

Starting Over Gently

A gentle way to use this resource

Begin anywhere. Read one section at a time, choose only what fits, and skip, adapt, pause, or stop as needed. Try one practice before adding another. Reflection is an invitation, not a requirement.

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

Educational wellness material. Not therapy, diagnosis, medical advice, crisis care, or a substitute for individualized professional support.



Before you begin

Take a moment to notice where you are starting. There is no correct answer and no requirement to complete every prompt.

What is most present?	What would feel supportive?
[ ] Tension or restlessness [ ] Heavy emotion [ ] Numbness or shutdown [ ] Racing thoughts [ ] Low energy [ ] Something else: _____	[ ] More steadiness [ ] More clarity [ ] Comfort or rest [ ] A practical next step [ ] Connection or support [ ] Something else: _____

A simple rhythm

1. Notice	Name what is happening without judging it.
2. Choose	Select one prompt or practice that fits your energy and circumstances.
3. Try	Use it gently for a clear amount of time. Smaller still counts.
4. Check	Notice whether you feel even slightly steadier, clearer, safer, or less alone.

Low-energy option

Read only the headings. Circle or note one sentence that feels useful. Then choose one action that takes five minutes or less. You can return later; stopping is allowed.

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.

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.

Reflect, Restore & Grow FREE RESOURCE

Rise

Return to yourself after setbacks, pauses, grief, overwhelm, or lost momentum without making yourself earn a restart.

Use this resource as an invitation, not a test. Skip any prompt, adapt the language, keep your eyes open, pause, or stop. You do not need to disclose your answers to anyone.

A gentle starting point

-] Look around and notice where you are.

-] Choose a position that feels workable for your body.

-] Notice one neutral or supportive point of contact.

-] Decide whether writing, thinking, drawing, or pausing fits today.

What would help this practice feel more choice-centered?

_____

_____

ROOT | Notice without judgment

What is here right now? _____

_____ immediate danger or medical emergency. Call or text 988 in the U.S. or Canada for suicide or mental health

crisis support. Copyright Michelle

Root means gathering information. You are not required to explain, solve, or change what you notice.

What are you starting over from?

_____

_____

What pressure are you carrying about getting it right this time?

_____

_____ What would a gentle restart actually look like this week? _____

_____ Circle or add what fits

_____

_____

-] steady

-] restless

-] tired
-] focused
-] foggy
-] guarded
-] open
-] overloaded
-] unsure
-] something else: _____ RISE | Choose one workable step Support does not have to be dramatic Rise means practicing agency in a size your current capacity can hold. Choose one option, invent your own, or choose no action yet.

Possible next steps

-] Reduce one demand.
-] Add one sensory support.
-] Ask for practical help.
-] Name a boundary or delay a response.
-] Drink water, eat, use the restroom, or attend to another basic need.
-] Step outside or change rooms if that is accessible.
-] Write down what can wait.
-] Contact an appropriate support person or professional.

The step I choose

What might make this step easier to begin?

_____

_____

RESTORE | Integrate and return

Close with care

Restore does not mean erasing stress or becoming calm on command. It can mean reducing pressure, reconnecting with choice, or giving your system time to settle in its own way.

My closing plan

-] I will stop here without completing every line.
-] I will place this page somewhere private.
-] I will do one ordinary next thing.
-] I will seek more support if this brought up more than I want to hold alone.

What I want to remember

support. Copyright Michelle D. Elder,

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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.

Read/listen to this worksheet online https://myreflectivecollective.com/worksheet-reader.html?file=starting-over-gently.pdf

Positive affirmations and short mantras

Scan to read/listen

https://myreflectivecollective.com/affirmations.html Soundscapes and grounding audio tools https://myreflectivecollective.com/soundscapes.html

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https://myreflectivecollective.com/resource-center.html Crisis and safety resources https://myreflectivecollective.com/crisis-resources.html

Website disclaimer

https://myreflectivecollective.com/disclaimer.html

Educational wellness notice

This worksheet and website offer educational wellness and self-reflection tools only.

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.

SAFETY, PRIVACY & EDUCATIONAL USE

MY REFLECTIVE COLLECTIVE - MICHELLE D. ELDER, MSW, LMHC

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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MyReflectiveCollective.com - Pause - Reflect - Learn - Practice

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE - NOT THERAPY OR INDIVIDUALIZED CARE

Immediate danger or medical emergency: call 911 | U.S. crisis support: call or text 988 | Michelle D. Elder, MSW, LMHC

Supportive practices and reminders

Trauma-informed choice

You are in charge of pace, privacy, and participation. Keep your eyes open if that feels safer. Change the words, position, movement, or environment. Skip any prompt that increases distress. You never have to describe a traumatic experience to benefit from grounding or reflection.

A one-minute mindfulness pause

Notice one point of support beneath you. Look around and name three neutral things you see. Notice one sound and one body sensation without trying to change either. Ask, 'What would support me in the next few minutes?' Choose the smallest workable response.

Believable affirmations

Choose language your mind can accept. Try: 'I can take one step at a time.' 'My needs and boundaries matter.' 'I am allowed to pause.' 'I can ask for support.' 'This moment is difficult, and it will not always feel exactly like this.' Edit any statement until it feels honest and respectful.

Practical tips

Pair reflection with water, food, movement, rest, medication as prescribed, or contact with a safe person when needed. Save the most helpful page where it is easy to find. Revisit the resource when you are relatively steady so the choices feel familiar during harder moments.

When more support is appropriate

A worksheet cannot provide emergency care, diagnosis, or individualized treatment. Consider a qualified health or mental-health professional when distress is intense, persistent, worsening, affecting daily functioning, or connected with safety concerns. In immediate danger, contact local emergency services or a crisis service available in your country.

Integrate and choose your next step

Pause after reading. More information is not always more helpful; the goal is to leave with one choice you can actually use.

What stood out?

_____

_____

What is one kind, realistic next step?

_____

_____

What support, boundary, or adaptation would help?

_____

_____

If this did not help

You did not fail. Try making the step smaller, changing from a thinking practice to a body or sensory practice, checking basic needs, or involving a safe person. Strong, persistent, or worsening distress may need professional or crisis support beyond a worksheet.