



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA AT HOME

A SELF-GUIDED INTRODUCTION TO TRIGGERS,
EMOTIONS, AND COPING SKILLS

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE COPING JAR
PRODUCT OF ZMZ COUNSELING

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR...



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Hi, I'm Zebiba Zere, LCSW-PIP, QMHP, founder and therapist at ZMZ Counseling, LLC. I was born in Eritrea, Africa, and raised in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where I completed K-12 before earning both my undergraduate and master's degrees in Social Work from the University of South Dakota.

I'm licensed to provide therapy in Texas, Minnesota, and South Dakota. I'm passionate about helping individuals heal from trauma, reduce anxiety and depression, and reconnect with themselves through EMDR, cognitive behavioral therapy, and nervous system regulation techniques. My mission is to make trauma-informed healing accessible to all. Through my practice and resources like this workbook, I strive to create tools that empower people to understand themselves, manage triggers, and move toward a healthier, more resilient future.

ZMZ Wellness & The Coping Jar

Founded in November 2021, ZMZ Wellness was created to extend trauma-informed care beyond the therapy room and into everyday life. Through educational tools, guided exercises, and practical resources like The Coping Jar, ZMZ Wellness supports adults and teens in understanding emotional triggers, stress responses, and the impact of past experiences. Our work is grounded in trauma-informed principles, nervous system awareness, and skills that promote emotional regulation, self-understanding, and resilience.

Each ZMZ Wellness resource is intentionally designed to be clear, accessible, and easy to use at home. The Coping Jar offers structured, emotion-based tools that help individuals pause, reflect, and respond rather than react. We are committed to providing evidence-informed, compassionate resources that empower people to build insight, practice coping skills, and strengthen their ability to navigate daily challenges with confidence and care.

WELCOME

“A GENTLE SELF-GUIDED BEGINNING TO UNDERSTANDING YOUR TRIGGERS”

You're about to begin Understanding Trauma at Home, a self-guided workbook created to help you recognize your triggers, reconnect with your body, and learn foundational skills for calming your nervous system.

This workbook is rooted in trauma-informed care and draws from EMDR principles, cognitive behavioral strategies, and nervous system regulation practices. Its purpose is to help you understand why certain reactions occur and to offer practical tools you can begin using right away to support emotional regulation, awareness, and response.

This workbook is not a replacement for therapy. It is intended to support and complement the care of a licensed mental health professional. If at any point the exercises feel overwhelming, pause and consider reaching out for additional support.

Move through this workbook at a pace that feels right for you. Some people complete an exercise in a single day, while others take more time. Allow space for breaks, reflection, and rest. Gentle and consistent engagement tends to be more helpful than rushing through the material.

By the end of this workbook, you'll have a clearer understanding of your doubt label, how it shows up in your body, and practical coping skills you can use to manage triggers and respond with greater awareness and choice.

A gentle, self-guided beginning to understanding your triggers.



Chapter One

BASELINE SELF-ASSESSMENT

BASELINE SELF-ASSESSMENT

Before beginning the exercises in this workbook, take a moment to complete the following self-assessments. This will give you a baseline snapshot of your current levels of anxiety and depression, and create a starting point to measure your progress as you work through the chapters. You'll retake these assessments midway and again at the end of this workbook to see your progress over time.

GAD-7

The GAD-7 is a short self-report questionnaire used worldwide to measure symptoms of anxiety. Completing it at the start of this workbook will give you a baseline of your current anxiety level. You'll retake again at the end to track changes over time.

Scoring Key:

- 0–4 = Minimal anxiety
- 5–9 = Mild anxiety
- 10–14 = Moderate anxiety
- 15–21 = Severe anxiety

PHQ-9

The PHQ-9 (Patient Health Questionnaire) is a widely used self-report tool for identifying and monitoring symptoms of depression. Completing it at the start of this workbook gives you a baseline for your current mood. You'll retake it again at the end to track changes over time.

Scoring Key:

- 1–4 = Minimal depression
- 5–9 = Mild depression
- 10–14 = Moderate depression
- 15–19 = Moderately severe depression
- 20–27 = Severe depression

Important:

This questionnaire is for self-reflection only and does not replace professional evaluation or diagnosis. If at any time your symptoms worsen or you have thoughts of harming yourself, please seek help immediately from a qualified mental health professional or crisis service (for example, in the U.S. you can dial 988 to reach the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline).

(Record your score in the Progress Tracker table to follow your progress.)

ANXIETY EVALUATION: GAD-7

Name:

Date:

There are no right or wrong answers. This is about noticing patterns, not judging yourself.

For each statement, check the number that best reflects how true it has been for you over the past two weeks.

0-- Not at all
1-- Several days
2-- More than half the days
3-- Nearly every day

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| 2. Not being able to stop or control worrying | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Worrying too much about different things | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Trouble relaxing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Total Score: _____ / 21

DEPRESSION EVALUATION: PHQ-9

For each statement, check the number that best reflects how true it has been for you over the past two weeks.

0-- Not at all
1-- Several days
2-- More than half the days
3-- Nearly every day

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| 2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Feeling tired or having little energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Feeling bad about yourself — let yourself & others down | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Poor appetite or overeating | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Trouble concentrating on things | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Moving slowly or feeling very restless | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Thoughts of self-harm or being better off dead | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Total Score: _____ / 27

This exercise helps bring awareness to your conscious thoughts — the thoughts and feelings you are actively aware of in this moment.

By writing freely without filtering, you create a snapshot of where your mind is right now. This can help reveal emotional patterns, stressors, and areas of concern that may not always be obvious when thoughts stay unspoken.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Chapter Two

UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

WHAT IS TRAUMA

TRAUMA IS NOT DEFINED BY WHAT HAPPENED — IT IS DEFINED BY HOW YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM EXPERIENCED WHAT HAPPENED.

Two people can live through the same event, yet only one develops trauma. This is because trauma is not stored as a logical memory you can think your way out of. It is stored in the body and brain, shaped by fear, overwhelm, and whether safety or support was available at the time.

When something feels too much, too fast, or too threatening, the nervous system automatically shifts into survival mode. The body responds through fight, flight, freeze, or shutdown — not by choice, but by design. These responses are adaptive and protective, helping you survive in moments when escape or control feels impossible.

Over time, unresolved trauma can leave the nervous system stuck in these survival patterns. Even when the danger has passed, the body may continue to react as if it hasn't. This can show up as anxiety, emotional numbness, irritability, avoidance, or feeling constantly on edge. Trauma is not a personal weakness — it is a biological response to threat, and it begins to make sense once you understand how the brain and body work together.



HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS THE BRAIN & BODY

TRAUMA CHANGES HOW THE BRAIN AND BODY WORK TOGETHER.

When something feels scary, overwhelming, or unsafe, the brain's main job becomes survival. It focuses less on thinking clearly and more on protecting you. This happens automatically. You do not choose it, and you cannot stop it just by "trying harder."

The brain has different parts that work together. One part helps you think, plan, and make sense of what is happening. Another part acts like an alarm system. When trauma happens, the alarm system becomes very strong. It starts looking for danger everywhere, even when you are safe. At the same time, the thinking part of the brain can become quieter. This is why people may know they are safe, but still feel unsafe.

When the brain senses danger, the body reacts too. The heart may beat faster. Muscles tighten. Breathing can become shallow. These reactions help the body get ready to fight, run, freeze, or shut down. These are called survival responses. They are meant to protect you in the moment.

The problem is that after trauma, the body may keep using these responses even when the danger is gone.

Trauma also affects how memories are stored. Most memories are stored like stories — they have a beginning, middle, and end. Trauma memories are different. They are often stored as body sensations, emotions, images, or sounds instead of clear stories. This is why certain smells, sounds, or feelings can cause strong reactions without warning. The body reacts before the brain has time to explain what is happening.

Because of this, trauma can feel confusing. You might react strongly to something small and not understand why. You may feel embarrassed or frustrated with yourself. But these reactions are not signs of weakness. They are signs that your nervous system learned to stay alert to keep you safe.

Over time, trauma can keep the nervous system stuck in survival mode.

HOW TRAUMA AFFECTS THE BRAIN & BODY

Some people feel constantly on edge, anxious, or easily startled. Others feel numb, tired, disconnected, or shut down. Some people move between both states. These patterns are the body's way of coping after too much stress for too long.

Trauma can also affect sleep, focus, and energy. It may be hard to fall asleep or stay asleep. You might feel tired even after resting. Concentrating or remembering things can feel difficult. These experiences can be frustrating, especially when others do not see what is happening inside your body.

The body may also hold trauma physically. This can show up as headaches, stomach problems, muscle pain, tight shoulders, or a constant feeling of tension. These symptoms are real. They are not “all in your head.” The body remembers what the mind tries to forget.

Understanding how trauma affects the brain and body can be relieving. When you realize these reactions are biological, not personal failures, shame begins to ease. You are not broken. Your body adapted to survive.

Healing from trauma does not mean forcing yourself to relive painful memories. It means helping the nervous system learn that the present moment is safer than the past.

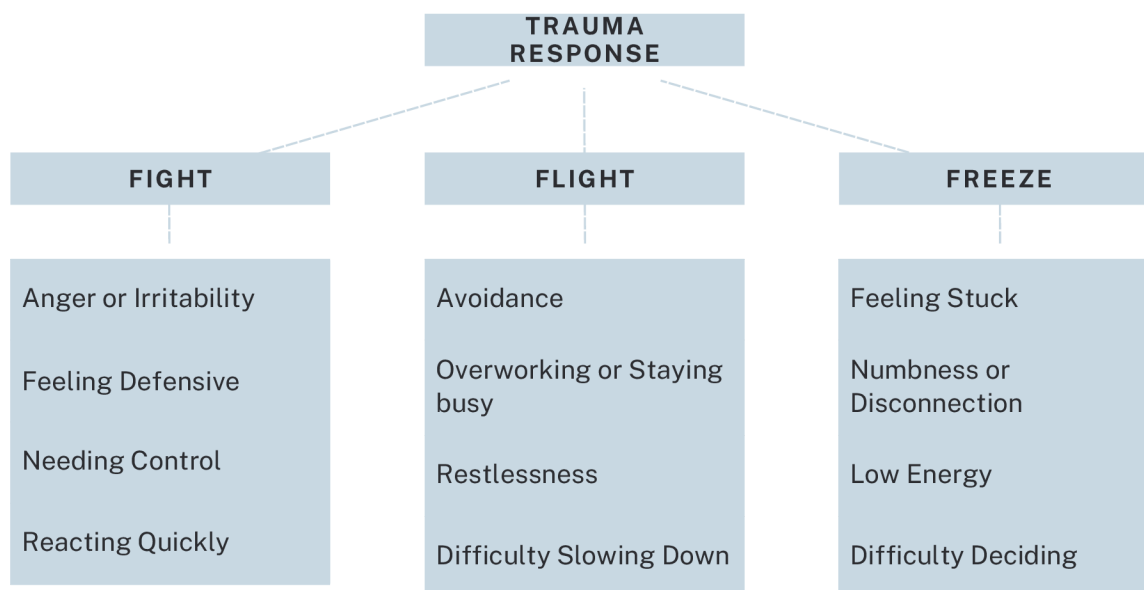
This happens slowly, through moments of regulation, grounding, and support. When the brain and body begin to feel safer, they no longer need to stay stuck in survival mode.

This is why trauma healing often focuses on the body, not just thoughts. When the body feels safe, the mind can follow. Healing is not about erasing the past — it is about helping your nervous system build new experiences of safety, connection, and control.



COMMON TRAUMA RESPONSES

Trauma responses are automatic reactions from the nervous system designed to keep you safe. They are not choices or character traits. These responses often continue even when the original danger has passed.



Another trauma response that is less talked about is **fawning**, which shows up as people-pleasing, avoiding conflict, and putting others' needs ahead of your own to stay emotionally safe.

Trauma responses are not something you choose. They develop when your nervous system learns what it needs to do to stay safe. At one point, these responses may have protected you from harm, conflict, or emotional overwhelm. Even if they cause problems now, they once served a purpose.

As you learn about your own trauma responses, awareness becomes the first step toward change. Healing does not mean forcing yourself to react differently. It means helping your body recognize when it is safe in the present. In the next chapter, you will learn how trauma affects your daily emotions and reactions — and how to begin working with your nervous system instead of against it.

MYTHS & FACTS

Trauma is often misunderstood. Many common beliefs about trauma can lead to shame, self-blame, or confusion. This chapter clears up common myths and replaces them with facts based on how the brain and body actually work.

Myth: Trauma only comes from extreme events

Fact: Trauma can come from ongoing stress, emotional neglect, or feeling unsafe over time — not just major events.

Myth: If it happened long ago, it shouldn't affect you now

Fact: Trauma can stay in the nervous system until it is processed, even years later.

Myth: Strong people don't get traumatized

Fact: Trauma is a nervous system response, not a sign of weakness.

Myth: You should just think positively and move on

Fact: Trauma lives in the body, not just the mind. Healing often requires body-based support.

Myth: Talking about trauma makes it worse

Fact: When done safely, understanding trauma can reduce fear and increase control.

Trauma myths can make people feel broken or ashamed for their reactions. When trauma is misunderstood, people often blame themselves for symptoms that are actually normal responses to stress and threat. Learning the facts helps replace judgment with compassion and understanding.

When you understand trauma for what it is, healing becomes more possible. You can begin to work with your nervous system instead of fighting it. In the next chapter, you will learn practical ways to support your body and emotions as you move forward.

RECOGNIZING TRIGGERS & WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

EVERYONE HAS A WINDOW OF TOLERANCE. THIS IS THE RANGE WHERE YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM FEELS BALANCED ENOUGH TO THINK CLEARLY, FEEL EMOTIONS, AND RESPOND RATHER THAN REACT.

When you are inside your window, your body feels more steady. You may still experience stress or strong emotions, but they feel manageable.

When a trigger pushes you outside your window of tolerance, the nervous system shifts into survival mode. Above the window is hyperarousal, which can look like anxiety, panic, anger, restlessness, or racing thoughts.

Below the window is hypoarousal, which can look like numbness, shutdown, exhaustion, or feeling disconnected. These shifts happen automatically and are not choices.

A trigger can be a sound, a smell, a tone of voice, a facial expression, a memory, or even a sensation in the body. When a trigger appears, the body reacts before the mind has time to think. Triggers are reminders that signal to the nervous system that something might not be safe, even when no danger is present.

Triggers are not about the present moment being dangerous.

They are about the nervous system remembering a past experience and reacting as if it is happening again. This is why reactions can feel sudden or confusing. The body is responding to learned threat, not current reality.

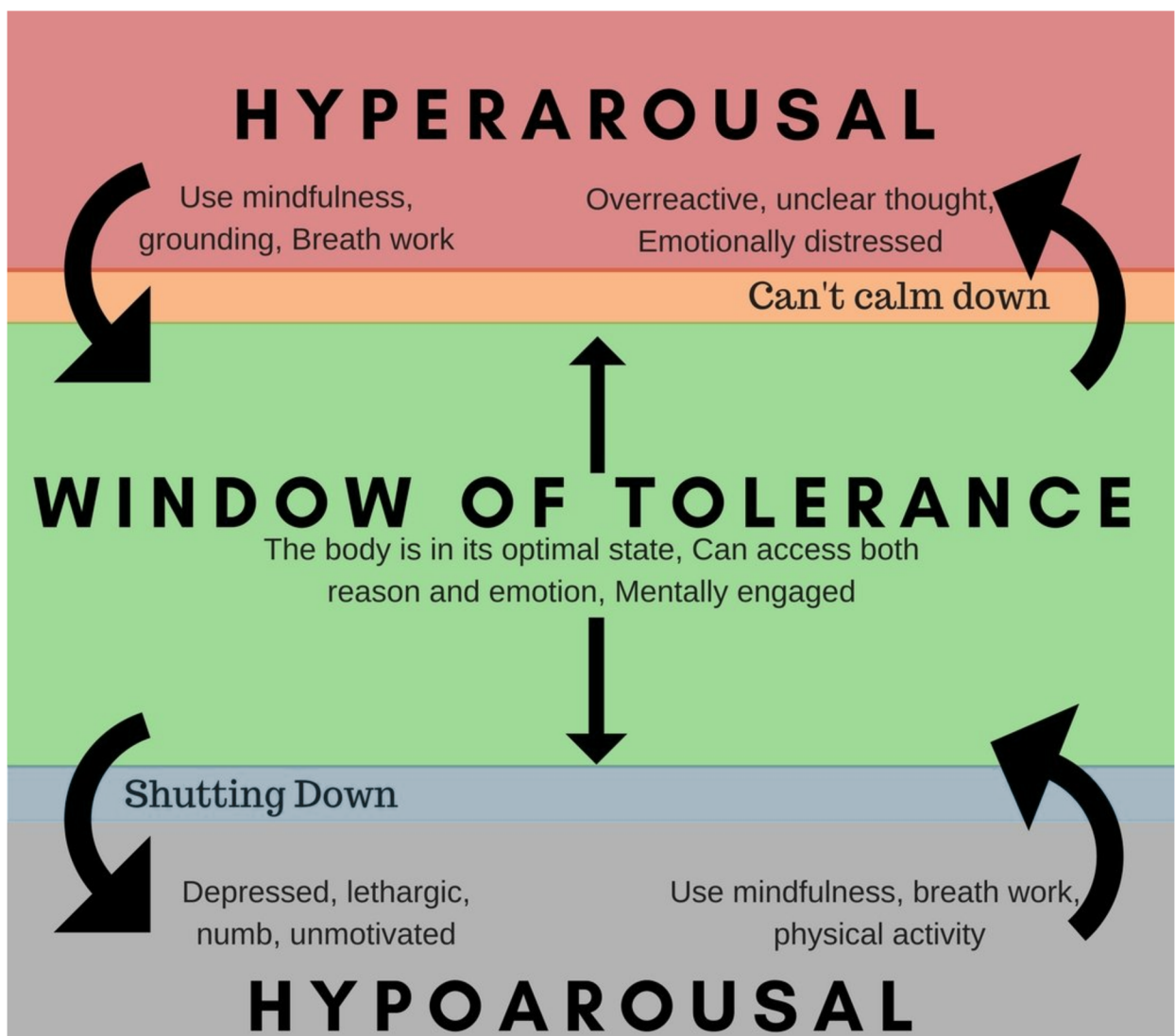
Recognizing your triggers helps you notice when your nervous system is moving outside its window. This awareness gives you more options. Instead of judging yourself or pushing through, you can begin to respond with support and grounding.

Learning about triggers and the window of tolerance is not about avoiding life. It is about understanding your nervous system so you can work with it. The goal is not to stay calm all the time, but to notice when you are overwhelmed and gently guide yourself back into a safer, more regulated state.

RECONGIZING TRIGGERS & WINDOW OF TOLERANCE

This image shows how the nervous system moves in and out of the window of tolerance. When you are inside the green area, your body feels more balanced and you can think clearly, feel emotions, and stay present. When stress or triggers push you above the window, the body enters hyperarousal, which can feel like anxiety, racing thoughts, emotional distress, or being unable to calm down.

When stress pushes you below the window, the body enters hyporarousal, which can feel like numbness, low energy, disconnection, or shutting down. These shifts are not failures — they are automatic survival responses. The goal is not to stay in the window all the time, but to recognize where you are and use grounding, breath work, or gentle movement to guide your nervous system back toward balance.



SELF COMPASSION & WHEN TO SEEK HELP

HEALING FROM TRAUMA CAN BRING UP MANY EMOTIONS. SOME DAYS MAY FEEL EASIER, AND OTHER DAYS MAY FEEL HEAVY.

Self-compassion means treating yourself with patience and understanding as you move through this process. It does not mean ignoring your pain or forcing yourself to feel better. It means recognizing that your reactions make sense given what you have been through.

Self-compassion starts with how you talk to yourself. Trauma often creates harsh inner messages like “I should be over this” or “Something is wrong with me.” These thoughts can increase stress and keep the nervous system activated. Replacing judgment with curiosity can help your body feel safer. Instead of blaming yourself, you can begin to ask, “What does my body need right now?”

Practicing self-compassion also means respecting your limits. Healing is not about pushing through discomfort at all costs. It is okay to take breaks, go slowly, or return to grounding tools when emotions feel overwhelming. Listening to your body builds trust and supports long-term healing.

While self-help tools can be powerful, there are times when additional support is needed. You may benefit from professional help if symptoms feel intense, last a long time, or interfere with daily life. This can include frequent panic, emotional numbness, intrusive memories, difficulty functioning, or thoughts of harming yourself. Seeking help is not a failure — it is a form of care.

Trauma healing does not have to happen alone. Support from a therapist, healthcare provider, or trusted professional can help guide the process safely. Reaching out is a sign of strength and self-respect. You deserve support, understanding, and care as you continue your healing journey.



Chapter Three

MEETING THE DOUBT LABEL

INTRODUCING DOUBT LABEL

A doubt label is the belief we form about ourselves when our emotional needs are not met or when something overwhelming happens. It is not the event itself — it is the meaning the nervous system creates to make sense of the experience. Doubt labels often form early and quietly, and over time they can shape how we see ourselves, others, and the world.

Doubt labels usually sound simple, but they carry a lot of weight. They can sound like “I am not lovable,” “I am not safe,” “I don’t matter,” or “I can’t trust anyone.” These beliefs are not chosen on purpose. They develop as a way to survive emotionally. When a doubt label is triggered later in life, the body reacts as if the original experience is happening again.

Below are two examples of how doubt labels can form.

Example 1: Family Dynamic Doubt Label

Imagine a child growing up with a parent who is emotionally unavailable. The parent is physically present but distracted, distant, or inconsistent. The child may try to get attention by being quiet, helpful, or achieving more, but their emotional needs are still unmet.

Over time, the child’s nervous system looks for meaning. The doubt label that forms might be “I am unlovable” or “I am not important.” As an adult, this person may feel easily rejected, struggle in relationships, or believe they have to earn love. When situations activate this doubt label, their reactions are not about the present moment — they are tied to the original emotional wound.

Example 2: Traumatic Event Doubt Label

Imagine someone who experiences a traumatic event where they felt trapped, powerless, or unsafe, such as an accident, abuse, or sudden loss. During the event, the nervous system goes into survival mode. There is no time to think — only to survive.

After the event, a doubt label may form such as “I am not safe” or “The world is dangerous.” Even long after the event has ended, the body may stay on alert. Loud noises, certain places, or unexpected changes may trigger fear or shutdown. The reaction is not weakness — it is the nervous system responding to a belief shaped by trauma.

Worksheet Exercise: The Doubt Label Map

EXAMPLE

Shaping Experiences

- Caregivers were inconsistent — sometimes supportive, sometimes unavailable
- Praise was given only during success or achievement
- Emotional needs were minimized or brushed off
- Learned early to handle things independently
- Asking for help often led to disappointment or silence

Doubt Labels

- “I don’t matter.”
- “Nobody really cares about me.”
- “My needs aren’t important.”
- “I’m easy to forget.”

Guidelines or Assumptions

- If I don’t need anything, I won’t be a burden
- If I handle things on my own, I won’t be disappointed
- If I stay low-maintenance, I’ll be accepted
- If I express needs, people will pull away
- If I rely on others, I’ll get hurt

Actions

- Avoid asking for help
- Minimize emotions or struggles
- Overfunction in relationships
- Stay emotionally guarded
- Take responsibility for others’ needs

Worksheet Exercise: The Doubt Label Map

This exercise helps you understand how past experiences shaped a core doubt label and how it continues to influence your thoughts and actions.

Shaping Experiences

Doubt Labels

Guidelines or Assumptions

Actions

PROCESSING QUESTIONS: UNDERSTANDING YOUR DOUBT LABEL

Write freely and honestly. You are not fixing anything here — just noticing and understanding.

When does this doubt label show up most strongly in your life today?

How has this doubt label tried to protect you in the past?

What does this doubt label need from you now?

PREPARING TO LISTEN TO THE BODY

You've just taken an important step by identifying your doubt label and understanding where it came from. This belief did not form randomly — it developed as a way to help you survive, cope, or make sense of your experiences. Even if the doubt label causes distress today, it once served a purpose.

As you reflect on what you wrote, notice any thoughts, emotions, or body sensations that came up. You may feel clarity, discomfort, sadness, relief, or even confusion. All of these responses are normal. There is no need to judge or change anything right now. Awareness comes before healing.

In the next chapter, we will shift from thinking about the doubt label to noticing how it lives in the body. Trauma is not only remembered through thoughts — it is stored in physical sensations, tension, and patterns of response. Learning to recognize these signals helps the nervous system feel safer and more regulated over time.

Before moving forward, take a moment to ground yourself. You may want to pause, take a few slow breaths, or gently stretch your body. Move ahead only when you feel ready. This work is meant to be taken slowly and with care.





Chapter Four

LOCATING THE DOUBT LABEL IN THE BODY

GUIDED BODY SCAN: SETTLING INTO THE BODY



Before you begin, find a position that feels comfortable for your body. You may be sitting, lying down, or gently supported. If closing your eyes feels safe, you can do that. If not, you can keep your eyes open while focusing on something in front of you.

There is no right or wrong way to do this exercise. If your mind wanders or your body feels restless, that's okay. Simply notice and gently bring your attention back when you're ready.

Begin by bringing your awareness to your breath. You don't need to change it. Just notice the natural rhythm of breathing in and breathing out. Allow your body to settle at its own pace.

Now imagine a soft, gentle light entering through the top of your head. This light is calm and steady. It is not forcing or fixing anything — it is simply observing.

As the light moves slowly through your head, notice any sensations you feel. You may notice warmth, pressure, lightness, tension, or nothing at all. Whatever you notice is okay.

Let the light move gently down into your neck and shoulders. Notice what is present here as you continue to breathe.

GUIDED BODY SCAN: SETTLING INTO THE BODY



Allow the light to continue moving slowly through your arms, into your hands, and through your fingers. Notice any sensations as the light scans this area.

Now bring the light into your chest and upper back. As you breathe, notice how this area responds. This can be a place where emotions show up. There is no need to analyze — just notice.

Let the light move down into your stomach and lower back. As it scans this area, gently bring your doubt label to mind. Notice how your body responds as you think about this belief. Pay attention to any sensations, shifts, or areas of disturbance.

Allow the light to continue moving down through your hips, legs, and feet. With each breath, imagine the light slowly scanning and then flowing out through the bottoms of your feet.

Once the light has moved completely through your body, take one slow, deep breath in — and gently release it.

When you are ready, bring your awareness back to the room. You may move your fingers or toes, stretch, or take another breath.

BODY SCAN REFLECTION

Write freely and honestly. You are not fixing anything here — just noticing and understanding.

Where in your body did you notice the strongest sensation or disturbance?
(Name the place, not the reason.)

What did that sensation feel like?
(For example: tight, heavy, warm, numb, shaky, pressured, or empty.)

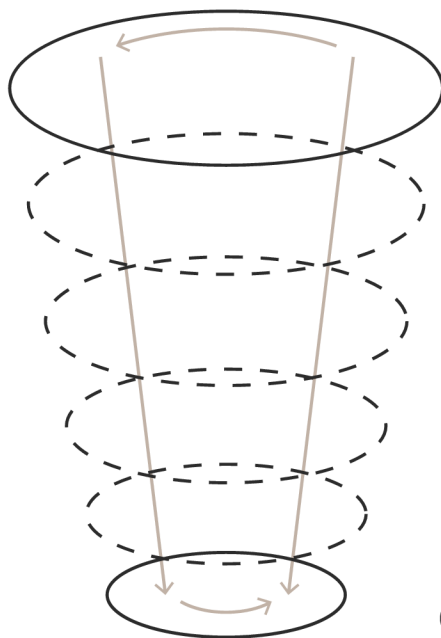
What happens to that sensation when you bring your doubt label to mind?
(Does it increase, decrease, stay the same, or shift?)

Disturbance Rating Scale

Instructions:

After completing the body scan, bring your doubt label to mind. Notice what happens in your body. Using the scale below, rate the level of disturbance you feel right now.

This is not a test. There is no “good” or “bad” number. This scale is simply a way to notice and track how your body responds.



10 — Extreme disturbance:
(The most disturbance I can imagine. Very triggered.)

7-9 — High disturbance:
(Strong physical or emotional reaction.)

4-6 — Moderate disturbance:
(Clear body sensations or emotional activation.)

1-3 — Mild disturbance:
(Some awareness or sensation, but manageable.)

0 — No disturbance:
(Feel calm or neutral when I think about my doubt label.)

Questionnaire

When you think about your doubt label, what number best describes your level of disturbance right now?

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Does this disturbance feel mostly physical, emotional, or both?

- ☐ Physical
- ☐ Emotional
- ☐ Both

Is the disturbance staying the same, increasing, or decreasing as you notice it?

- ☐ Staying the same
- ☐ Increasing
- ☐ Decreasing

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

01

Bring your attention to your body. Notice where you feel the disturbance right now. There is no need to analyze or change it — just observe what is present.

02

Place both feet on the ground or notice the surface supporting you. Take one slow breath in and a longer breath out. Let your body know it is supported.

03

As you breathe out, imagine releasing a small amount of tension from the area where you feel disturbance. You don't need to force it — just allow what's ready to soften.

04

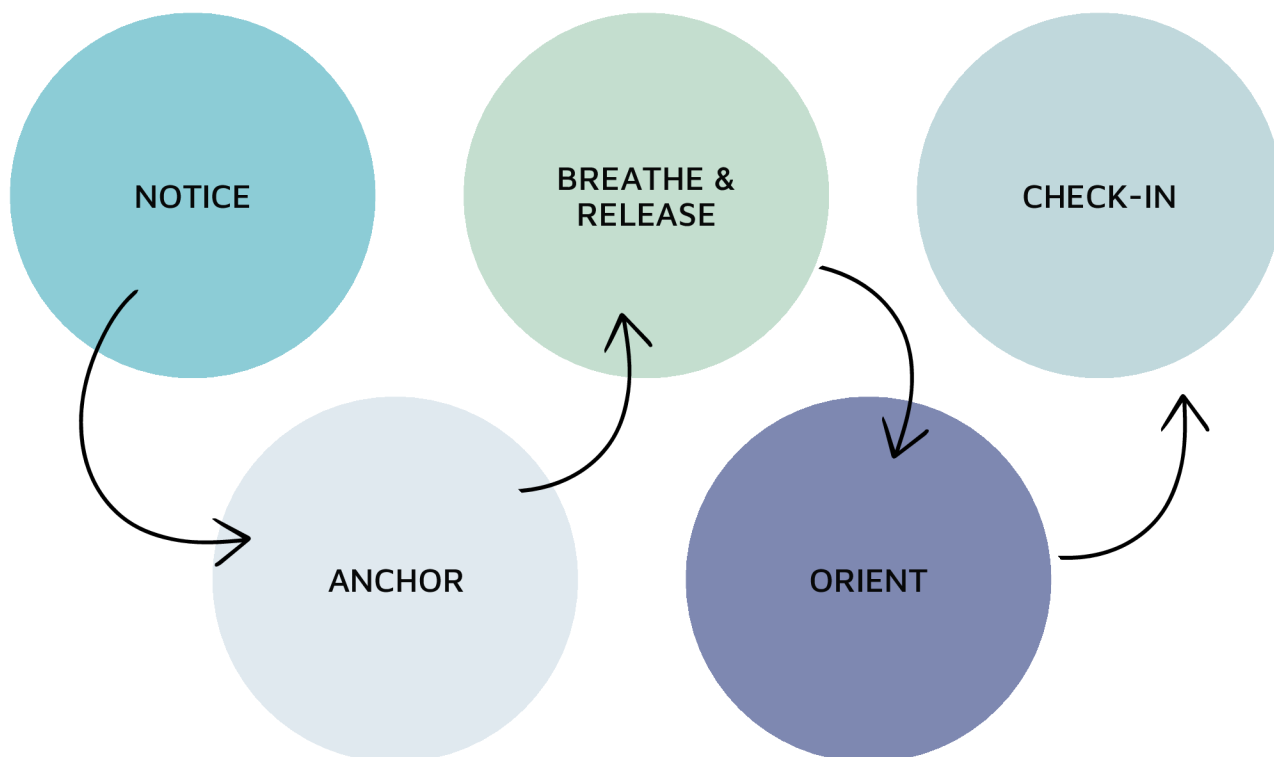
Look around and name:

- 3 things you can see
- 2 things you can physically feel
- 1 thing you can hear

Let your attention move outward for a moment.

05

Pause and notice your body again. Has the disturbance shifted, stayed the same, or softened even slightly? Whatever you notice is enough.



This process can be repeated anytime you notice distress in your body. You are not trying to eliminate feelings — only to support your system through them.



Chapter Five

CHALLENGING THE DOUBT LABEL

WHEN THE BODY SPEAKS BEFORE THE MIND

SOMETIMES, OUR BODY REACTS BEFORE OUR MIND UNDERSTANDS WHAT IS HAPPENING.

You might feel irritated, sad, tired, or shut down without knowing why. Nothing bad may have happened that day, yet something feels “off.” This can be confusing and frustrating, especially when you are trying to make sense of your emotions.

The mind works on different levels. Some thoughts are easy to notice. These are the thoughts you can clearly explain. Other thoughts stay just below your awareness. And some reactions happen without words at all. These deeper reactions often come from past experiences, especially ones that involved stress, fear, or emotional pain.

Long ago, your body learned how to protect you. It learned which situations felt unsafe or overwhelming. Even if you do not remember those moments clearly, your body still holds onto the information. When something in the present feels similar to the past, your body may react right away.

This reaction can happen before your mind has time to catch up. Your heart might race.

Your stomach might feel tight. Your energy may drop suddenly. You may feel the urge to pull away, shut down, or avoid people or tasks. All of this can happen without a clear reason in your thoughts.

Because the reaction starts in the body, you may struggle to explain it. You might say, “I don’t know what’s wrong with me,” or “I just don’t feel like myself today.” When there is no clear event to point to, people often blame themselves. They may think they are lazy, dramatic, or overreacting.

This is where the doubt label often shows up. Thoughts like “I’m not good enough,” “I’m failing,” or “Something is wrong with me,” can quickly take over. The body reacts first, and the mind tries to make sense of it afterward. Unfortunately, the explanation the mind gives is often shaped by old beliefs, not by the truth.

It is important to understand that these reactions are not a personal flaw.

WHEN THE BODY SPEAKS BEFORE THE MIND

Your body is not trying to sabotage you. It is doing what it learned to do to keep you safe. At one time in your life, reacting quickly may have helped you survive emotionally. Even if the situation is different now, the body may still respond the same way.

When the body speaks before the mind, motivation can disappear. You may feel heavy, numb, or disconnected. Tasks that normally feel manageable can suddenly feel overwhelming. This is not because you are incapable. It is because your nervous system is responding to a perceived threat.

Learning to notice these body-first reactions is a powerful skill. Instead of judging yourself, you can begin to observe. You might ask, “What is my body feeling right now?” or “Did something today remind my body of an old experience?” Curiosity helps slow the reaction down.

As you practice noticing these patterns, you create space between the reaction and your response. You are no longer stuck in automatic mode.

Over time, this awareness makes it easier to challenge the doubt label, because you understand that the reaction started in your body—not because the doubt label is true.

Understanding that the body can speak before the mind is the first step in changing how you respond to triggers. You do not need to force yourself to “think positive.” Instead, you begin by listening, noticing, and learning how your body communicates with you. This sets the foundation for the next steps in challenging the doubt label.



CHALLENGING THE DOUBT LABEL

ME VS. THE DOUBT LABEL

When you feel triggered, it can feel like the doubt label is you. The thoughts feel loud and convincing. The emotions feel overwhelming. In those moments, it may seem like there is no space between you and the belief. But the doubt label is not your whole self. It is a part of you that formed during past experiences.

The doubt label developed at a time when you needed protection, understanding, or safety. It learned how to react quickly to keep you from getting hurt again. When something in the present reminds your body of the past, the doubt label steps in automatically. It does not stop to check whether the situation is actually dangerous or whether you are safe now.

This is why the doubt label can feel so powerful. It is not responding to what is happening today. It is responding to what used to happen. It reacts as if the past is happening again, even when your current life is different. The doubt label does not understand time—it only understands familiar threat.

Creating distance between you and the doubt label is an important step. This does not mean rejecting it, arguing with it, or trying to make it disappear. It means recognizing that the doubt label is a response, not your identity. You are the one who notices the doubt label—you are not the doubt label itself.

When you begin to see the doubt label as something separate from you, you gain more choice. Instead of reacting automatically, you can pause and respond. This separation allows you to listen to the doubt label without letting it control your actions or decisions.

This page is not about changing the doubt label yet. It is about shifting your relationship to it. Before you can challenge the doubt label, you first need to recognize that you and the doubt label are not the same voice.

ME VS. THE DOUBT LABEL EXERCISE

Complete the statements below to begin creating space between you and the doubt label. Write honestly and without judgment.

WHAT DOES YOUR DOUBT LABEL USUALLY SAY WHEN YOU FEEL TRIGGERED?

01.

WHEN THIS DOUBT LABEL SHOWS UP, HOW DOES IT MAKE YOUR BODY FEEL?

02.

WHAT DO YOU NOTICE YOURSELF DOING WHEN THE DOUBT LABEL IS IN CHARGE?

03.

IF THE DOUBT LABEL WERE TRYING TO PROTECT YOU, WHAT WOULD IT BE AFRAID OF? (EX: REJECTION, FAILURE, ETC.)

04.

WHAT IS ONE SENTENCE YOU CAN SAY TO REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU ARE NOT THE DOUBT LABEL?

05.

This exercise is about awareness, not fixing. You are learning to notice the difference.

EXTERNAL REBUTTAL: SPEAKING BACK

By now, you've learned how your body reacts to triggers and how your doubt label shows up. The next step is learning how to respond to the doubt label instead of letting it take over.

An external rebuttal means you speak to the doubt label as if it is separate from you. This matters because the doubt label was created during a time when you were trying to survive. It learned its rules in the past — not in your present life.

When the doubt label speaks, it often sounds harsh, urgent, or absolute. It may say things like “You’re not safe,” “You’re not good enough,” or “This will end badly.” These messages feel real because they come with strong body reactions. But feeling real does not mean they are true right now.

The goal of an external rebuttal is not to argue, shame, or force positive thinking. Instead, you are practicing responding from your present self — the part of you that has more information, more options, and more safety than you did before.

Think of this as creating a pause. The doubt label speaks — and instead of reacting automatically, you answer back with clarity and steadiness. This is a skill. It may feel awkward at first. That’s okay. Even a short response is enough to begin shifting the pattern.

How to Do an External Rebuttal

- First, notice what the doubt label is saying
- Then, respond from who you are now, not who you were then
- Use calm, grounded language
- Speak as if you are reassuring a younger part of yourself

You are not trying to erase the doubt label.
You are showing it that you are in charge now.

EXTERNAL: REBUTTALS (EXAMPLE)

01.

DOUBT LABEL: "I'M NOT LOVABLE."

External Rebuttal:

"I learned this belief when I didn't get the care I needed. That does not define my worth now."

02.

DOUBT LABEL: "I'M NOT SAFE."

External Rebuttal:

"This feeling comes from the past. Right now, I am safe in this moment."

03.

DOUBT LABEL: "I'M NOT GOOD ENOUGH."

External Rebuttal:

"This belief was shaped by pressure and criticism. It is not the full truth of who I am."

04.

DOUBT LABEL: "SOMETHING BAD IS ABOUT TO HAPPEN."

External Rebuttal:

"My body is remembering an old fear. I can pause and check what is actually happening right now."

05.

DOUBT LABEL: "IF I MAKE A MISTAKE, I'LL BE REJECTED."

External Rebuttal:

"I am allowed to be human. Mistakes do not mean I lose connection or safety."

**YOUR REBUTTAL DOES NOT NEED TO FEEL BELIEVABLE YET.
IT ONLY NEEDS TO BE GROUNDED IN THE PRESENT.**

EXTERNAL REBUTTALS EXERCISE

Instructions

Now it's your turn to practice responding to your own doubt label.

This exercise helps you slow down and create space between what the doubt label says and how you respond from your present self. There is no right or wrong way to do this. Write honestly and gently.

If you notice emotion or body sensations as you complete this, pause when needed. This is about awareness and practice — not perfection.

01.**STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR DOUBT LABEL**

(Examples: I'm not safe, I'm not good enough, I'm unlovable, I will be rejected)

02.**STEP 2: NOTICE THE IMPACT**

WHEN THIS DOUBT LABEL SHOWS UP, WHAT HAPPENS FOR YOU?

IN MY THOUGHTS OR BEHAVIOR, I NOTICE:

**YOUR REBUTTAL DOES NOT NEED TO FEEL BELIEVABLE YET.
IT ONLY NEEDS TO BE GROUNDED IN THE PRESENT.**

EXTERNAL REBUTTALS EXERCISE

03.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY YOUR DOUBT LABEL

Now respond to your doubt label from your present self — the part of you that knows more, has more support, and lives in the current moment.

Your response does not need to feel true yet. It only needs to be grounded in the present.

Present Me Responds:

(You may begin with phrases like:

“That belief comes from the past...”

“Right now, I am...”

“I am allowed to...”

“This moment is different because...”)

04.

STEP 4: PAUSE AND NOTICE

After writing your rebuttal, take a slow breath.

- Does your body feel the same, more activated, or slightly calmer?

There is no correct answer. You are learning to notice the shift.

*This exercise is about practicing response, not forcing belief.
Even noticing the doubt label without reacting is progress.*

Grounding Technique

5 SENSES

Instructions:

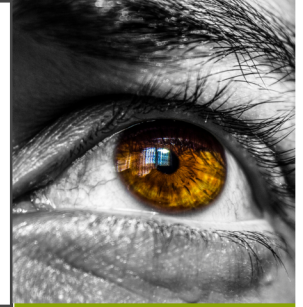
Find a position that feels comfortable for your body. Take one slow breath in through your nose and exhale through your mouth.

Begin noticing your surroundings. You do not need to change anything — just observe.

5 THINGS YOU CAN SEE

- COLORS
- SHAPES
- LIGHT
- OBJECTS NEAR OR FAR

SAY WHAT YOU SEE OUT LOUD



4 THINGS YOU CAN TOUCH

- YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR
- THE CHAIR SUPPORTING YOUR BODY
- THE TEMPERATURE OF THE AIR

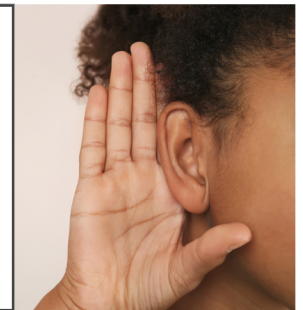
LET YOUR BODY SINK INTO WHAT FEELS STEADY.



3 THINGS YOU CAN HEAR

- CLOSE BY OR FAR AWAY
- LOUD OR SOFT

THERE IS NO RIGHT SOUND. JUST NOTICE & BE STILL



2 THINGS YOU CAN SMELL

- RECALL A FAMILIAR CALMING SCENT
- OR GENTLY NOTICE THE NATURAL SCENT OF THE SPACE
- SMELL YOURSELF



1 THING YOU CAN TASTE

- A DRINK
- FOOD
- OR SIMPLY THE NATURAL TASTE IN YOUR MOUTH

TAKE ONE SLOW BREATH AS YOU NOTICE IT.





Chapter Six

MINDFULNESS

MINDFULNESS IS ABOUT PAYING ATTENTION TO WHAT IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.

It means noticing your thoughts, feelings, and body sensations without judging them or trying to change them. When trauma is involved, the mind often moves back into the past without us realizing it. Mindfulness helps bring awareness back to the present moment, where there is more safety and choice.

When you were younger, your brain and body learned certain beliefs based on what you experienced. These beliefs helped you survive and make sense of the world at the time. If you felt ignored, unsafe, or not good enough, your mind may have formed a doubt label to protect you. Even when life changes, that belief can remain active.

This is why a doubt label can feel so strong. The body reacts as if the past is still happening. Thoughts like “I’m not safe” or “I’m not worthy” can appear even when there is no current danger. Mindfulness helps slow this process by asking a simple question: Is this happening now, or is this coming from the past?

Building a new belief does not mean denying what you went through or forcing positive thoughts. It means recognizing that a belief formed in the past may not fit your life today. A new belief reflects your present self—who you are now—not who you had to be in order to survive.

Mindfulness allows both the past and the present to be acknowledged. You can honor the experiences that shaped you while also noticing what is different now. You may have more support, more control, or more safety than you once did. These differences matter.

This section is about learning to stay grounded in the present while opening the possibility of a new belief. You are not changing anything yet. You are simply becoming aware that another belief may exist—one that better matches your life today. In the next section, you will begin identifying what that belief could be.

FROM DOUBT LABEL TO DESIRED BELIEF

THE DOUBT LABEL YOU IDENTIFIED EARLIER DID NOT COME FROM NOWHERE.

It formed during moments when your nervous system was trying to protect you, explain pain, or make sense of experiences that felt confusing, overwhelming, or unsafe. At the time, this belief may have helped you survive. Over time, however, the belief can remain active even when your life has changed.

Because doubt labels are connected to memory and emotion, they often feel true on a deep level. This is why logic alone is not enough to change them. You may know you are safe, capable, or worthy, yet your body and emotions respond as if that belief is not real. This exercise helps you gently explore that disconnect without judgment.

In EMDR-informed work, this step is about identifying a desired belief — a belief you wish you could hold instead of the doubt label. This belief represents your present self, not your past self. It reflects who you are now, what you have survived, and what is different today. The goal is not to convince yourself or force change. The goal is awareness.

As you complete this exercise, you may notice discomfort, doubt, or resistance. That does not mean you are doing it wrong. It simply means the old belief is still connected to past experiences. By noticing how strong the belief feels and how much disturbance is present, you begin mapping where healing is needed.

This section helps you understand:

- How strongly the doubt label is still connected to the past
- What belief your present self wants to move toward
- How true that belief feels right now, without pressure

In the next section, you will begin checking in with your present self to see how this desired belief fits your life today. Rather than focusing on the past, you will explore what your body, mind, and environment tell you now.

FROM DOUBT LABEL TO DESIRED BELIEF

EXERCISE: IDENTIFYING A DESIRED BELIEF

Take your time with this exercise. If your body feels activated, pause and use grounding skills as needed. There is no rush

Step 1: Name the Doubt Label

My doubt label is: (Remember your answer from Chapter Two)

Step 2: Past Connection & Disturbance

Briefly bring to mind the experiences that shaped this belief. You do not need details — just notice how your body responds.

WHEN I THINK ABOUT THESE EXPERIENCES, MY DISTURBANCE LEVEL IS:
(0 = NO DISTURBANCE, 10 = HIGHEST DISTURBANCE)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Step 3: Identify a Desired Belief

If this belief came from the past, what belief would better reflect who you are now?

This belief does not need to feel true yet. It only needs to feel meaningful.
My desired belief is:

FROM DOUBT LABEL TO DESIRED BELIEF

EXERCISE: IDENTIFYING A DESIRED BELIEF

Take your time with this exercise. If your body feels activated, pause and use grounding skills as needed. There is no rush

Step 4: Belief Strength Check

When you think about your desired belief while remembering the past experiences, how true does it feel right now?

(0 = not true at all, 10 = completely true)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Step 5: Compassionate Awareness

Complete the sentences below with honesty and kindness.

My past self believed _____ because

_____.

My present self wants to believe _____
because _____.

Important Reminder

A low belief score does not mean failure. It means your nervous system is still protecting you. Awareness comes before change. Simply noticing the gap between the past belief and the desired belief is meaningful progress.

In the next section, you will focus on your present self—checking in with what is true now and how your body responds as you begin to orient toward a new belief.

PRESENT SELF CHECK-IN

Your doubt label was shaped by past experiences, but your present self lives in a different moment. This section is about slowing down and noticing what is true now. Rather than arguing with the doubt label or trying to change how you feel, you will gently check in with your body, your environment, and your current resources.

The purpose of this exercise is not to prove the doubt label wrong. It is to help your nervous system notice the difference between then and now. When the body recognizes that the present moment holds more safety, choice, or support, the grip of the old belief can begin to loosen.

As you complete this check-in, move slowly. If at any point you feel overwhelmed, pause and return to grounding. Awareness happens best when the body feels steady enough to stay present.



PRESENT SELF CHECK-IN

Exercise: Checking in With the Present Self

Step 1: Reconnect to the Present

Take a moment to look around you.

Name three things you can see in your current environment that remind you where you are right now.

Name one thing that tells your body you are not in the past.

Step 2: Body Awareness

Bring your attention to your body.

When you think about your desired belief, notice what happens inside.

Where in your body do you feel the most response?
(For example: chest, stomach, throat, shoulders)

What does that sensation feel like
(For example: Tight, warm, heavy, calm, numb)

PRESENT SELF CHECK-IN

Exercise: Checking in With the Present Self

Step 3: Present Reality Check

Answer the following based on your current life-- not your past.

What support, skills, or resources do I have now that I did not have then?

What choices do I have today that were not available to me in the past?

Step 4: Gentle Belief Re-Check

Bring your attention to your body.

Read your desired belief again, slowly.

Right now, my belief feels:

(0 = not true at all, 10 = completely true)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

If the number stayed the same or lowered, that is okay. Noticing is progress.

Step 5: Present Self Statement

Complete the sentence below from present self--not your past self:

In this moment, my present self knows that:

GROUNDING TECHNIQUE

COLOR FOCUS RESET

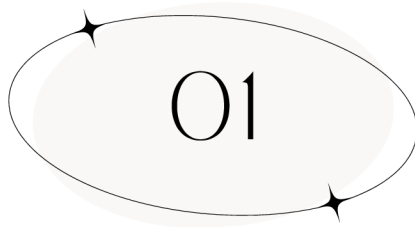
Think of a color.

Now pause.

Use the very first color that came to mind when you read that sentence.

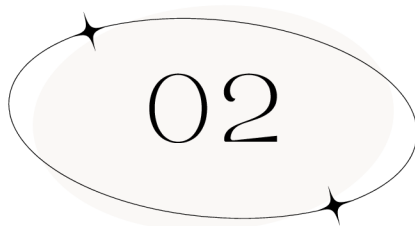
The color you use should be the one that appeared immediately, without effort or decision. That first response is already connected to your awareness in this moment.

Once you have that color, continue with the steps below.



NAME THE FIRST COLOR

THIS IS WHERE STEP ONE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP ONE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP ONE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP ONE GOES.



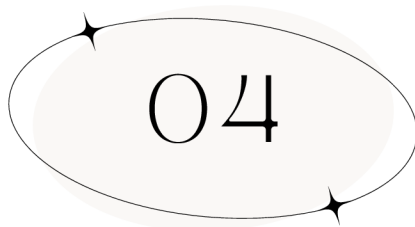
SEARCH FOR THE COLOR

THIS IS WHERE STEP TWO GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP TWO GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP TWO GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP TWO GOES.



IF THE COLOR IS LIMITED

THIS IS WHERE STEP THREE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP THREE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP THREE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP THREE GOES.



BODY CHECK-IN

THIS IS WHERE STEP FOUR GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FOUR GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FOUR GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FOUR GOES.



CLOSE THE EXERCISE

THIS IS WHERE STEP FIVE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FIVE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FIVE GOES. THIS IS WHERE STEP FIVE GOES.



Chapter Seven

MINDFULNESS

CLOSING REFLECTION: LETTING THE PRESENT SELF LEAD

YOU HAVE SPENT THIS WORKBOOK LEARNING WHERE YOUR BELIEFS CAME FROM, HOW THEY WERE SHAPED, AND HOW THEY CONTINUE TO INFLUENCE YOUR REACTIONS TODAY.

This work takes courage. It asks you to slow down, notice patterns, and reflect on experiences that once felt overwhelming. What matters most now is recognizing that you are no longer living in those moments.

The doubt label you identified was formed during a different time in your life. It may have developed years ago, or more recently, but it belongs to a version of you that was responding to circumstances that no longer exist. Even though the belief can feel very real, it is rooted in the past—not in your present reality.

When the doubt label appears, it is often speaking from a younger place. You might imagine it as the age you were when the belief first formed. That version of you did not have the same choices, safety, or understanding that you have now. Yet when the belief is triggered, it can feel as if that younger voice is directing your thoughts, emotions, and behavior today.

Mindfulness helps you notice when this happens. It allows you to pause and recognize that your present self is responding to an old message. You are not trying to erase the past or silence that younger part of you. Instead, you are acknowledging that it has not yet learned what your life looks like now.

Your present self has access to resources, boundaries, and support that were not available before. You can make decisions, protect yourself, and care for your needs in ways that were once impossible. When you challenge the doubt label, you are offering reassurance to a part of you that does not yet know how much has changed.

As you move forward, remember that healing does not mean forgetting where you came from. It means allowing your present self to lead, while holding compassion for the parts of you that learned to survive. The goal is not control or perfection, but awareness, choice, and the ability to respond to life as it is now.

DISTURBANCE & BELIEF: PROGRESS TRACKER

Progress Check-In Assessment

Part 1: Doubt Label Disturbance

Take a moment to look around you.

When you first identified your doubt label, you rated how much disturbance you felt when thinking about it.

When I think about my doubt label now, my disturbance level is:

(0 = no disturbance, 10 = highest disturbance)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Optional reflection: One thing I notice about this number

Part 2: Desired Belief Strength

Earlier, you identified a belief you wish to hold instead of the doubt label.

When I think about my desired belief now, how true does it feel?

(0 = not true at all, 10 = completely true)

☐ 0 ☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5 ☐ 6 ☐ 7 ☐ 8 ☐ 9 ☐ 10

Optional reflection: What feels different, if anything:

There is no “right” number.

If your numbers changed, that matters.

If they stayed the same, increased awareness still counts as progress.

Healing is not linear, and this work can be revisited at any time.

Set a timer for one to two minutes and write continuously. Keep it simple. You might offer comfort, acknowledge what that part of you went through, or remind it that you are safe and supported today. There is no right or wrong way to do this. When the time is up, stop writing and take a breath.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.



Conclusion

ASSESSMENTS & RESOURCES

ANXIETY EVALUATION: GAD-7

Name:

Date:

There are no right or wrong answers. This is about noticing patterns, not judging yourself.

For each statement, check the number that best reflects how true it has been for you over the past two weeks.

0--Not at all
1--Several days
2--More than half the days
3--Nearly every day

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| 2. Not being able to stop or control worrying | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Worrying too much about different things | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Trouble relaxing | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Total Score: _____ / 21

DEPRESSION EVALUATION: PHQ-9

For each statement, check the number that best reflects how true it has been for you over the past two weeks.

0--Not at all
1--Several days
2--More than half the days
3--Nearly every day

- | | | | | |
|--|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things | <input type="checkbox"/> 0 | <input type="checkbox"/> 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> 2 | <input type="checkbox"/> 3 |
| 2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3. Trouble falling or staying asleep or sleeping too much. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4. Feeling tired or having little energy | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5. Feeling bad about yourself — let yourself & others down | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 8. Moving very slowly or feeling unusually restless | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 9. Thoughts of self-harm or being better off dead | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Total Score: _____ / 27

Reflect on any changes in your PHQ 9 & GAD 7 Assessment

Situations alone do not create emotional reactions. Two people can experience the same event and respond very differently. What shapes our emotional and behavioral response is the thought we have about the situation.

This exercise helps you slow down and identify the thought that is driving your feelings and actions. Once the thought is visible, it becomes something you can examine rather than something that controls you automatically.

CBT Thought Awareness Worksheet



Bonus: Emotion Based Coping Skills

FRAUSTRATED

- Push your hands into a wall for 20 seconds. Release and breathe.
- Hold ice in your hands or place it on your chest. Breathe while your body cools.
- Stop and ask: “Will reacting right now make this worse?”

OVER- WHELMED

- Set a 10-minute timer. Work on one task only until the timer ends.
- Imagine a light moving through your body. Breathe where you feel tension until it softens.
- Break the task into the smallest step possible and start there.

LONELY

- Place a hand on your chest or hug yourself. Breathe slowly.
- Ask yourself: “Do I need comfort, reassurance, or connection?” Go find what helps.
- Walk, stretch, or play music to help your body shift.

ANXIOUS

- Hold ice or something cold. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth until your body slows.
- Cross your arms and tap left, then right. Keep breathing for about one minute.
- Pick one object in front of you. Keep your eyes on it and breathe until you feel grounded.

HOPELESS

- Say: “Hopelessness is here,” not “I am hopeless.”
- Tap your arms or legs left and right while remembering something hard you survived.
- Count down 5-4-3-2-1 while breathing. Get up and take one small step.

ANGRY

- Splash cold water on your face or hold ice. Breathe until your body cools.
- Walk fast, climb stairs, or move your body for one minute.
- Practice what you want to say later, when you are calm.