



The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma by Bessel Van Der Kolk

Discussion and Journaling Prompts

Section 1 (Chapter 1 – 4):

Information: Section 1 of *The Body Keeps the Score* is dense, foundational, and emotional, so a worksheet of questions can help members slow down, reflect, and connect the material to their lived experience.

Section 1 Worksheet — *The Body Keeps the Score*

Understanding Trauma & the Brain

A reflective and discussion-based worksheet for women's book club members

1. Core Understanding

- What stood out to you most in Section 1 about how trauma affects the brain and body?
- Which concepts were new or surprising?
- How does the author describe the relationship between trauma and memory?
- What did you learn about the brain's survival systems (fight, flight, freeze)?

2. Personal Reflection (gentle, optional)

- Did any part of this section feel familiar or relatable to your own experiences?
- How did your body respond while reading (tension, calm, curiosity, discomfort)?
- What emotions came up for you, and what do you think triggered them?
- What helped you stay grounded while reading?



- **Is there a moment in your life when your body “remembered” something before your mind did?**

3. Women’s Lived Experience

- **How do societal expectations of women influence how trauma is expressed or suppressed?**
- **What messages were you taught growing up about emotional expression or “being strong”?**
- **How might those messages affect healing?**

4. Application & Growth

- **What is one insight from Section 1 you want to carry into your daily life?**
- **What practices help you reconnect with your body when you feel overwhelmed?**
- **What boundaries or self-care practices feel important after reading this section?**
- **What questions do you want to explore further in Section 2?**

5. Optional Creative Prompts

- **Write a few sentences describing how your body feels today.**
- **Draw or describe a metaphor for how trauma impacts the brain (storm, tangled wires, locked room, etc.).**
- **Create a grounding affirmation inspired by this section.**



The Body Keeps Score

Chapter 5 & 6: Discussion & Journaling Questions

Chapter 5: Body-Brain Connections & Trauma's Impact on the Nervous System

Understanding the Body's Response

- What part of the chapter helped you better understand how your body reacts to stress or fear?
- Did anything in this chapter explain a physical reaction you've had in the past (tight chest, stomach issues, numbness, hypervigilance)?
- How does learning about the nervous system change the way you think about "overreacting" or "shutting down"?

Self-Awareness & Patterns

- When you think about your own stress responses, do you tend to fight, flee, freeze, and/or collapse?
- What situations in your life activate your body the fastest?
- What signals does your body give you that you're overwhelmed or shutting down?

Compassion Toward Yourself

- Did this chapter help you feel more compassion for your past reactions?

Regulation & Safety

- What practices help you feel grounded or safe in your body (breathing, stretching, prayer, journaling, movement)?
- What new regulation techniques from the chapter would you like to try?



Chapter 6: The Brain, Memory, and Trauma's Imprint

Discussion & Journaling Questions

Memory & Meaning

- What stood out to you about how trauma affects memory?
- Did the chapter help you understand why some memories feel vivid while others feel foggy or fragmented?
- How does this change the way you think about your own past experiences?

Emotional Processing

- What emotions came up for you while reading this chapter?
- Did anything surprise you about how the brain stores emotional vs. factual details?
- How do you typically respond when a difficult memory surfaces?

Identity & Self-Perception

- How has trauma shaped the way you see yourself or your capabilities?
- What part of the chapter helped you understand your reactions or behaviors in a new way?

Healing & Integration

- What does mind - body "integration" mean to you after reading this chapter?
- What small steps could help you feel more connected to your present self, your emotions, or how your body responds to certain stimuli?
- What supportive practices (journaling, movement, meditation, breathing work, community, boundaries, etc.) feel most accessible and helpful to you right now?

Gentle Closing Reflection

- What is one thing you want to carry forward from these chapters?
- What is one thing you want to release?

