

# Practicing Better Mental Health

Journaling and Reflection Guide



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Putting your mental health first can be a challenge, but it feels easier when you have the right tools. In service of our goal to make mental health care accessible to everyone, we've curated this free guide to help you manage symptoms of anxiety, depression, and more. Start your journey to better health with these journaling, reflection, and restorative yoga exercises from the world's leading clinical experts.

We're so glad you're here.





## ACTIVITY 1

# Guided Journaling

These journal exercises invite you to reflect on the experiences that sum up your life. Each person has a unique journey. We create, discover, and experience life differently. Think of this journal as a safe place to pull back the curtain and share your thoughts, emotions, moments, and memories.

The key to answering these questions is to take your time. Part of the magic is to simply write what feels true for you. In the process, you'll capture your memories and discover the power of having your experiences organized on neatly lined pages.





## Breathe. Reset. Write.

- Sit in a comfortable position.
- Bring your attention to the flow of your breath coming into and leaving your body.
- There's nothing special you need to do—your body knows how to breathe.
- Become aware of what you're feeling right now.
- The idea is to let yourself feel what you're experiencing, without judgment.
- As you sit still, continue to follow the natural flow of your breath.
- If you notice your mind is distracted, know that it's normal.
- Simply redirect your attention back to the flow of your breath.
- Now rest in loving awareness that stillness grows in your heart as it becomes an intention in life.
- Allow each in-breath to be a new beginning and each out-breath to be a letting go.

# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What is your favorite color?

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What sound do you find most soothing?

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If you could live anywhere, where would it be?

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Guided Journaling, page 1 of 7

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What is your favorite color?

What sound do you find most soothing?

If you could live anywhere, where would it be?



## ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What is the story behind your name?

What three qualities define you?

# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What is one of your shortcomings and how do you deal with it?

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Describe something in nature that nourishes you.

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# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What is your favorite animal, and why?

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Share one thought that instantly brings a smile.

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# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What brings you strength?

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How do you describe your identity?

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# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

What makes you sad?

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What brings you happiness?

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What are your fears?

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# ACTIVITY 1: GUIDED JOURNALING

If you could have three wishes, what would they be?

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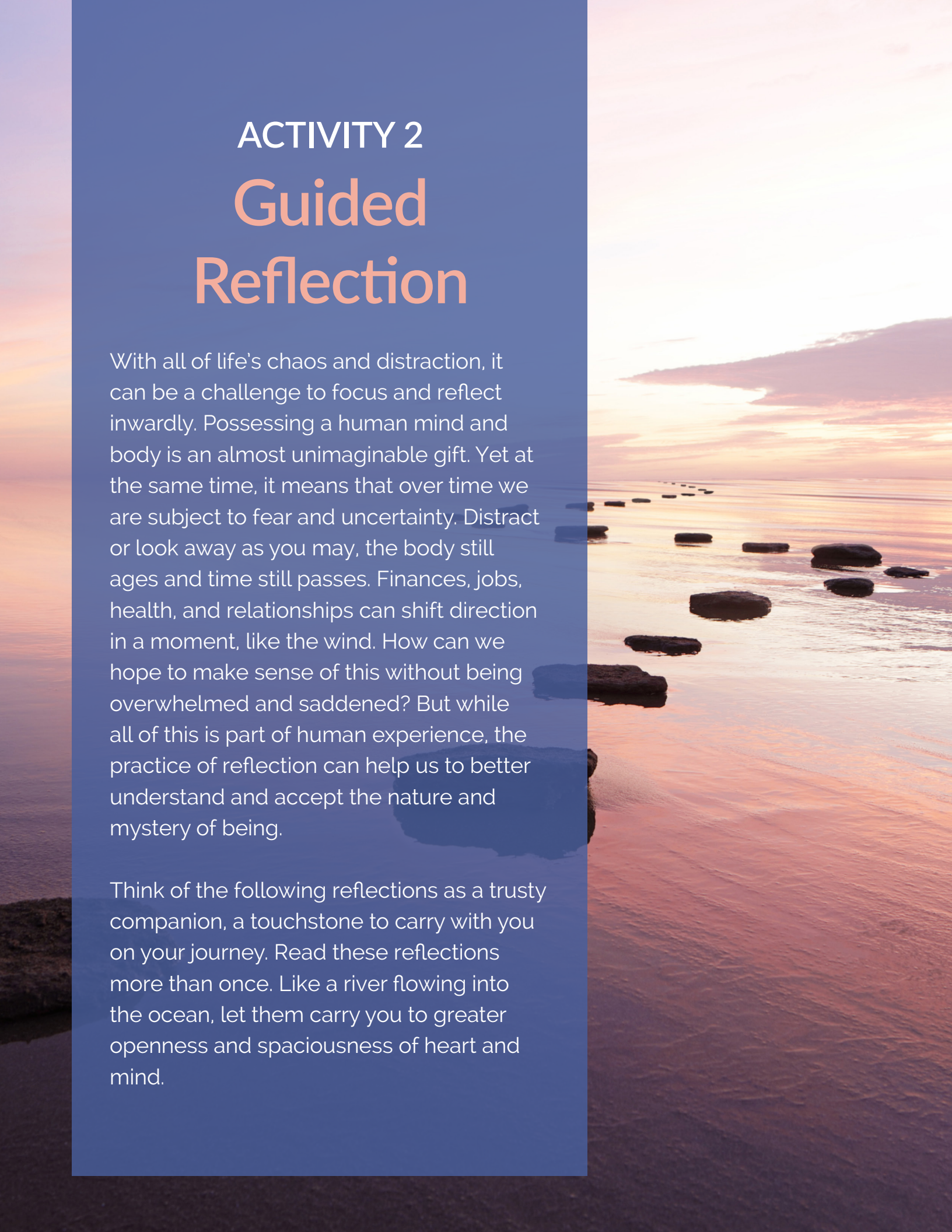
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## ACTIVITY 2

# Guided Reflection

With all of life's chaos and distraction, it can be a challenge to focus and reflect inwardly. Possessing a human mind and body is an almost unimaginable gift. Yet at the same time, it means that over time we are subject to fear and uncertainty. Distract or look away as you may, the body still ages and time still passes. Finances, jobs, health, and relationships can shift direction in a moment, like the wind. How can we hope to make sense of this without being overwhelmed and saddened? But while all of this is part of human experience, the practice of reflection can help us to better understand and accept the nature and mystery of being.

Think of the following reflections as a trusty companion, a touchstone to carry with you on your journey. Read these reflections more than once. Like a river flowing into the ocean, let them carry you to greater openness and spaciousness of heart and mind.





## ACTIVITY 2: GUIDED REFLECTION

*Joy abounds mostly in the small  
nooks and crannies of life.*



Find joy in ordinary moments, like:  
Taking a step and feeling the body move.  
Eating and digesting an apple.  
Watching a hummingbird mid flight.  
Taking this next breath.

Yes, you can wait for some big, dramatic  
accomplishment to punctuate your life.

Or you can be receptive to the ordinary  
and unforeseen joys right before you.

Reflect on this.

Reviewing the past week,  
what ordinary moments can  
you savor?

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How can you more readily recognize ordinary moments that invite joy?

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Today, find one ordinary thing that nourishes you with joy. How might you  
share this with others?

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## ACTIVITY 2: GUIDED REFLECTION

*Body is the elegant  
integrator of your inner-outer  
world experiences.*



Bliss lives in each bodily sensation.

Grow silent and listen.

Feel each heartbeat  
as it tingles in your fingertips.

Feel each breath  
as it caresses the lungs.

See each vibrant image and color  
as it glints in the eye.

Tap your personal inner-outer,  
and know the bliss of Here and Now.

Reflect within the body.

Reflect on this.

How does your body mediate your  
inner and outer experiences?

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How can you slow down enough  
to find peace and acceptance  
for whatever the body is sensing  
right now?

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Today, tune in to the body's entire orchestra of experiences, movements, and  
sensations. How does full embodiment change things for you?

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## ACTIVITY 2: GUIDED REFLECTION

*There's a silver lining  
in everything.*



Yes, there are things you hate,  
that disrupt your life and grate.  
But how solid and permanent are these?

With each phenomenon you witness,  
there is also a silver lining  
that materializes with the passage of time.

Soften, and look into your past,  
and you will find the grace of silver linings.

It is the silver linings that  
make life rich and meaningful.

Reflect on this.

What loss in your life has made  
the space for other doors to open  
for you?

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What is an example from your life of something you initially thought was bad,  
but which turned out to have a positive consequence?

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Today, what's it like to actively find a silver lining for a challenge that's  
occurring in your life right now?

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## ACTIVITY 3

# Restorative Yoga Poses

The following practice invites you to explore the softer side of yoga with restorative postures that support your parasympathetic nervous system. Restorative yoga focuses on longer holds in restful poses. You might hold a pose for five minutes while allowing yourself to soften into the stillness of the shape. Often these poses are supported using bolsters, blankets, and blocks.

The postures in this specific practice are focused on releasing tension through your hips and lower back. Remember, if you experience physical pain at any time, you have gone too far, and if uncomfortable emotions arise, you can gauge how long to stay in the experience while always recognizing that you can come out of a pose at any time.





## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

### Turning Inward

This gentle, restorative yin yoga sequence invites you to explore longer holds in postures aimed to release tension in your hips and lower back. The forward folds in this practice involve rounding your spine over your legs, but if you have a history of joint hypermobility, sciatica, or back injuries, these poses may be contraindicated for you. If you do choose to come into these shapes, it will be helpful to have two blocks, a bolster, and a blanket for this practice. While it is recommended that you stay in some of the poses for three to five minutes, you can come out of any pose at any time. If you would like, you might also choose to play some soft music that evokes a calm or loving feeling for you.

### Orienting and Centering

I invite you to begin seated comfortably on your yoga mat. Take a moment to notice your sensations, emotions, thoughts, breath, and level of energy.

### Butterfly

For this shape, bring the soles of your feet together and slide them away from you. If it is safe for your lower back, allow your spine to round as you fold forward. You might allow your hands to rest on your feet or on the floor in front of you. Or you can explore resting your head into your hands with your elbows resting on blocks. It can also be helpful to lift your hips up slightly by



## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES



sitting on a folded blanket. Stay in the shape for about three to five minutes, and when you are ready to come out of the shape, slowly use your hands to press yourself up out of the forward fold. You can then lean back on your hands and slowly straighten your legs. If you notice any stiffness, you might rock your legs from side to side to release your hips.

### Half Butterfly

From a seated position, bend your right leg and straighten your left leg as you draw your right foot to the inside of your left leg. To facilitate this pose, you might find it helpful to lift your hips up slightly by sitting on a folded blanket. In the first version of this shape, explore folding forward over your left leg. If it is safe for your lower back, allow your back to round as you fold toward your leg. If needed, you can bend your left leg by placing a bolster or blanket under your knee for support. You can also place your hands on the floor for support, use blocks under your elbows, or use a bolster on top of your leg to support your torso.





## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

After about two minutes, you can come into a second variation of this shape by adding a twist to your spine. To create this change, lift your torso up slightly and draw your right arm to the inside of your left leg on the floor or on a block. This will allow you to lean the right side of your body down toward your left leg. Your right hand might rest on top of your left hip, or you might extend your right arm overhead as you gently rotate your torso up toward the sky. Once again, breathe into this shape for about two minutes. When you feel ready to come out of the pose, turn your torso back down toward the floor and use both hands to slowly press yourself up to sitting. Take a few moments to stretch out through both legs before moving to the other side.



### Shoelace

This classic hip opener can be beneficial for the joints of your lower body, but you can skip this shape if it creates pain in your knees. Once again, it can be helpful to lift your hips up slightly by sitting on a folded blanket. Begin in a seated position with your legs extended out in front of you, and draw your right leg over your left leg, sliding your right heel toward your left hip as far as it will go. Then bend your left knee and draw your left foot toward your right thigh, gently sliding it as far as it will go. In this position, your knees will be stacked on top of each other. If your bottom knee has discomfort, you can modify this shape by extending your left leg long in front of you.

Now gently begin to fold forward while rounding your spine. Once again, you can support your head in your hands by placing your elbows on your knees. See how it feels to stay in the shape for about three to five minutes, and when

## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

you are ready to come out of the shape, slowly use your hands to press yourself up out of the forward fold. You can then lean back on your hands and slowly straighten your legs. If you notice any stiffness, you might rock your legs from side to side to release your hips before coming into the shape on the opposite side.



### Deer

This next pose helps open and balance your hips after shoelace pose, but you can skip it if it creates pain in your knees. Starting in butterfly pose, slowly swing your right leg behind you so the side of your right foot is resting on the floor. You can then move your left foot slightly away from your body so your front leg is at a right angle. If you have enough sensation in your right hip in this shape, allow yourself to remain here as you connect to your breath. If you need to move deeper into the shape in order to find your edge, you can begin

[Restorative Yoga Poses, page 4 of 8](#)



## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

to twist toward the left, which will amplify sensations in your right hip. To do so, walk your left hand behind you as you twist to the left. You might rest your right hand on your left leg. Explore this shape for about one minute, and when you are ready to come out of the shape, slowly bring your torso and legs to center and come into the shape on the opposite side.



### Happy Baby

For this next hip opener, come down onto your back. Once you are lying on your back, hug your knees to your chest and use your hands to grip the outside of your calves, ankles, or soles of your feet as you send your feet up toward the sky. Continue to release your shoulders and head down to the floor. Unlike the previous shapes, you might find some exploratory movements in this shape by sending your feet out to each side one by one. Allow yourself to find a playful

*Restorative Yoga Poses, page 5 of 8*

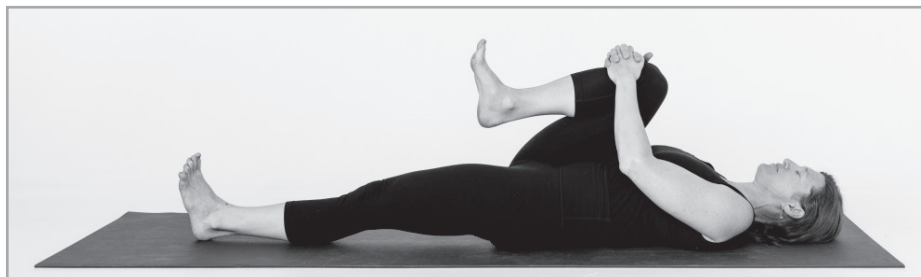
## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

exploration in this pose. When you feel complete, slowly draw your legs back to center and rest your feet onto the mat.



### Wind-Removing Pose and Reclining Twist

Now, if you would like, bring both knees up toward your chest once again. You might wrap your arms around your shins as if giving yourself a hug. Pause here and perhaps rock a little from side to side to massage your digestive organs. Now, keeping hold of your right knee, extend your left leg long in front of you. Once again, you can wrap your hands or forearms around your right shin. Take several breaths here, either in stillness or as you try adding a few gentle pulses into your right leg with your hands.





## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES

From here, I invite you to draw your right knee across your body toward the left. Ideally, your right shoulder will remain on the floor, but if it is floating, you can place a folded blanket underneath your shoulder for support. There is no need to push your right knee toward the floor; rather, you might place a block under your knee for support. Explore this shape for about three to five minutes. When you are ready to come out of the shape, slowly lift your knees to center and extend both legs out long prior to finding this shape on the opposite side.

### Legs Up the Wall

The final posture in this practice can be completed by moving to a wall, which will allow you to rest your legs on it for support. I invite you to lie down on the floor near a wall, moving your bottom as close to the wall as possible, as you gently scoot your legs up on the wall until your body resembles an L shape. You might place a folded blanket or bolster underneath your hips and then lift your legs so that you can rest your heels on the wall. Take time to find your way into this shape. Adjust your position until you feel supported. Alternatively, you can use a chair for this pose, allowing your calves to rest on the seat of the chair so your legs are at a 90 degree angle instead of extending straight up.



## ACTIVITY 3: RESTORATIVE YOGA POSES



Once you have found a comfortable position, begin to draw your awareness inside. See if you can feel the heaviness of your body, and explore how it feels to soften into support. If it feels right for you, you might choose to rest in this shape for closer to 10 minutes, knowing that you have the option to move out of this shape at any time. When you feel ready, slowly descend your legs, and roll onto one side.

### Completion

Take as much time as you need resting on your side. When you feel ready, press back up into a comfortable sitting position. What are you aware of now as you notice your body, mind, emotions, and level of energy? Take some time to write down any observations, knowing that you can return to this practice as often as you would like.

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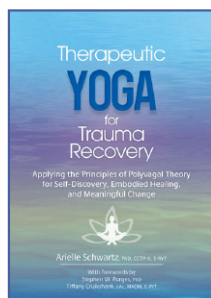
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# Resources

## Add these titles to your bookshelf

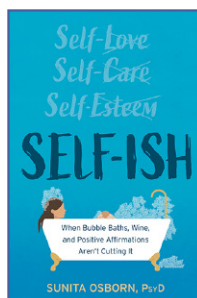


PUB087285

### Therapeutic Yoga for Trauma Recovery

Arielle Schwartz, PhD, CCTP-II, E-RYT

This book will help you gain a better understanding of how our brains and bodies respond to stress and trauma and offer a self-led healing journey toward feeling more empowered, grounded, clearheaded, inspired, and at ease.



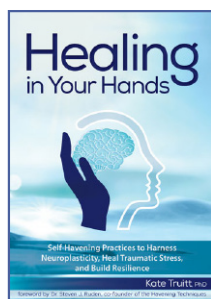
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### Self-ish:

*When Bubble Baths, Wine, and Affirmations Aren't Cutting It*

Sunita Osborn, PsyD, MA

This provocative new book shows us how being selfish can actually change our lives (and the lives of those we love) for the better. Join the movement of selfish women who support each other's commitment to becoming their best selves!



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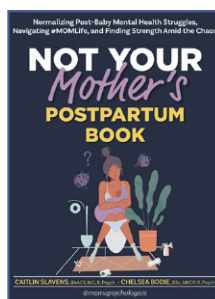
### Healing in Your Hands: Self-Havening Practices to Harness Neuroplasticity, Heal Traumatic Stress, and Build Resilience

Dr. Kate Truitt, PhD, MBA

With the simple and effective tools in this book, you will learn how to:

- Draw upon your brain's amazing ability to heal itself
- Build a trusting relationship with your mind and body
- Soothe your nervous system in moments of reactivity
- Create feelings of safety, agency, and personal empowerment

... all with the palms of your own hands.



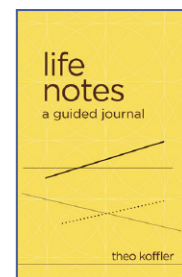
PUB087915

### Not Your Mother's Postpartum Book:

*Normalizing Post-Baby Mental Health Struggles, Navigating #MOMLife, and Finding Strength Amid the Chaos*

Caitlin Slavens, BAACS, MC, R Psych, and Chelsea Bodie, BSc., MACP, R. Psych

This refreshingly candid resource fills a notable void by providing real, honest, and raw insights into motherhood. With their nonjudgmental yet humorous tone, Caitlin and Chelsea provide a deep dive into all things #momlife.

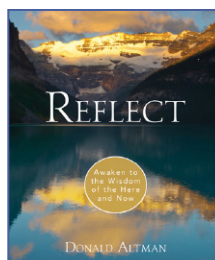


PUB087105

### Life Notes: A Guided Journal

Theo Koffler

Each person has a unique journey. We create, discover, and experience life differently. Let this guided journal be a safe place to pull back the curtain and express your thoughts, emotions, moments, and memories.



PUB085980

### Reflect:

*Awaken to the Wisdom of the Here and Now*

Donald Altman, MA, LPC

Reflect taps into your unique human capacity for accessing meaning, presence, and wisdom in 108 inspiring, affirming, and illuminating reflections. You'll journal, reflect, and practice to discover the wonder and stillness of presence that exists for you not tomorrow, but in this next awakening moment.

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