

A rustic dining table set in a barn with hay bales in the background. The table is long and made of wood, with several place settings including plates, glasses, and cutlery. There are also water bottles and small potted plants on the table. The background features large hay bales and a window with multiple panes.

Not Just About the Food

A Compassionate Guide for
When Everything
Feels Like Too Much

How we feel in our bodies is never solely physical — it's a convergence of emotion, environment, memory, and meaning. If you've ever felt overwhelmed by your relationship to food or how you see yourself, this resource is here to offer gentle support, grounded exercises, and a pathway back into compassionate connection with yourself.



SECTION ONE:

IT'S ABOUT THE FOOD, IT'S NOT ABOUT THE FOOD

One of the most challenging things about healing your relationship with food or your body is that you still have to engage with it — daily, hourly, constantly. Unlike other areas of healing where you can create distance, food is a part of everyday life. Which means: you're face-to-face with what challenges you most, multiple times a day.

And yet — people are often surprised by how much shifts in their relationship with food... even when we're not directly talking about it.

That's because food is both the thing and the symbol.

When we trace our relationship with food back to its roots, we begin to see the tangled web beneath the surface. Food is nourishment — and nourishment connects to care. Often, this leads us to early relationships: with caregivers, with our environment, with the way we learned to receive (or not receive) support.

Food is also connection. Celebration. Comfort. Culture. Control.

It is biological — we need it to survive.

And it is emotional — we often use it to feel, to avoid feeling, or to manage what's hard to feel.

It is historical — shaped by your personal and cultural past.

And it is current — present at every holiday, every dinner table, every moment of choice.

This is why it's so important to talk about more than food in healing spaces.

And also why it's important not to forget to talk about food. Because one feeds the other. And all of it matters.

PRACTICE: FOOD AS RELATIONSHIP

If you feel up for it, you might try shifting your focus from how food makes you feel about yourself, to how it is here to nourish you.

Pick one thing you're eating this week — a piece of fruit, a loaf of bread, a root vegetable — and take a moment of wonder to wonder:

- Where did this come from?
- Who grew it? What land did it come through?
- What journey did it take to get here — to me?

Not as a pressure to romanticize, but as a soft invitation to relate to food differently.

Not as the enemy. Not as the obsession. But as a partner in care.

PRACTICE (TAKE IT A STEP FURTHER): RECONNECT TO THE SOURCE

If it feels supportive — here are some reconnection routes to try out:

- Visit a local farmer's market or small food producer.
- Plant a single herb, seed, or sprout — even in a windowsill.
- Pull something from the earth with your own hands.
- Ask an elder or family member about the food they ate growing up.

No pressure to go deep. Just an experiment in seeing food not just as fuel or a battleground — but as something living, connected, and life-giving. Perhaps this is a space to re-route focus (just as we re-route neuropathways over time) away from the body as a point of pain or distress and towards life and food as nourishment for life.



SECTION TWO: THE BODY IMAGE TORNADO

Sometimes it starts with a feeling.

Other times, it starts with a sensation – sometimes it may even be sensation/illness/imbalance physically.

Or a glance in the mirror.

Or a weird interaction.

Or the way your jeans fit.

Or the weather. Or nothing at all.

What follows is a whirlwind — the kind that skips all nuance and lands you right in the eye of the storm:

“I hate my body.”

But here’s the thing: that thought is often a shortcut.

It’s a way of naming something hard without having to feel all the layers underneath it.

Because those layers? They’re a lot.

You might be:

- Emotionally overwhelmed
- Physically dysregulated
- Energetically carrying something that isn’t even yours
- Trying to protect yourself from feeling too close to something (or someone)
- Or just exhausted, hungry, and overstimulated

And instead of sorting through all that, your system reaches for something familiar:

Blame the body.

Because that’s what you were taught.

Because that’s the pattern that’s been practiced.

Because it gives a false sense of control or certainty.

But what if body hate wasn’t the truth?

What if it was just the most accessible story your nervous system could grab?

PRACTICE: THE 5-4-3-2-1 RESET (REMIXED)



When your thoughts start to spiral or your body feels like too much, this is a useful back-pocket practice to support arrival in the now.

PS. The key is each of these things are neutral things, we want objects that carry no emotional charge for you.

5: Look around and name 5 neutral things you can see.

A shadow on the wall, the color of your socks, a tree outside.

4: Name 4 neutral things you can touch.

Your clothing, the ground under your feet, a pet nearby.

3: Name 3 neutral things you hear.

Birds, traffic, your own breath.

2: Name 2 things that feel supportive right now.

A soft texture, a warm drink, a person or animal who feels safe.

1: Say 1 kind thing to your body.

Even if it feels hard. Even if it's just: "I'm doing my very best."

This is not about doing it perfectly — it's about making room for just enough solid ground to interrupt the storm.

PRACTICE: NAME WHAT'S ACTUALLY GOING ON

If you notice yourself in a 'spiral' - that loop of harsh thought towards yourself and/or your body (alongside perhaps the crawl out of your skin feeling that can go with it) - try these curiosities:

But first: celebrate the noticing. By noticing the loop/spiral, it creates a bit of distance between you and that thought/reality, some breathing space.

Curiosities:

- What am I feeling emotionally?
- What sensations am I noticing physically?
- What happened right before I started feeling this way?
- is all of this mine?

Nothing to fix, change, or understand. Just a noticing.

Awareness can soften into acknowledgement, which can offer you compassion.



SECTION THREE: SENSITIVITY AND THE BODY

Some of us were born porous.

Attuned. Alert.

So good at reading a room, we sometimes forgot to read ourselves.

When you're more highly sensitive — especially one who grew up in unpredictable or emotionally intense environments — your body becomes a tuning fork. You don't just feel your own feelings... you start picking up on everyone else's too.

Sometimes, that muchness gets stored in the body as tension, fogginess, nausea, heaviness — and the only way out seems to be control. Control of food. Of movement. Of how the body looks.

But here's the thing: the discomfort you feel in your body might not be your body.

It might be:

- Someone else's mood that you absorbed without meaning to
- Emotional energy you've been carrying for days
- The sensory overwhelm of a chaotic space
- A nervous system that never learned it was safe to slow down

PRACTICE: CHECK IN TO LET GO.

Before you make meaning of a body sensation — pause and ask:

“Is this mine?”

Sometimes the answer will be yes.

Sometimes it will be no.

Sometimes it will be: “I don’t know yet.”

And that’s okay. The invitation and curiosity is the key here.



PRACTICE: HARNESSING IMAGINATION

Stand, sit, or lay on the floor (maybe something soft underneath you). Feel the ground underneath the part of you that is connected to it.

Imagine a filter forming maybe a few inches, feet (whatever feels right) away from your skin — not a wall, but a membrane.

See in your mind's eye the filter working, doing it's job to let in what's nourishing. Let out what's not.

I would also highly highly encourage practicing and playing with your imagination here and just noticing as you do. Maybe the image of a filter does not land for you at all, and perhaps it's imagining your energy bigger, stronger, perhaps it's zooming your awareness back in so that the volume isn't so turned up. It can truly be anything that supports, that feels like your own unique solid ground within. It's not even about protecting, rather fortifying your own ability to stay in your own energy.

SECTION FOUR: TRUST IS A TWO-WAY STREET

Our relationship with our bodies is not unlike any other relationship. There is a poem by David Whyte that sits on the desktop of my computer that speaks to this. Everything is relational. (This is why therapy is effective btw). When it comes to our bodies, trust is built in the similar small, quiet moments of choosing curiosity over control. It need not be grand. You don't have to love your body to begin building trust with it. A split second of gentle curiosity, perhaps even connection goes a long way.



*“Your great mistake is to act the drama as if you were alone.
As if life were a progressive and cunning crime with no witness to
the tiny hidden transgressions.*

*To feel abandoned is to deny the intimacy of your surroundings.
Surely, even you, at times, have felt the grand array; the swelling
presence, and the chorus, crowding out your solo voice.*

*You must note the way the soap dish enables you, or the window
latch grants you freedom. Alertness is the hidden discipline of
familiarity.*

*The stairs are your mentor of things to come, the doors have always
been there to frighten you and invite you, and the tiny speaker in the
phone is your dream-ladder to divinity.*

*Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into the
conversation. The kettle is singing even as it pours you a drink, the
cooking pots have left their arrogant aloofness and seen the good in
you at last. All the birds and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.”*

David Whyte

PRACTICE: MICRO-MOMENTS THAT BUILD BODY TRUST (THAT HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH FOOD – EVEN THOUGH THAT IS ALSO VERY IMPORTANT):

- Move around in your chair with presence when you notice discomfort
- Go pee when you need to, even if you're in the middle of something
- Drink water when you are thirsty
- Move, shake, dance, etc. when you feel restless
- Rest when you feel tired, depleted, mellow.
- **If you are a woman, pay attention to your cycle and the ways your needs/energy shifts throughout the month.



PRACTICE: A DAILY PROMPT

What could it look like to build trust
with my body today?

Maybe it's water.

Maybe it's socks.

Maybe it's silence.

Maybe it's choosing not to override
the little cue you usually ignore.

Tiny acts. Real repair.

I'LL LEAVE YOU WITH THESE LAST LITTLE THOUGHTS:

It is my hope that this little guide offers a few footholds when things feel loud. A bit of ground beneath your feet when you're spiraling. And perhaps most importantly, a reminder: there is nothing wrong with you.

You are allowed to feel everything.

You are allowed to not know what you're feeling. (This can actually be a very important one to let go of – and in doing so brings us more into presence: out of our heads, out of control control, out of always needing to know).

You are allowed to still be learning how to stay with yourself.

If something in these pages opened a door, stirred something tender, or made you exhale — and you want to go deeper — I'm always here for that.

You can reach out to me here anytime. No pressure. No fixing. Just support — if or when you want it. You're already doing enough. You're already doing beautifully.

Thank you for being here.