undermine freedom and safety.

1. After conflict, can both people speak, repair, and change behavior?

2. Are differences negotiated, or does one person have to surrender?

3. Can I disagree without fear, punishment, humiliation, or retaliation?

4. Does accountability lead to consistent change, or only another promise?

Healthy relationships can include conflict. What they do not require is fear, coercion, or the loss of one person's voice.

Repairable Conflict

Control Or Safety Concern

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Relationship Green Flags

Learn to notice health, not only the absence of obvious harm.

1. Can we disagree without punishment or fear?

2. Are words and actions reasonably consistent?

3. Is accountability followed by changed behavior?

4. Can both people have boundaries, friends, privacy, and separate interests?

Healthy often feels steady, respectful, and repairable - not constantly intense.

Green Flags I Need

How They Look In Action

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Your Relationship Standards

Turn what you have learned into clear, living standards.

1. What is non-negotiable for safety and respect?

2. What qualities are important but flexible?

3. What behaviors end access to me?

4. How will I respond when chemistry conflicts with my standards?

Standards are not a wall against love. They are the conditions in which love can remain healthy.

Non-Negotiable

Preference Or Flexible Area

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Negotiable, Non-Negotiable, or Preference?

Sort compatibility questions without treating every difference as danger or every need as optional.

1. Non-negotiable: Is this required for dignity, consent, safety, equality, or a core

life direction?

2. Negotiable: Could different approaches both remain respectful and workable?

3. Preference: Would I enjoy this without needing it to feel safe or whole?

4. What consequence will protect each true non-negotiable?

Non-negotiables protect core well-being. Negotiables invite collaboration.

Preferences leave room for difference.

Item And Category

Why It Belongs There

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Where Did I Learn My Standards?

Explore the messages that shaped what felt normal, tolerable, desirable, or deserved.

1. What did my family or caregivers model about love and conflict?

2. What did culture, faith, media, peers, or past partners teach me?

3. Which lessons protected me, and which taught me to disappear?

4. What do I choose to keep, revise, or return?

Understanding where a belief came from gives you more freedom to decide whether it comes with you.

Lesson I Inherited

Lesson I Choose Now

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- Take the Lesson, Leave the Blame

Turn experience into wisdom without making yourself responsible for another person's harmful choices.

1. What warning sign will I take seriously sooner?

2. What strength helped me survive or leave?

3. What would I do differently with the knowledge I have now?

4. What responsibility belongs fully to the other person?

Learning from an experience does not mean you caused it or deserved it.

Wisdom I Carry

Blame I Return

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A Life That Is Yours

Rebuild identity through ordinary choices, pleasure, purpose, and belonging.

1. What did I stop doing or postpone?

2. What makes time feel spacious or alive?

3. Which room, routine, friendship, or dream wants attention?

4. What small experiment could I try this month?

Your future does not need to be dramatic to be deeply yours.

What I Am Reclaiming

First Small Experiment

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Loving Yourself Starting Now

Practice self-love as behavior before waiting for a perfect feeling.

1. How can I speak to myself with dignity today?

2. What need can I meet without earning it first?

3. What promise is small enough to keep this week?

4. What would choosing myself look like in the next hour?

Self-love can begin as protection, honesty, nourishment, and follow-through.

The warm feeling may come later.

Act Of Self-Love

When I Will Practice It

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Knowing Your Worth

Separate human worth from attention, performance, relationship status, and another person's capacity to value you.

1. What qualities remain true even when no one applauds them?

2. What have I survived, learned, created, protected, or offered?

3. Whose treatment taught me to question my worth?

4. What treatment is consistent with the worth I already have?

Worth is not a prize another person grants or removes. It is the ground from which you choose.

Evidence Of Who I Am

Treatment I Now Require

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A Letter From Your Clearer Voice

- Let the part of you that knows, protects, and hopes speak without interruption.

Begin with: Dear me, I know you have been trying so hard...

You might include what was not your fault, what you now understand, what you are proud of, what you will no longer negotiate, and what you want to remember when doubt returns.

- Write the letter here - imperfect, private, and entirely yours You do not have to feel certain before you speak to yourself with loyalty.

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A Note on Language and Safety

- Use labels only when they increase clarity, compassion, and access to support.

The phrase trauma bond is commonly used to describe a powerful attachment shaped by cycles of harm, fear, relief, affection, hope, and renewed connection. It can be validating, but it is not a diagnosis and no single label can capture every relationship.

The words healthy, unhealthy, and abusive describe patterns on a spectrum. A person does not need a perfect label before taking discomfort, coercion, fear, isolation, surveillance, sexual pressure, threats, or physical danger seriously.

If someone may monitor your device or written materials, consider whether keeping this workbook is safe.

If you are in immediate danger, contact local emergency services. For individualized safety planning, contact a domestic violence service or qualified professional in your area. Leaving can increase danger in some abusive relationships, so safety planning should be personalized.

Sources that informed these educational pages SAMHSA, Trauma and Violence - samhsa.gov/find-help/trauma The National Domestic Violence Hotline, Healthy Relationships and Why People Stay - thehotline.org love is respect, Relationship Spectrum, Healthy Relationships, and Boundaries - loveisrespect.org This workbook offers education and reflection. It is not therapy, diagnosis, legal advice, or a substitute for professional care.

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My Immediate Safety Plan

Prepare options before a crisis, and keep this page only if written information is safe to store.

If someone monitors your belongings or device, consider completing this plan with an advocate and storing it elsewhere. A personalized plan is especially important when threats, stalking, coercion, weapons, strangulation, escalating violence, or separation are involved.

Plan around your own circumstances; do not take a step that increases danger.

People, Places, And Resources

Documents, Needs, And Safe Contact Plan

Safety planning is not a promise to leave.

It is a way to preserve options, information, and support.

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Keep This Close

A final page for the truths you are carrying forward.

- My feelings are information.
- My boundaries do not require unanimous approval.
- I can miss someone and still protect myself.

I am allowed to take time before deciding.

Consistency matters more than promises.

I do not have to abandon myself to be loved.

The voice you are reclaiming was never gone.

It was waiting for enough safety to be heard.

If workbook activities bring up intense or persistent distress, pause and seek support from a licensed mental health professional, credentialed art therapist, domestic violence service, or local crisis resource.

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The Voice Ladder

Speaking up can move from private knowing to rehearsal, low-risk expression, direct request, boundary, and advocacy.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which rung is challenging enough to matter but safe enough to practice?

Current Rung

Next Practice

- Write it privately

Say it to a safe person Make a clear request

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Assertive, Passive, Aggressive, or Protective?

Communication styles are shaped by context and power. Assertiveness names needs while respecting both people; safety may require strategic silence or distance.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What response protects dignity without pretending every setting is equally safe?

Situation

Style, Purpose, And Alternative

Name power differences

Avoid blaming survival responses Choose safety over perfect communication

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Anger as Information and Energy Anger may signal violation, unfairness, blocked action, grief, or need. It deserves safe expression without becoming harm.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What is anger asking me to protect, change, mourn, or stop?

Message In The Anger

Safe And Effective Action

Move energy safely Delay high-stakes contact

- Use support if urges feel unsafe

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The Difficult Conversation Planner

A useful plan names purpose, timing, observable facts, request, boundary, and exit strategy.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What outcome is within my control even if they disagree?

What I Want To Say

When, Where, Support, And Exit

Avoid unsafe confrontation

- Keep one issue in focus Plan how to pause

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Limited Contact and No-Contact Scripts Contact decisions can be practical boundaries rather than punishment. Safety, parenting, legal orders, work, and shared property may shape the plan.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What level of access supports my healing and responsibilities now?

Script Or Contact Rule

Support And Follow-Through

No response is also a choice Use written channels when appropriate Seek legal advice for legal questions

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Documenting Without Living in the Case Documentation may support clarity, medical care, workplace action, advocacy, or legal consultation, but constant review can increase distress.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What information needs preserving, and what can I stop carrying every hour?

What To Document

How To Store And Limit Review

- Use factual dates and actions

Protect digital safety

- Ask a qualified professional what matters

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Advocacy and Accommodation Requests Your voice may include asking providers, employers, schools, or services for information, accessibility, privacy, language support, or reasonable accommodation.

Pause And Ask Yourself

What would make this system more usable and dignified for me?

Request

Person, Policy, Or Follow-Up

- Ask for written information Bring support if allowed

Document next steps

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Boundary Rehearsal Studio

Rehearsal helps language become available under stress. Practice tone, brevity, repetition, and exit - not a perfect speech.

Pause And Ask Yourself

Which sentence do I want my body to recognize as mine?

Boundary Script

Pushback Response And Exit Line

I am not discussing that My answer is no I will return when the conversation is respectful 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.

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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.

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