



Salt Water Heals (Almost) Everything

By Brandy Trout

The first thing the salt water does is sting. It is subtle. Barely noticeable at first, but if you have even the smallest cut, it finds it. The ocean has a way of doing that. It does not ask what you are carrying or where you have been. It just shows up exactly as it is and meets you there.

Most days, I walk on the beach without an agenda. No podcast. No music. Just the steady rhythm of waves that do not care how busy the week ahead looks. I tell myself I am doing it for the benefit of exercise, but that is never true. I walk because the ocean does not require me to explain anything.

Some weeks, I arrive carrying more mental anguish than others. Decisions that did not land cleanly. Conversations I replay inside my mind too many times. The quiet pressure of being the one people expect answers from... often before I have given myself time to reflect on the question. I do not bring those things intentionally to the ocean; they just come along with me, tucked somewhere behind my ribs.

Those are the days when the walk feels heavier at first. When my feet drag slightly through the sand and my thoughts run faster than the tide. I have learned that when my mind is loud, it is usually because I have been holding too much for too long... decisions that needed space, emotions that did not get named, expectations I absorbed without questioning whether they were mine to carry or not.

I do not come to the beach looking for answers. I have learned the ocean does not offer those on demand. What it offers instead is honesty. It reflects on whatever I bring with me to the beach... urgency, fatigue, resolve... and asks me to stand with it long enough to see it clearly. Breathe in the salt air, hold it inside my lungs, pause, and release the pressure once it reminds me of my own presence. No commentary. No urgency. Just breathing the salt air and the quiet recognition of what is truly present at that moment.

The water does not try to fix any of it. It moves in and out, repeatedly, as if to remind me that consistency matters more than force. That healing is not rushed. That there is a difference between pain and damage, and that not everything that stings is meant to harm you. Leadership thinkers often talk about consistency over intensity, about showing up repeatedly when progress feels invisible. The ocean has been practicing that long before we tried to name it.

I have learned that salt water does not heal by erasing what happened. It cleans. It clarifies. It leaves you a little more exposed than before, but also a little lighter. The things that do not belong eventually loosen their grip. *Brené Brown* reminds us that clarity often comes only after we allow ourselves to feel what is uncomfortable. The salt water seems to agree.

There is something humbling about standing at the edge of the tide, barefoot, and unremarkable. Out here, titles do not translate well. Accomplishments do not echo. The ocean does not ask what you do; it simply invites you to be still long enough to notice what is true. *Anne Morrow Lindbergh* wrote in *Gift from the Sea* about the shoreline as a place that strips life back to its essentials, where the noise falls away and only what matters remains. Standing on the beach, her words resonate.

On some days that I visit the beach in what is true is exhaustion. Other days, it is gratitude. Or uncertainty. Or the quiet realization that the thing I have been trying to control might be asking for space instead. The ocean has taught me that strength does not always look like forward motion. Sometimes it looks like waiting for the next wave to finish what the last one started. It looks like trusting that erosion, over time, reshapes even the most stubborn edges.

I used to think healing was supposed to feel peaceful, gentle, and clean. But salt water tells a different story. Healing can be uncomfortable. It can sting before it soothes. It can require you to feel what you would rather move past quickly. Yet every time I leave the water, I feel steadier. Not because everything will be resolved by a beach walk, but because I remember that I do not have to resolve it all at once.

I notice the difference most clearly after I leave. In how I speak a little more slowly. In how I listen without interrupting. In how I resist the urge to rush someone else toward resolution simply because I have learned to tolerate my own discomfort. The ocean does not make life easier, but it does make it clearer. It reminds me that steadiness is often more useful than certainty, and that presence matters more than performance.

The beach always looks different on the walk back. The light shifts. The sand settles. Tide has left an impression on the sand. What felt unfinished on the way out feels less demanding now and not because it is resolved, but because it has been given room to breathe in the salt air. I have learned to trust that shift. To let the tide do what it does best without narrating the process.

The tide never rushes, yet it always returns. The shoreline is never the same twice, yet it holds. There is a kind of wisdom in that. Perhaps a reminder that progress does not always announce itself loudly. Sometimes it looks like you are showing up again tomorrow.

By the time I turn back toward the dunes, the salt has dried on my skin. The sting fades. What remains is clarity. Not answers, exactly, but perspective. The sense that whatever needs healing will come in its own time, wave by wave.

Salt water heals (almost) everything. It reminds you that discomfort and healing often arrive together. What does not resolve immediately finds its proper weight and distribution with the tides of your life. That is when you begin to learn which things are yours to carry... and which are not.

Brandy Trout is a leadership strategist, writer, speaker, and executive coach who works with organizations and leaders in navigating growth, change, and complexity. (www.FromGoodToGrace.com) Her writing explores the intersection of inner clarity, steady leadership, and the rhythms that shape how we live and lead. She is often found between Savannah and Tybee Island, where much of her writing takes shape.

The author often walks Tybee's shoreline, listening to what the tide has to say.