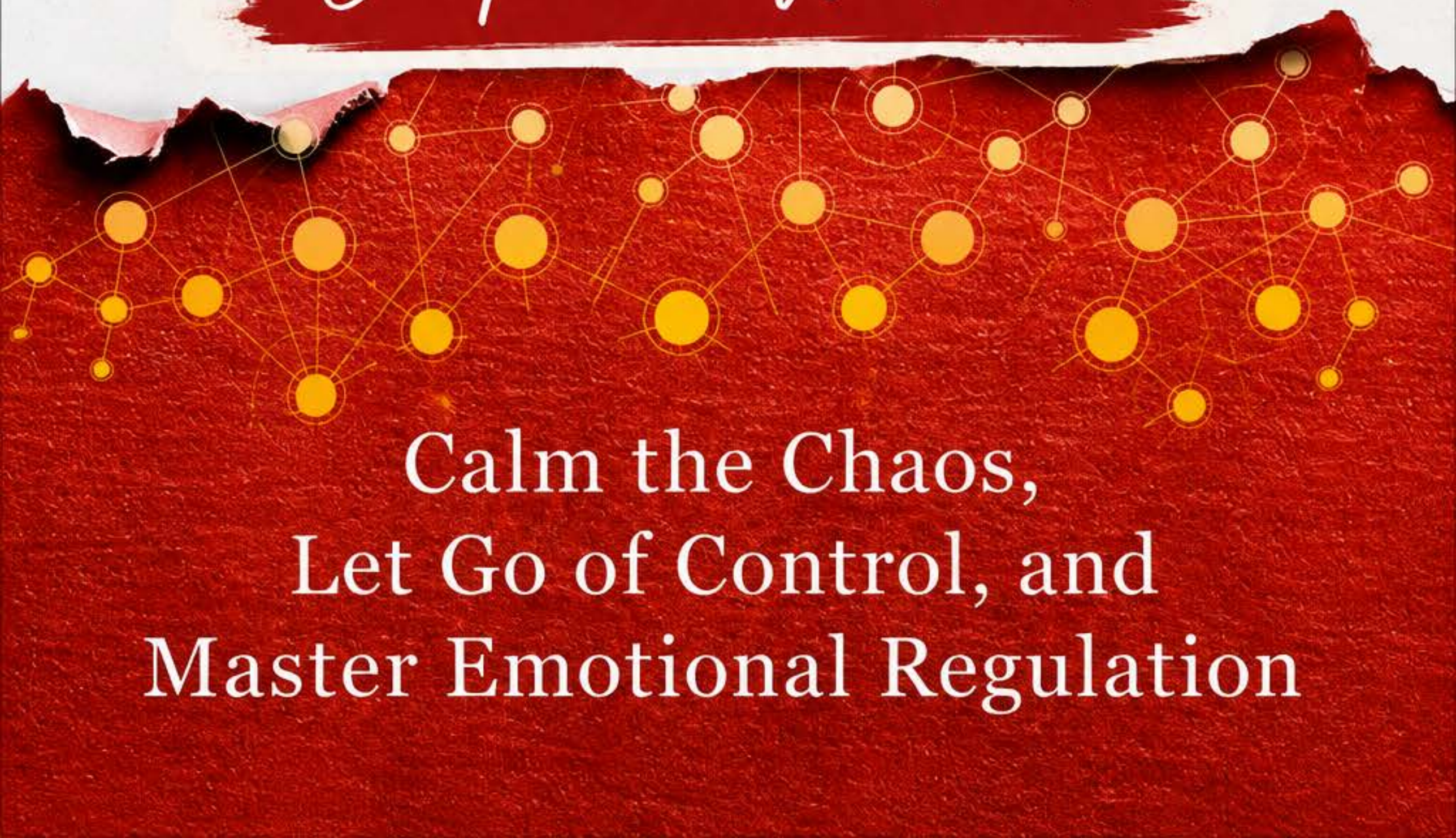
GWEN TAYLOR

# THE REGULATED BITCH

*Companion Workbook*



Calm the Chaos,
Let Go of Control, and
Master Emotional Regulation

# Welcome

## TO YOUR CALMER LIFE

This workbook isn't about becoming someone new.
It's about remembering the woman you were
before you learned that your worth depended on
keeping everyone else happy.

Over the next twelve chapters, you'll uncover the
patterns that taught you to abandon yourself,
practice choosing your own needs without guilt,
and begin building a life where your voice matters—
just as much as everyone else's.

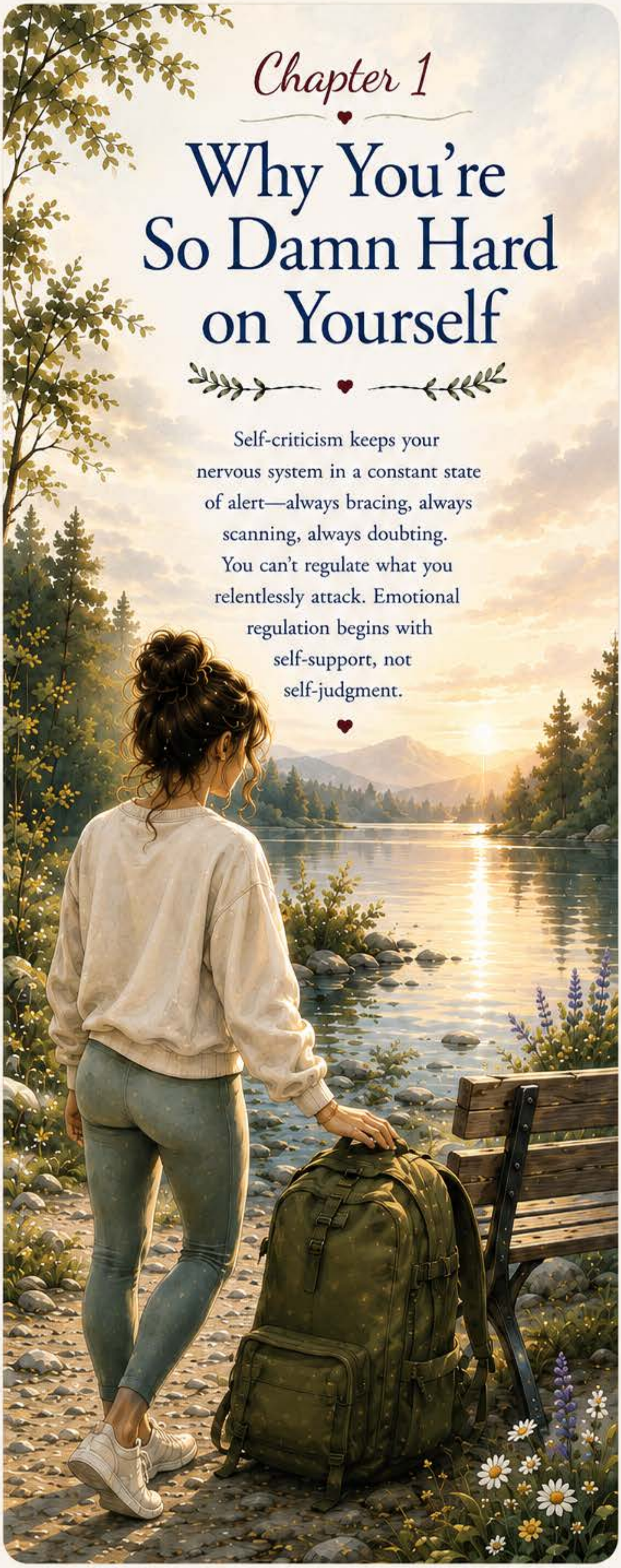
You don't need perfect answers.
You don't need to finish every exercise.
You only need one thing:
A willingness to come home to yourself,
one page at a time.

*This workbook is your space to...*

- Pause, breathe, and reconnect.
- Understand your patterns.
- Regulate your nervous system.
- Create boundaries that protect you.
- Live a steady, peaceful, and emotionally free life.

You are so glad you're here.

*Let's begin.*



## Chapter 1

# Why You're So Damn Hard on Yourself

Self-criticism keeps your nervous system in a constant state of alert—always bracing, always scanning, always doubting. You can't regulate what you relentlessly attack. Emotional regulation begins with self-support, not self-judgment.

## Let's Reflect

Take a few minutes to check in with yourself. There are no wrong answers—just honest ones.

- When am I hardest on myself?

- How do I usually motivate myself?

- What do I hope changes by the end of this chapter?



# The Voice That Never *Shuts Up*

Your inner critic has a
lot to say—and most of it
isn't even true.
It's the voice that points out
flaws, predicts failure,
and keeps you small
to keep you safe.
Let's start by
listening to what
it actually sounds like.

## *Let's Reflect*

### WHAT DOES MY INNER CRITIC SOUND LIKE?

Complete each prompt with phrases your inner critic has said to you. Don't overthink it—just write the first things that come to mind.

What does my inner critic say when I make a mistake?

What does my inner critic say when I try something new?

What does my inner critic say about how I should look or how I'm not enough?

What does my inner critic say when things don't go my way?

What does my inner critic say about my future?

### How does my inner critic make me feel most often?

## *Affirmation*

I deserve a kind voice.
I am learning to silence my inner critic
and listen to my truth.

# My Body Reacts *Before My Mind*

Self-criticism doesn't just
live in your thoughts—
it shows up in your body first.
Your nervous system is always
listening, always responding.




## *Let's Reflect*

### BODY AWARENESS CHECK

Where do you first feel signs of stress or self-criticism in your body?
Check the areas you notice most often and describe what each feels like for you.



**Jaw**
What do you notice?



**Shoulders**
What do you notice?



**Chest**
What do you notice?



**Stomach**
What do you notice?



**Breathing**
What do you notice?



**Thoughts**
What do you notice?

♥ Where do I notice self-criticism first?

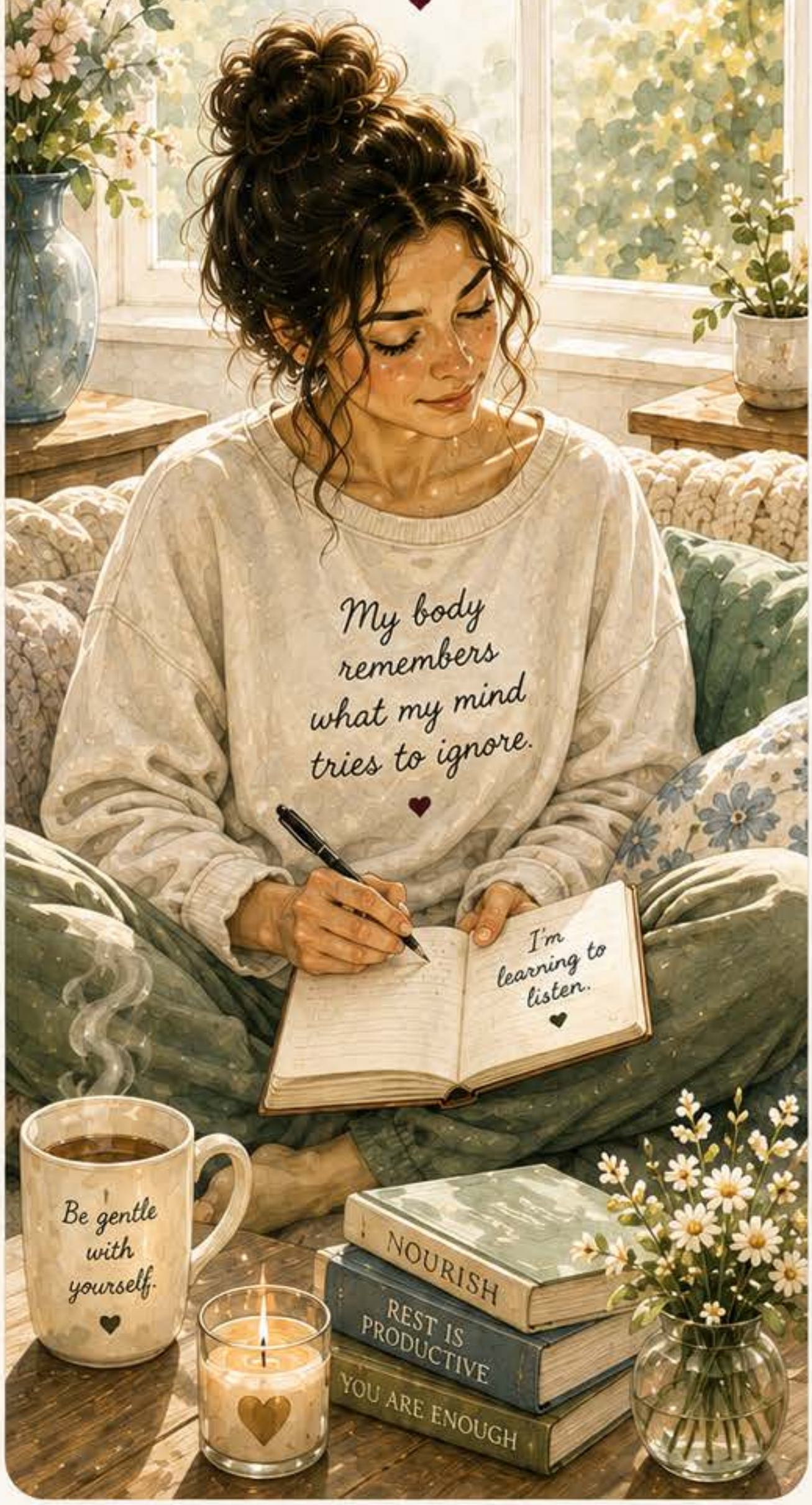


## *Affirmation*

I listen to my body
with compassion
and awareness.

# My Body Actually Believes *the Critic*

It's not just in your head.
Your body holds every
critical word like it's true.
Tension. Fatigue. Anxiety.
All signs that your system
is bracing for impact.




## *Let's Reflect*

### WHAT MY BODY FEELS WHEN I BELIEVE THE CRITIC

Check the physical responses you notice when self-criticism takes over.
Add anything else you experience.

- ☐ Tight chest
- ☐ Shallow breathing
- ☐ Tense shoulders
- ☐ Headaches
- ☐ Stomach knots
- ☐ Muscle tension
- ☐ Fatigue
- ☐ Trouble sleeping
- ☐ Racing heart
- ☐ Jaw clenching
- ☐ Nausea
- ☐ Restlessness
- ☐ Feeling wired
- ☐ Other: _____

### HOW IT SHOWS UP FOR ME

Describe how believing the critic impacts your body, energy, and overall well-being.

### WHAT MY BODY NEEDS INSTEAD

What would support, safety, and kindness look like in my body right now?

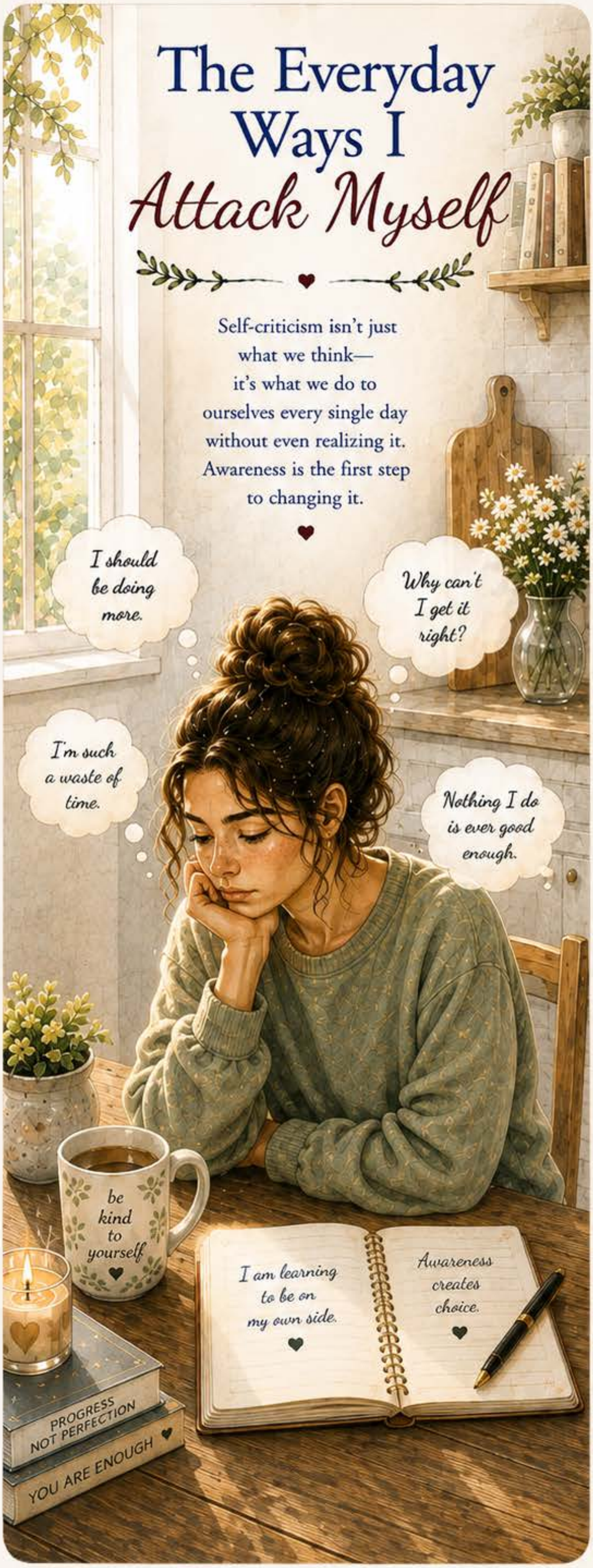


## *Affirmation*

My body is not the enemy.
It's been trying to protect me.
I choose to listen
with compassion.

# The Everyday Ways I Attack Myself

Self-criticism isn't just
what we think—
it's what we do to
ourselves every single day
without even realizing it.
Awareness is the first step
to changing it.




## Let's Reflect

### SELF-CRITICISM FREQUENCY CHECK

Rate how often you engage in each habit.
There are no wrong answers—just honest ones.

| | Never | Sometimes | Often | Almost Always |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| I replay my mistakes over and over. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I compare myself to others. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I focus on what's wrong instead of what's right. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I set impossible standards. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I call myself names in my head. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I doubt my decisions. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I ignore or push aside my needs. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I apologize excessively. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I judge my body harshly. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I feel guilty even when I've done nothing wrong. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I assume I'm a burden. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I believe I have to earn my worth. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| I minimize my accomplishments. | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

♥ Which pattern steals the most peace from my day?



### Affirmation

I am learning to notice
the patterns so I can
choose a kinder way.

# Rest Isn't Something You Earn

You are not a machine.
You are a human being
with a body that needs rest,
a heart that needs kindness,
and a soul that needs space
to simply be.

♥




## Let's Reflect

### TRUTH OR INNER CRITIC?

Read each statement below.
Decide if it sounds like self-compassion (truth)
or self-criticism (inner critic).
Write each statement in the correct column.

- I rest so I can keep up.
- If I'm resting, I must be lazy.
- I deserve rest even when I'm not productive.
- I'll rest when everything is done.
- My worth isn't tied to how much I do.
- If I take time for myself, I'll fall behind.
- Rest helps me show up as my best self.
- I have to earn every break.
- Taking care of myself is not selfish.
- I should be able to handle more.
- I'm allowed to pause without guilt.
- Only weak people need time off.

| SELF-COMPASSION (TRUTH) | SELF-CRITICISM (INNER CRITIC) |
|---|---|
| ♥ | ♥ |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Which belief about rest
am I ready to let go of?



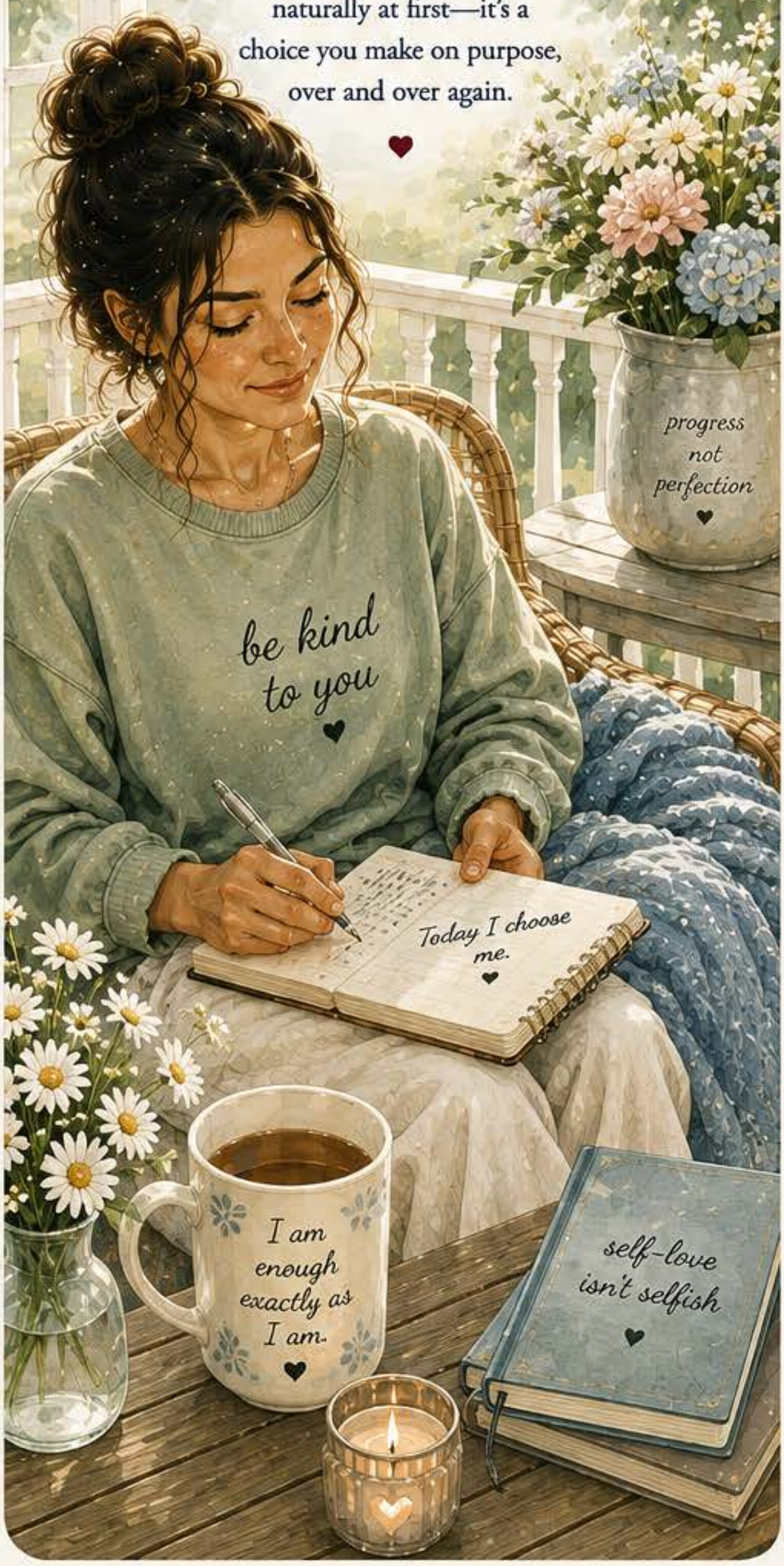
### Affirmation

I give myself permission
to rest, receive, and be.
I am enough—right now.

♥

# Choosing Self-Support *Instead*

You have the power
to change the voice you've
been listening to.
Compassion doesn't come
naturally at first—it's a
choice you make on purpose,
over and over again.




## *Let's Reflect*

### SELF-ATTACK → SELF-SUPPORT PRACTICE

Notice the self-critical thought. Then choose a kinder, truer response. You deserve the same compassion you offer everyone else.

| BEFORE → SELF-ATTACK<br>What I usually say to myself | AFTER → SELF-SUPPORT<br>What I can say instead |
|---|---|
| I'll never get it right. → | |
| I'm not good enough. → | |
| I should be doing more. → | |
| I always mess everything up. → | |
| I'm such a failure. → | |
| I don't deserve a break. → | |
| I have to be perfect to be worthy. → | |
| Why can't I just get it together? → | |

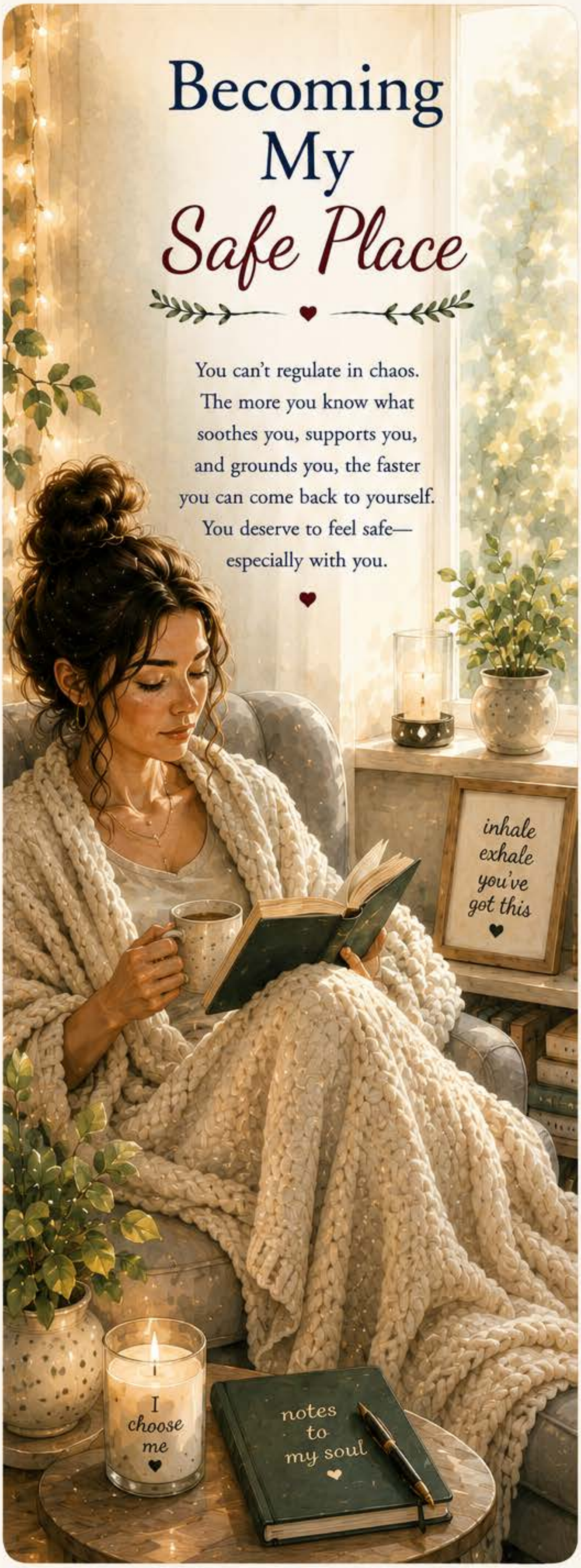
One supportive action I'll practice this week:



## *Affirmation*

I choose self-support today.
I am learning to be on my own side.
I am enough.

# Becoming My *Safe Place*




## *My Emotional Safety Plan*

I feel safest when…

When I'm overwhelmed I can…

People who help me feel safe…

One promise I'll make myself.

## *Let's Reflect*

What helps my nervous system feel safe?




## Real Talk

Amber used to believe that being hard on herself was the only way to get things done. If she didn't push, she thought she'd fall behind. If she didn't criticize, she'd get comfortable and lazy.

But all that criticism left her exhausted, anxious, and never feeling good enough—no matter how much she accomplished.

One day, she caught herself after yet another harsh self-talk spiral. She paused and asked, "Would I speak to my best friend this way?" The answer was no.

That moment changed everything.
Amber started practicing self-support instead of self-attack. She spoke to herself with more kindness, celebrated small wins, and gave herself permission to be human.

And slowly, she began to feel safe in her own skin.

## Let's Reflect

- What part of Amber's story felt most familiar?
- How do I relate to the way she used to treat herself?
- What's one way I can start showing more self-support today?

# Taking This With Me




## Chapter Wrap-Up

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

One criticism I'm releasing:

One way I'll support myself this week:

My new inner voice statement:

## Let's Reflect

What sentence do I want to remember whenever my inner critic returns?

Chapter 2

# When Perfectionism Becomes a Prison

Perfectionism keeps your nervous system trapped in survival mode—constantly scanning, never satisfied, always bracing for what could go wrong.

Regulation—not perfection—is the path to peace.




## Let's Reflect

- Where do I expect perfection from myself?
- How does perfectionism affect my peace?
- What do I hope changes during this chapter?

# The Myth of High Standards

High standards can inspire you
to grow and reach your goals.
But perfectionism comes from fear—
the fear of not being enough,
of making mistakes,
or disappointing others.

Excellence is a choice.
Perfectionism is a prison.




## Let's Reflect

### HEALTHY STANDARDS vs. FEAR-BASED DEMANDS

Read each statement below and decide where it belongs.
Write the letter in the correct column.

| Healthy Standards | Fear-Based Demands |
|---|---|
| | |

A. I strive for excellence because it matters to me.

B. I take breaks and trust things will still be okay.

C. I learn from mistakes.

D. I communicate my needs.

E. I set boundaries and honor them.

F. I do my best and then let it go.

G. If it's not perfect, it's a failure.

H. I can't relax until everything is done.

I. I need approval to feel okay.

J. I avoid asking for help.

K. I replay mistakes over and over.

L. I feel guilty when I slow down.

### ADD YOUR OWN BELIEFS

| One belief I want to embrace: | One belief I want to release: |
|---|---|
| | |

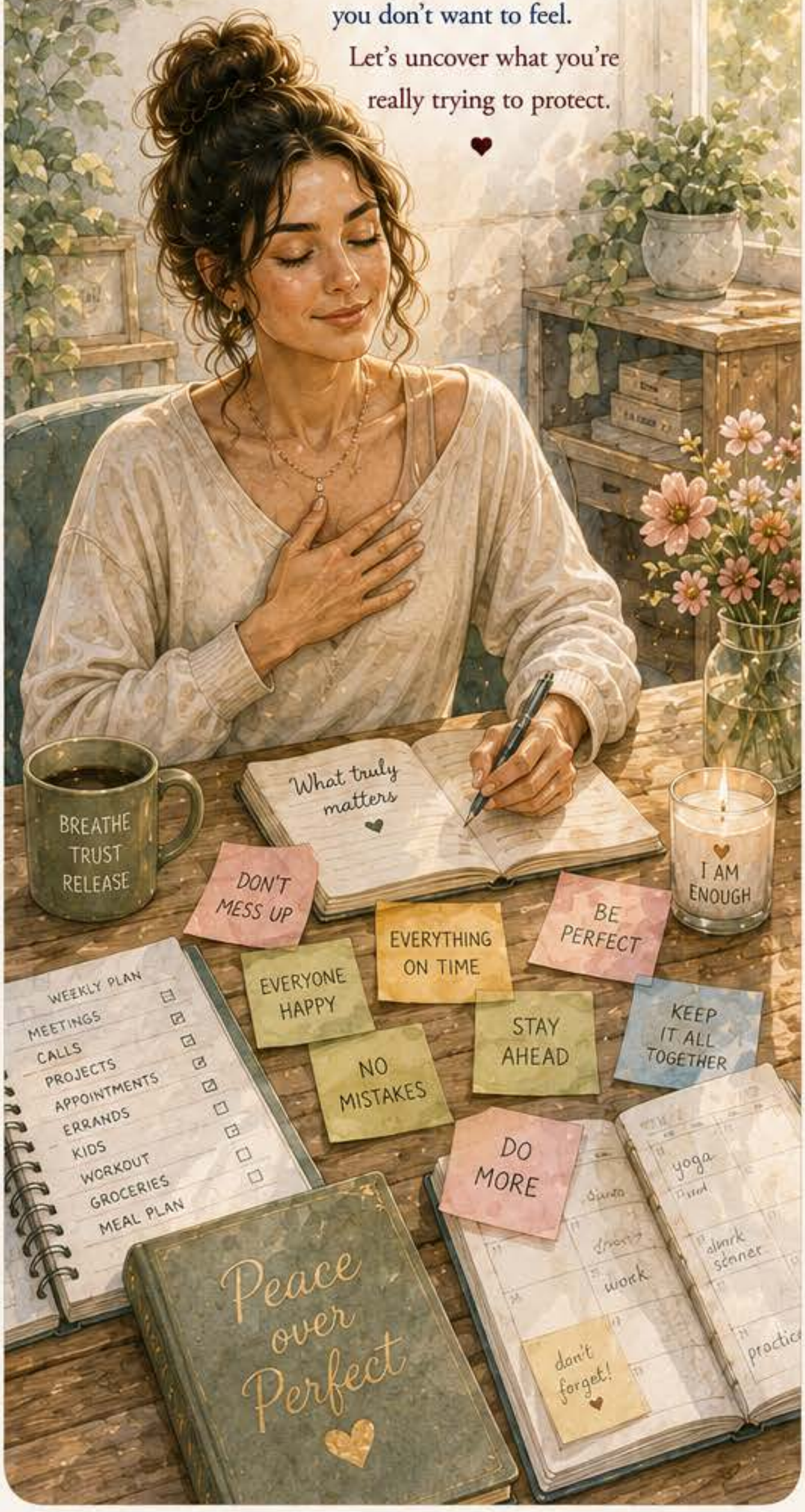
Which standards truly reflect my values?

# What Am I *Really Trying* to Control?

Perfectionism convinces you that control will keep you safe. But underneath the need to get it all right is usually a fear you don't want to feel.

Let's uncover what you're really trying to protect.

♥




## *Let's Reflect*

### CONTROL INVENTORY WHEEL

Circle the areas where perfectionism shows up for you.




What am I afraid will happen if I let go?

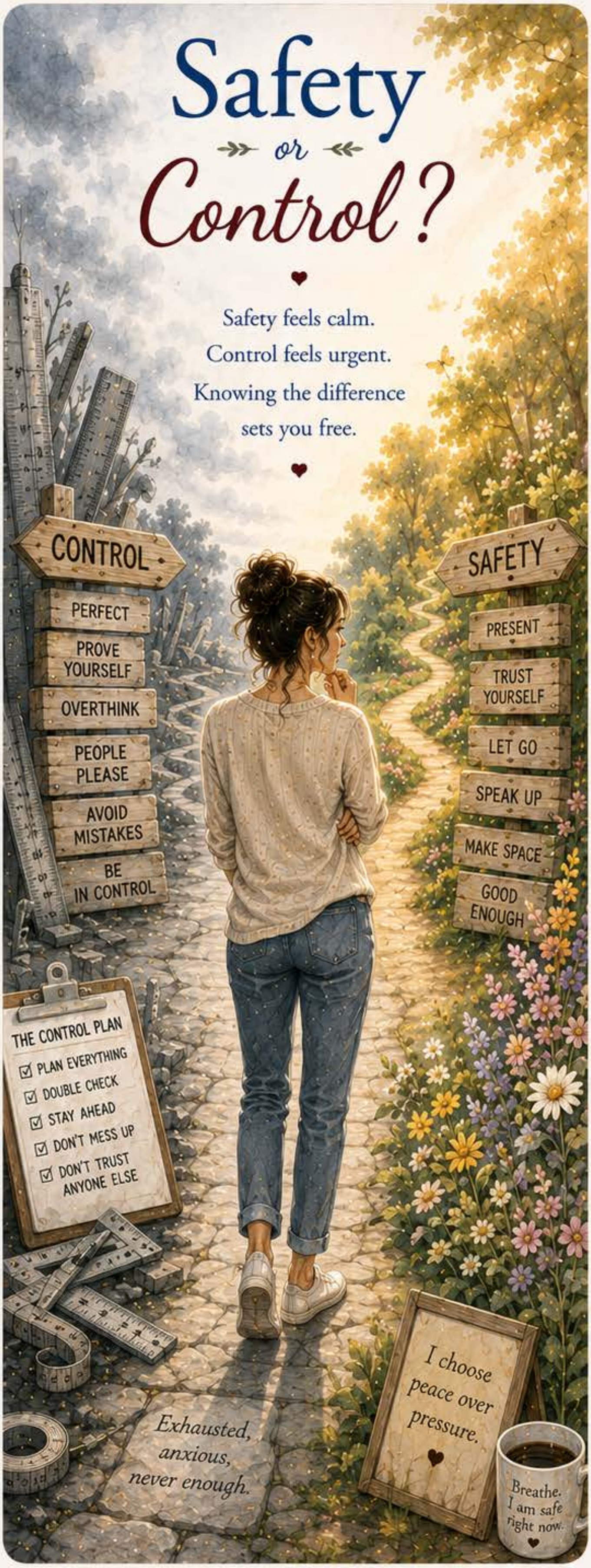
Which fear shows up most often for me?

# Safety or Control?

♥

Safety feels calm.
Control feels urgent.
Knowing the difference
sets you free.

♥




## Let's Reflect

### DECISION SORT ♥

Read each situation below and decide if your response usually comes from Safety, Control, or Both. Check the column that fits best.

| Situation | Safety ♥ | Control ♥ | Both ♥ |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I redo a task multiple times until it feels perfect. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2. I say yes when I want to say no so I won't disappoint anyone. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3. I plan for every possible outcome before I take action. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4. I feel anxious when I don't know exactly what will happen. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5. I take deep breaths and remind myself I can handle it. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 6. I check and recheck things even when it's already done. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 7. I set a boundary to protect my time or energy. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 8. I avoid asking for help because I want to do it all myself. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 9. I release what I can't control and focus on what I can. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 10. I feel guilty if I'm not productive all the time. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

♥

Where do I confuse control with safety?

# The Perfectionism–Anxiety *Loop*

Perfectionism whispers, "Not enough."
Anxiety screams, "What if?"
Together, they keep you running
in circles—exhausted and never enough.

♥

**1 TRIGGER**

**2 PERFECTIONISTIC THOUGHT**

**3 BEHAVIOR**

**4 TEMPORARY RELIEF**

**5 EXHAUSTION**

**6 NEXT TRIGGER**

A NEW PATTERN IS POSSIBLE ♥

## *Let's Reflect*

### CYCLE MAP

Fill in each part of your perfectionism–anxiety loop with an example from your own life.

1 TRIGGER

2 PERFECTIONISTIC THOUGHT

3 BEHAVIOR

4 TEMPORARY RELIEF

5 EXHAUSTION

6 NEXT TRIGGER

Where can I interrupt my cycle?




## Let's Reflect

### VALUES FILTER

Read each thought below. Decide if it comes from your Values or from Fear. Write a ✓ in the column that fits best.

| | My Values ♥ | My Fear ♥ |
|---|---|---|
| I have to be perfect so people will respect me. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I want to do meaningful work that helps others. | ☐ | ☐ |
| If I slow down, I'll fall behind. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I value rest so I can show up as my best self. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I must always prove I'm good enough. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I choose honesty over people-pleasing. | ☐ | ☐ |
| If I make a mistake, people will be disappointed. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I want a life that feels peaceful and aligned. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I need to control everything to feel safe. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I trust myself to handle whatever comes. | ☐ | ☐ |
| I value learning, growth, and personal peace. | ☐ | ☐ |

### CREATE A NEW VALUES-BASED BELIEF

Write one new belief that comes from your values, not your fear.

What matters most to me when fear isn't leading?

# Practicing Good Enough

Perfection keeps you stuck.
"Good enough" sets you free.
You don't build confidence
by doing everything perfectly—
you build it by proving to yourself
that you're okay even when
things aren't.




## Let's Reflect

### GOOD ENOUGH CHALLENGE

Plan five small "imperfect" experiments to practice this week.
Then record what actually happened.

| | My Imperfect Experiment | What I Expected Would Happen | What Actually Happened |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | |
| 2 | | | |
| 3 | | | |
| 4 | | | |
| 5 | | | |

### RATE YOUR EXPERIENCE

After each experiment, rate how it felt (1 = really hard, 5 = felt easier than I thought).

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 2 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 3 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 4 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| 5 | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

What happened when I stopped chasing perfect?

# Letting Myself *Be Human Again*




## *Let's Reflect*

### PERMISSION SLIPS

Tear, keep, and remind yourself often. You already have permission.

I'm allowed to *rest.*

I'm allowed to *make mistakes.*

I'm allowed to *ask for help.*

I'm allowed to *disappoint people.*

I'm allowed to *be unfinished.*

### MY PERSONAL PERMISSION SLIPS ♥

Write three more permissions you need to give yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Which permission feels hardest to accept?

# Brittany's Story

Perfectionism promised
me safety.
Regulation finally
gave it to me.

♥




## Let's Reflect

### REAL TALK ♥

Brittany had built her entire life around doing everything right. At work, she was the one who stayed late, triple-checked, and fixed what no one else noticed. At home, she was the one who remembered everything, planned everything, and carried the invisible load no one thanked her for.

On the outside, she looked like she had it all together. On the inside, she was always bracing for the next thing to go wrong.

It took a health scare—and a full-blown anxiety spiral—for Brittany to realize she wasn't chasing excellence. She was chasing relief.

Once she started learning to regulate her nervous system, she saw how perfectionism had been her way of trying to feel safe in an unpredictable world. She couldn't control other people, but she could control her performance.

Little by little, she started practicing good enough. She let the email go without re-reading it ten times. She left the kitchen a little messy. She said no without over-explaining. Nothing fell apart.

What did change was her. She started sleeping better. She laughed more. She felt lighter. And for the first time in years, she trusted that she didn't have to earn her worth through perfection.

She's still a high achiever. But now, her standards come from her values—not from fear.

And that changed everything.

### REFLECTION QUESTIONS ♥

1. What part of Brittany's story sounded most like mine?

2. What did I learn from how she started showing up differently for herself?

3. What's one thing I can start doing this week that supports "good enough"?



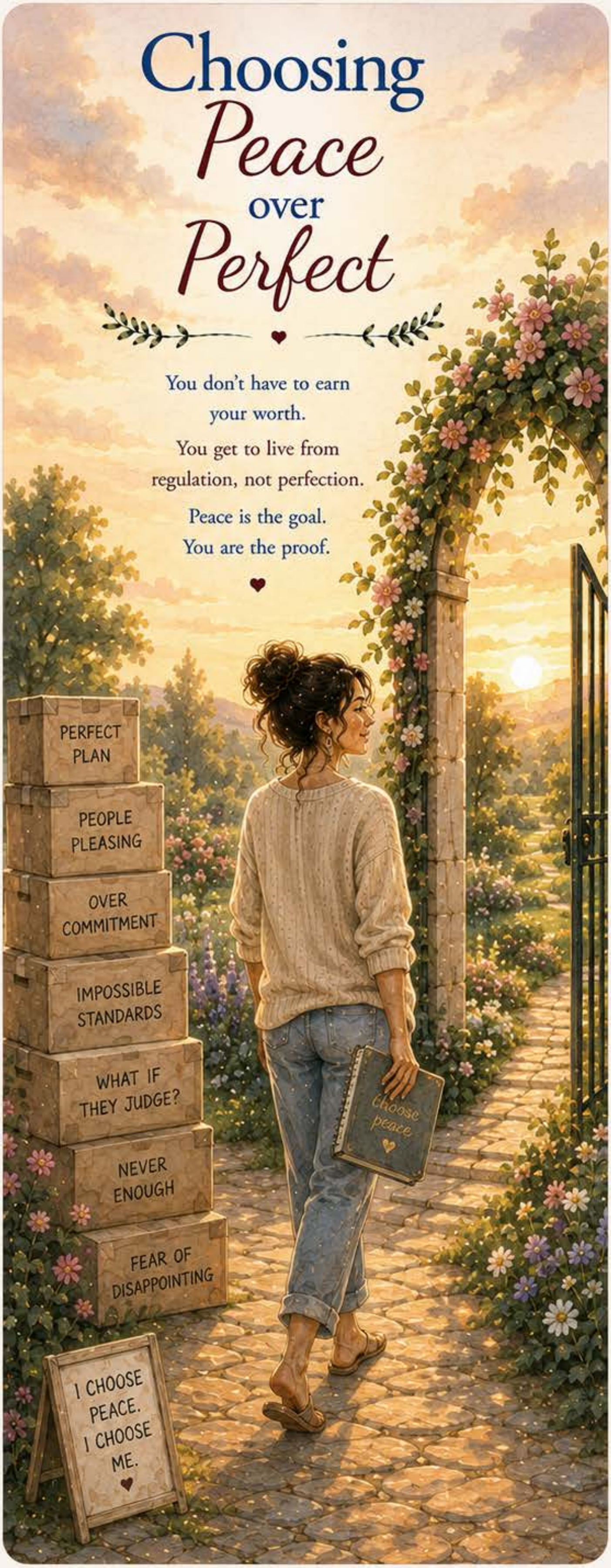
# Choosing Peace over Perfect

You don't have to earn
your worth.

You get to live from
regulation, not perfection.

Peace is the goal.
You are the proof.

♥




## Let's Wrap It Up

You've explored how perfectionism keeps you stuck—and how regulation sets you free. Take a moment to honor what you've discovered.

### CHAPTER WRAP-UP ♥

**1 MY BIGGEST INSIGHT**

The most important thing I learned in this chapter is...

**2 ONE DEMAND I'M RELEASING**

I'm letting go of the expectation that...

**3 MY NEW DEFINITION OF SUCCESS**

Success, for me, looks like...

**4 ONE WAY I'LL PRACTICE "GOOD ENOUGH" THIS WEEK**

This week, I will...

What does peace look like for me now?

# Chapter 3

# LEARNING TO SPEAK TO YOURSELF *Like You Matter*

Emotional regulation begins with the words you speak to yourself.

*Your inner critic keeps your nervous system activated.*

Self-support creates safety.




## Let's Reflect

1. WHEN AM I HARDEST ON MYSELF?

What situations, moments, or patterns show up most often?

2. WHAT DOES MY INNER VOICE USUALLY SOUND LIKE?

What words does it use?

What tone does it have?

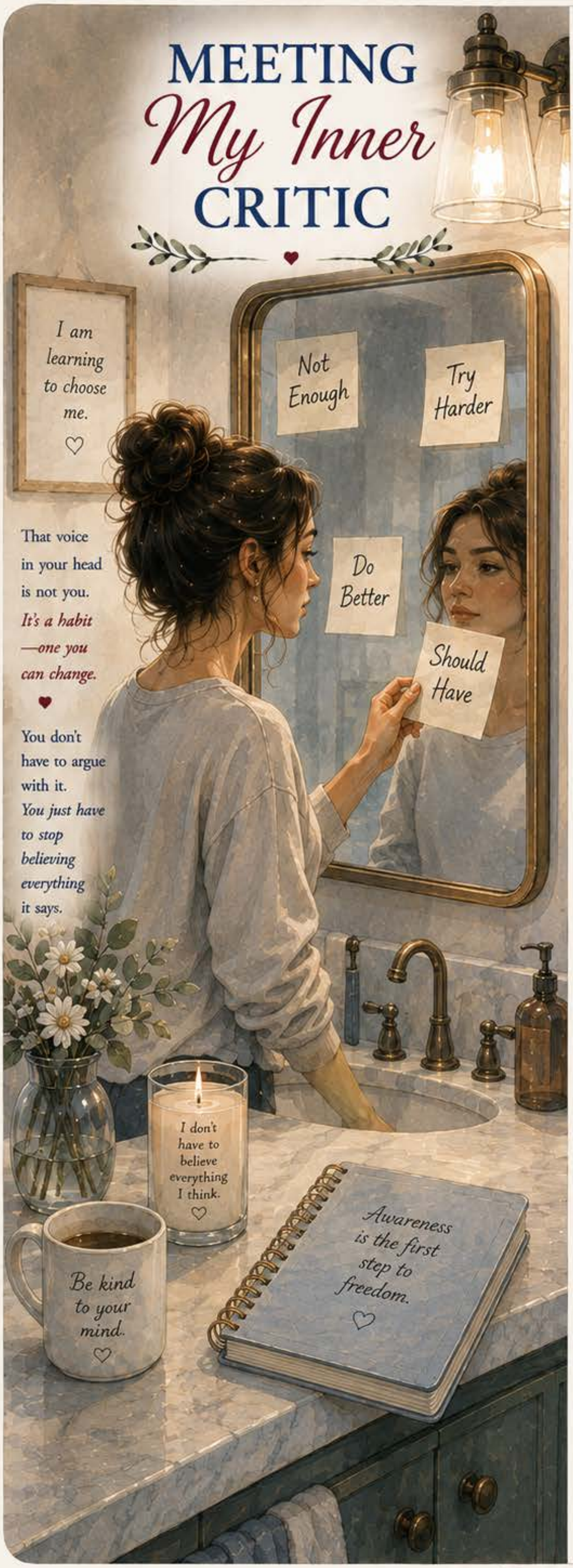
3. WHAT DO I HOPE CHANGES DURING THIS CHAPTER?

What would feel lighter, calmer, or more supportive?

## Affirmation

I choose self-support.
I speak to myself
with kindness and respect.
I matter.
Always.

# MEETING *My Inner* CRITIC




## *Let's Reflect*

### INNER CRITIC INVENTORY

Read the statements below and circle the ones you hear from your inner critic most often. You may circle more than one.

- ○ I'm not enough.
- ○ I always mess up.
- ○ I should know better.
- ○ I'm so stupid.
- ○ I'm a failure.
- ○ Nobody would be proud of me.
- ○ I let everyone down.
- ○ I'm too sensitive.
- ○ I'm not doing enough.
- ○ I have to be perfect.
- ○ I don't deserve rest.
- ○ I'm falling behind.
- ○ Other people are better than me.
- ○ I'll never be good enough.
- ○ I should have handled that better.
- ○ I can't do this.
- ○ I'm such a burden.
- ○ I'm too much.
- ○ I need to try harder.
- ○ I'll get it wrong.

### WHAT PHRASES DOES MY INNER CRITIC REPEAT?

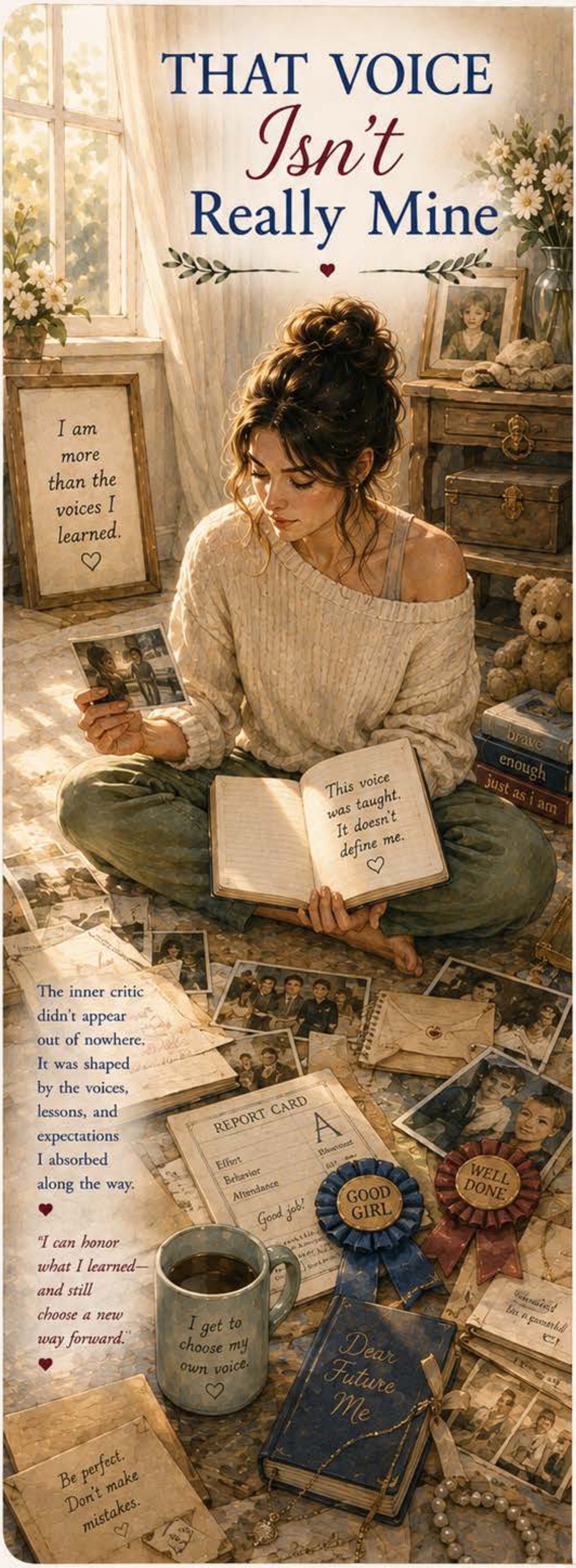
### REFLECTION

How do the things I tell myself impact my body, emotions, and choices?

### *Affirmation*

I am allowed to speak kindly to myself.
My words create my reality.
I choose self-support over self-criticism.

# THAT VOICE *Isn't* Really Mine




## *Let's Reflect*

Our inner critic is often a collection of voices we absorbed over time. Let's explore where those messages came from.

### VOICE MAP

Think back through your life experiences. What messages or beliefs may have shaped your inner critic?

Write or jot down common messages you believe you picked up from each source.

**FAMILY**

**SCHOOL**

**RELIGION**

**WORK**

**RELATIONSHIPS**

**CULTURE**

**OTHER**

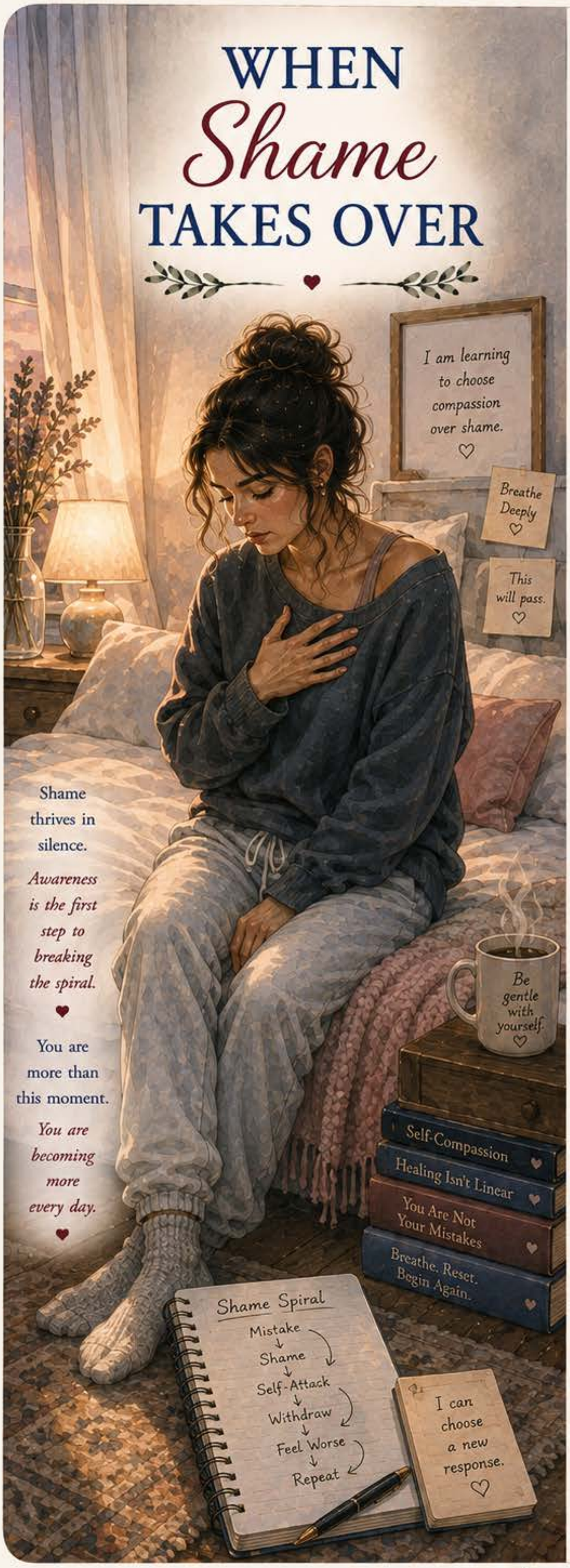
### REFLECTION

Whose voice does my inner critic sound like?

## *Affirmation*

I release the voices
that were never mine.
I choose a voice
that supports, believes,
and empowers me.

# WHEN *Shame* TAKES OVER




Shame thrives in silence.

*Awareness is the first step to breaking the spiral.* ♥

You are more than this moment.

*You are becoming more every day.* ♥

## *Let's Reflect*

Shame can feel overwhelming, but it doesn't have to run the show. When we pause, we can interrupt the spiral and return to truth and self-compassion.

### INTERRUPT THE SPIRAL

Take a breath. Slow down. Get curious.
Answer the questions below to break the shame cycle.

**1. WHAT HAPPENED?**
Describe the situation.

**2. WHAT STORY DID I TELL MYSELF?**
What did I believe about myself or the situation?

**3. WHAT ARE THE ACTUAL FACTS?**
What really happened?

### *Affirmation*

I release shame.
I choose truth.
I am learning to
treat myself with
the kindness I deserve.

# WHAT MY *Body* IS TRYING TO TELL ME




## *Let's Reflect*

Your body is always communicating with you.
It reacts to stress, self-criticism, and pressure
long before your mind catches up.
Let's tune in.

### BODY AWARENESS CHECK

Take a moment to scan your body right now.
Notice what feels tight, tense, heavy, or unsettled.
Check in with each area below.
What are you noticing?

**CHEST**
What do I feel here?

**SHOULDERS**
What do I feel here?

**JAW**
What do I feel here?

**STOMACH**
What do I feel here?

**THOUGHTS**
What am I thinking?

**BREATHING**
How is my breath?

**REFLECTION**
What changes in my body when I criticize myself?

## *Affirmation*

I listen to my body.
I believe its messages.
I choose compassion
over criticism.
I am safe with myself.

# TALKING TO *Myself* LIKE SOMEONE I LOVE




The words you speak to yourself become the voice you live by.

♥

Choose words that build you up, not break you down.

♥

*Compassion is a practice. You are worth it.*

♥

## *Let's Reflect*

Compassionate self-talk calms your nervous system and creates emotional safety. You can learn to speak to yourself in ways that support you instead of scare you.

### REWRITE THE SCRIPT

Notice the harsh things you tell yourself. Then replace them with words of support and self-compassion.

| INSTEAD OF SAYING... | I CAN REMIND MYSELF... | TODAY I CHOOSE... |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

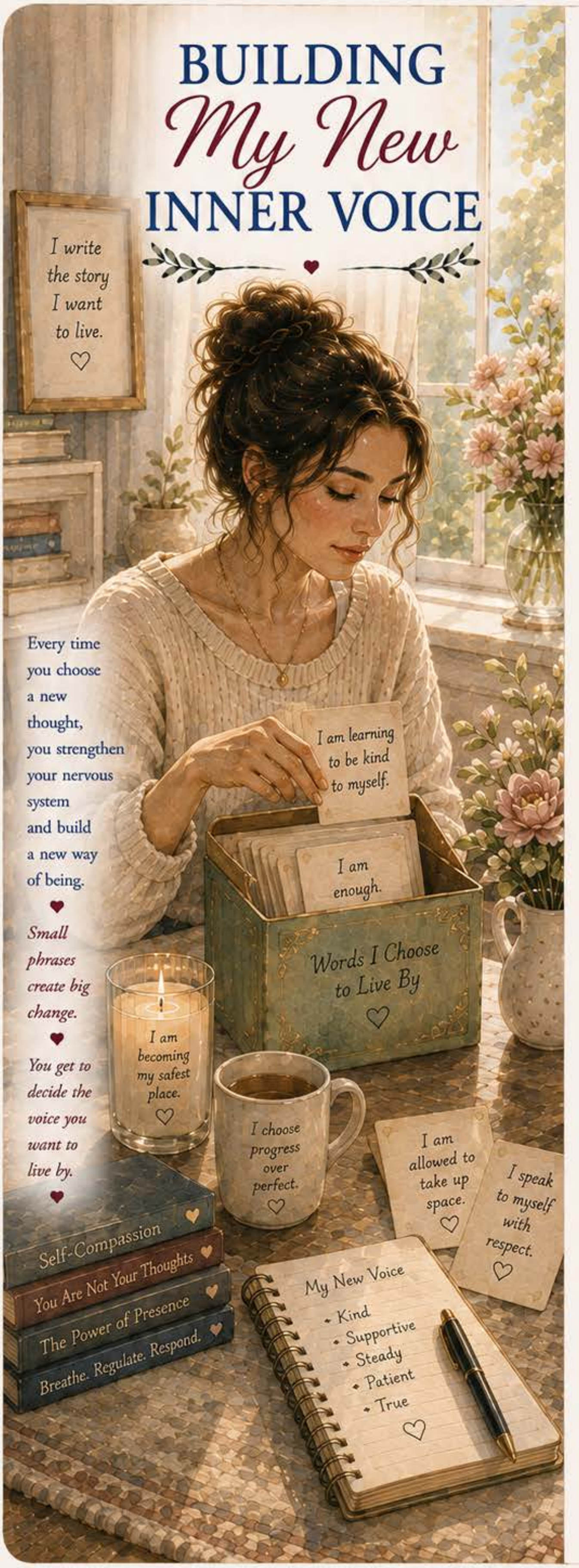
### REFLECTION

What would it feel like to talk to myself like someone I love?

## *Affirmation*

I choose compassion
in every thought.
I speak to myself
with kindness,
respect, and love.

# BUILDING *My New* INNER VOICE




## *Let's Reflect*

Your inner voice shapes your emotions, your choices, and your sense of safety. Let's create new scripts that support regulation and self-trust.

### MY REGULATION SCRIPTS

Write five supportive statements that help you feel calmer, more grounded, and more compassionate with yourself.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

### TODAY'S ANCHOR PHRASE

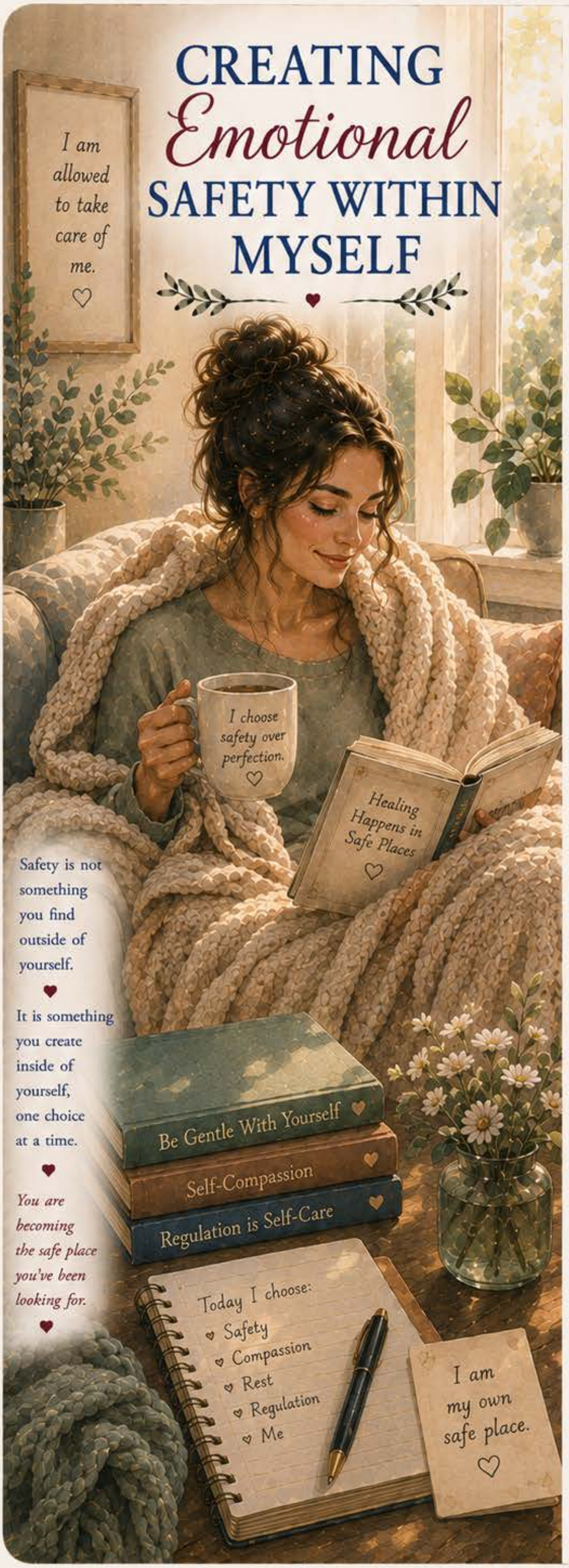
Choose one of your statements above to be your anchor phrase for today.
Write it here and say it often.

_____

## *Affirmation*

I am creating a new inner voice that is kind, steady, and supportive. I choose thoughts that help me regulate and believe in myself.

# CREATING *Emotional* SAFETY WITHIN MYSELF




## *Let's Reflect*

Emotional safety allows your nervous system to relax, heal, and regulate. You don't have to be perfect to be safe—you just have to be kind to yourself.

### SAFETY PLAN

Use the spaces below to create a plan for building emotional safety within yourself.

#### I FEEL SAFEST WHEN...

What helps me feel calm, supported, or grounded?

#### WHEN I'M OVERWHELMED I CAN...

List things I can do to regulate and return to myself.

#### ONE WAY I'LL SUPPORT MYSELF THIS WEEK...

What is one intentional action I can take to care for me and create safety?

## *Affirmation*

I am creating
emotional safety within me.
I choose compassion,
I honor my needs,
and I allow healing
to become my new normal.

# Jessica's REAL TALK




## JESSICA'S STORY

For years, Jessica thought the harsh voice in her head was just her being "realistic." It pushed her to do more, be more, and never let anyone down. But no matter how hard she tried, it was never enough.

One night, completely exhausted, she asked herself, "Whose voice is this, really?" That question stopped her cold. It didn't sound like her. It sounded like her mother's. Her teachers. Her old boss. Every message that said she wasn't enough unless she earned it.

When Jessica started talking to herself with compassion instead of criticism, something shifted. Her body relaxed. Her anxiety eased. She slept better. She stopped bracing for the next mistake.

Jessica realized emotional regulation didn't come from perfecting herself. It came from finally feeling safe with herself.

*Compassion isn't weakness.*
*It's the moment you finally choose your own side.*

♡

## Let's Reflect

Jessica's journey reminds us that the voice in our head isn't always the truth. We can choose a new voice—one that creates safety, not stress.

### 1. WHAT PART OF JESSICA'S STORY FEELS FAMILIAR?

What stood out to you the most?

### 2. WHERE HAVE I MISTAKEN CRITICISM FOR MOTIVATION?

How has that affected me?

### 3. WHAT WOULD CHANGE IF I BELIEVED I DESERVED COMPASSION?

What might become possible for me?

## Affirmation

I release the old voice.
I choose compassion.
I am safe with myself.
I am enough.

# TAKE THIS *With You*




## *Let's Reflect*

You don't have to be perfect to heal.
You just have to be willing to be kind to yourself
and create safety from the inside out.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

What did I learn in this chapter
that I want to remember?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

### ONE CRITICAL THOUGHT I'M READY TO RELEASE

What's one harsh belief I'm ready to let go of?

### ONE WAY I'LL SUPPORT MYSELF THIS WEEK

What is a specific action I can take
to care for myself?

### WEEKLY INTENTION

What do I want to focus on
as I practice self-compassion?

## *Affirmation*

I don't have to earn kindness from myself.
I become steadier when I replace criticism
with compassion, honesty,
and emotional safety.

# Chapter 4

# MINDFULNESS WITHOUT *the Cringe*

Mindfulness isn't about
doing it perfectly.
It's about noticing
your present moment
with a little more
awareness than
autopilot allows.




## *Let's Reflect*

Use these reflections to connect
with yourself and set the tone
for this chapter.

**1** When do I feel most disconnected from myself?

**2** What do I think mindfulness means?

**3** What do I hope changes during this chapter?



### *Affirmation*

I choose to be present
in the life I'm living,
not the life I'm rushing toward.

# PRESENCE Looks Different Than You Think

Mindfulness isn't something you add to your life. It's something you notice in the life you already have.

## Let's Reflect

The moments you already have can be the moments that bring you back to yourself.

### ♥ PRESENCE INVENTORY

Circle the everyday moments where you already experience presence, even if just for a few seconds.



drinking coffee



showering



driving



folding laundry



walking



gardening



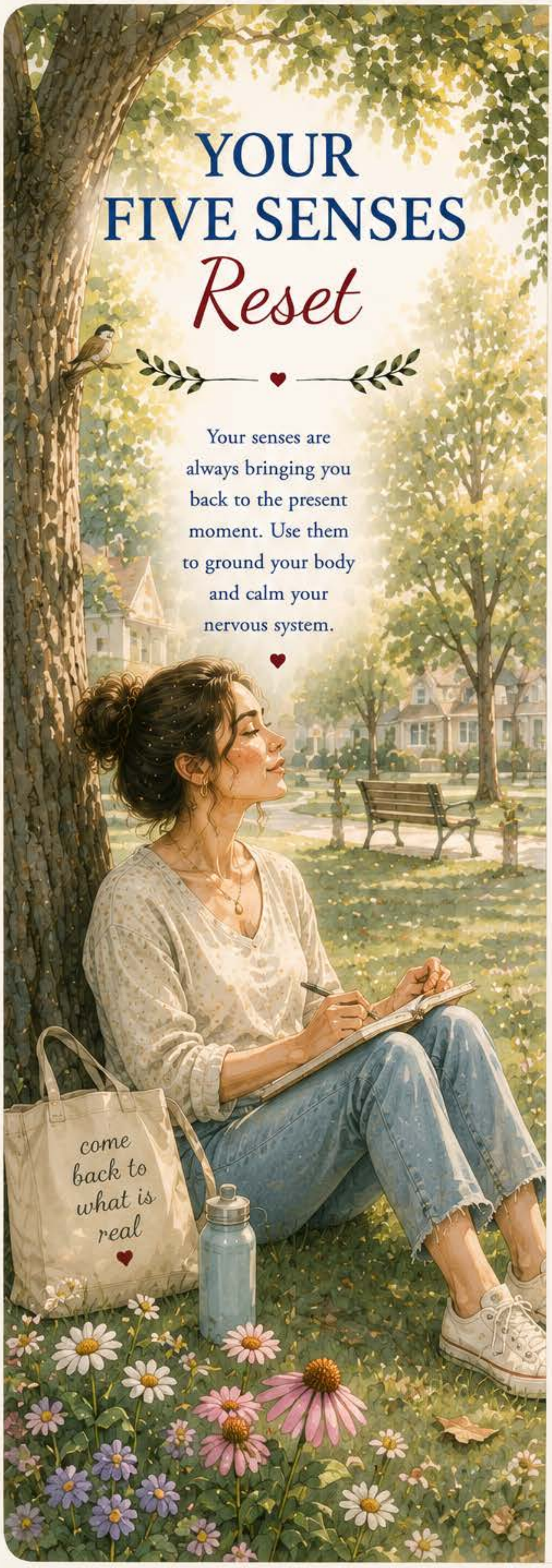
waiting in line

I feel most present when...



### Affirmation

I don't need the perfect conditions to be present. I just need a willingness to notice.




## Let's Reflect

Use your senses to anchor yourself in the present moment.

### ♥ 5-4-3-2-1 SENSORY MAP

Take a slow breath. Look around. Notice. Record what you experience right now.

**5** things I see

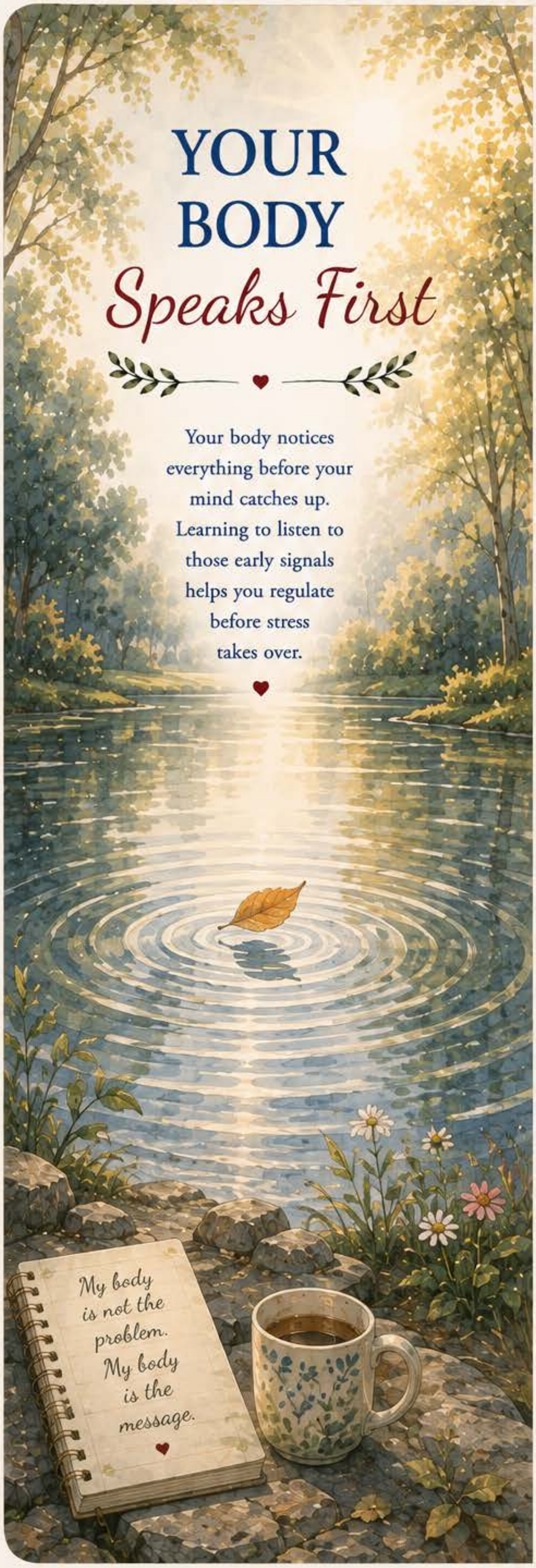
**4** things I feel

**3** things I hear

**2** things I smell

**1** thing I taste

How does my body feel now?




# YOUR BODY *Speaks First*

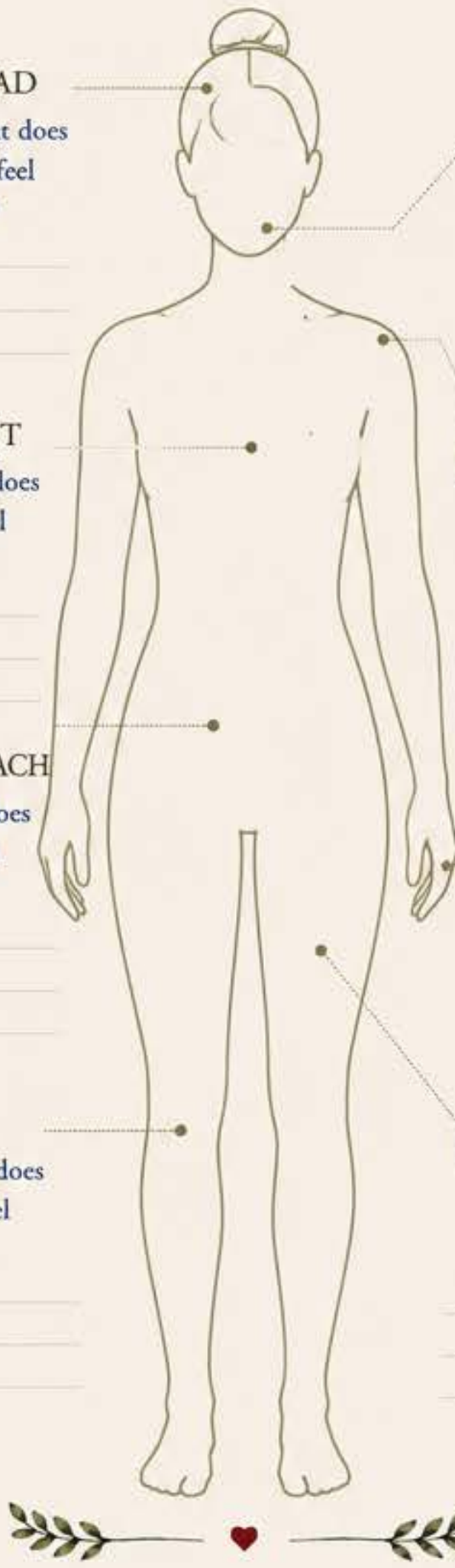
Your body notices everything before your mind catches up. Learning to listen to those early signals helps you regulate before stress takes over.

## *Let's Reflect*

Your body gives you clues throughout the day. Use this map to notice where you feel stress first and what each signal feels like.

### ♥ BODY AWARENESS MAP

On the outline below, shade the areas where you usually feel stress or tension first.
Then write what those signals feel like for you.



**HEAD**
What does this feel like?

**JAW**
What does this feel like?

**CHEST**
What does this feel like?

**SHOULDERS**
What does this feel like?

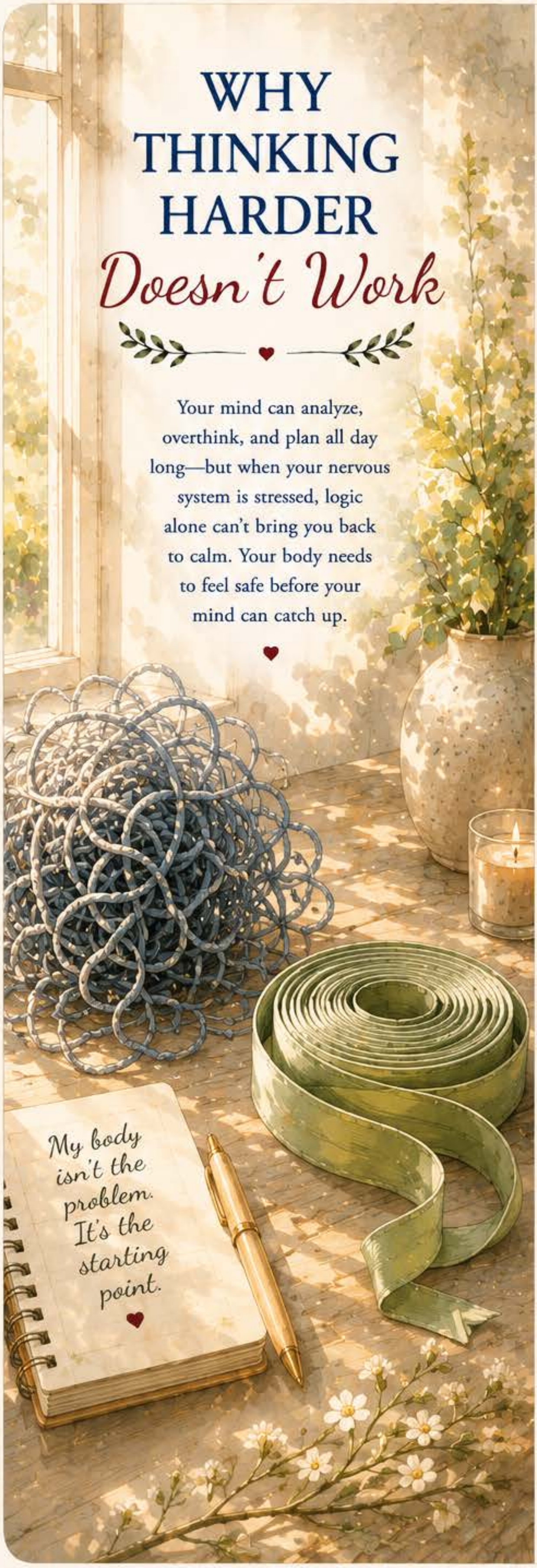
**STOMACH**
What does this feel like?

**HANDS**
What does this feel like?

**LEGS**
What does this feel like?

**BREATHING**
What does this feel like?

What is one early signal your body gives you that you don't want to ignore anymore?




# WHY THINKING HARDER *Doesn't Work*

Your mind can analyze, overthink, and plan all day long—but when your nervous system is stressed, logic alone can't bring you back to calm. Your body needs to feel safe before your mind can catch up.

## *Let's Reflect*

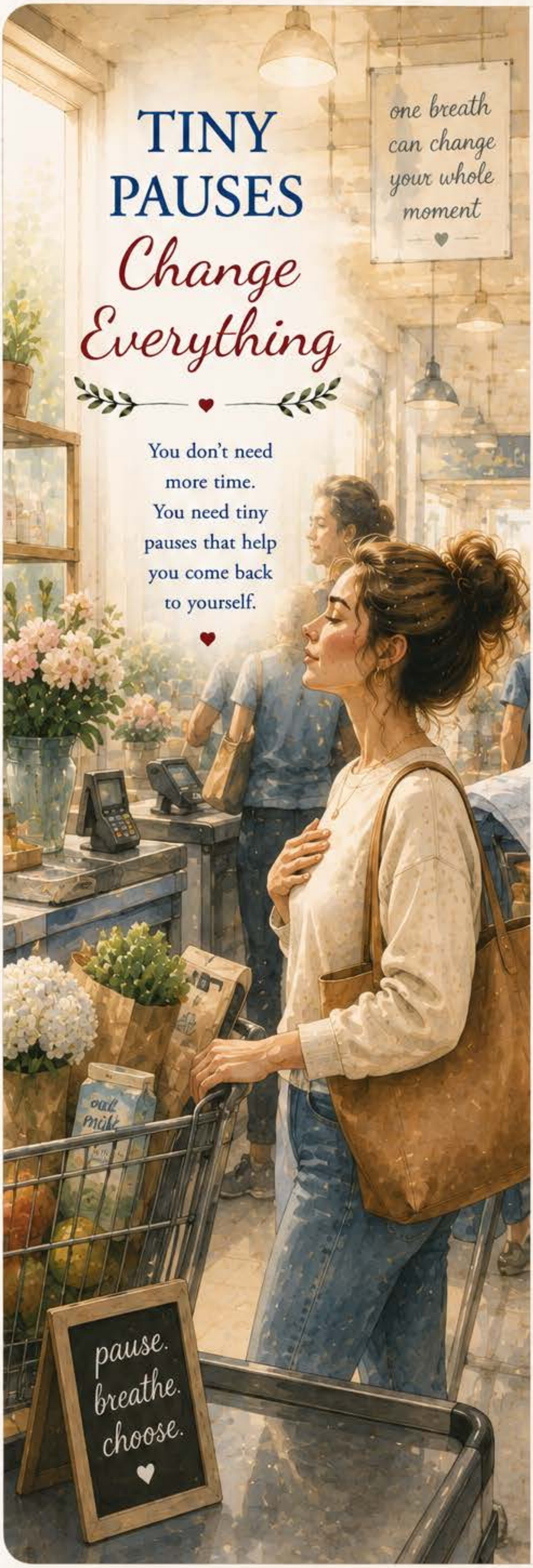
When we're stressed, our bodies react first.
Help your body calm down first,
and your mind can follow.

### ♥ TOP-DOWN vs. BOTTOM-UP

Top-down responses try to fix the situation with thinking.
Bottom-up responses help your body feel safe first.
Draw an arrow from each stressful situation (left)
to the bottom-up response (right) that would
best help you regulate.

| STRESSFUL SITUATION | BODY-BASED RESPONSE |
|---|---|
| 1 I'm overwhelmed with too much to do. | A Take three slow, deep breaths into your belly. |
| 2 Someone just said or did something that upsets me. | B Feel your feet on the ground and name 5 things you see. |
| 3 I feel panic starting to build. | C Do a gentle movement to release the tension. |
| 4 I'm stuck in overthinking a problem. | D Place a hand on your heart and feel your breath. |
| 5 I feel tense and irritated for no clear reason. | E Splash cool water on your face or hold an ice cube. |
| 6 I feel numb, shut down, or checked out. | F Hug yourself, wrap in a blanket, or place a hand on your chest. |

What did I notice about how my body responds before my mind does?




# TINY PAUSES *Change Everything*

You don't need
more time.
You need tiny
pauses that help
you come back
to yourself.

## *Let's Reflect*

Tiny pauses interrupt autopilot.
They give your body and mind
the space to choose a better response.

### ♥ PAUSE TRACKER

Notice when you take micro-pauses during your day.
Even a few seconds count.

HOW TO USE:
Each time you take a pause, fill in one circle.
Try for at least 3 pauses each day.

MY DAILY PAUSE TRACKER

| DAY | PAUSE 1 | PAUSE 2 | PAUSE 3 | BONUS! |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| MON | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| TUE | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| WED | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| THU | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| FRI | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SAT | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |
| SUN | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

### ♥ MY PAUSE MENU

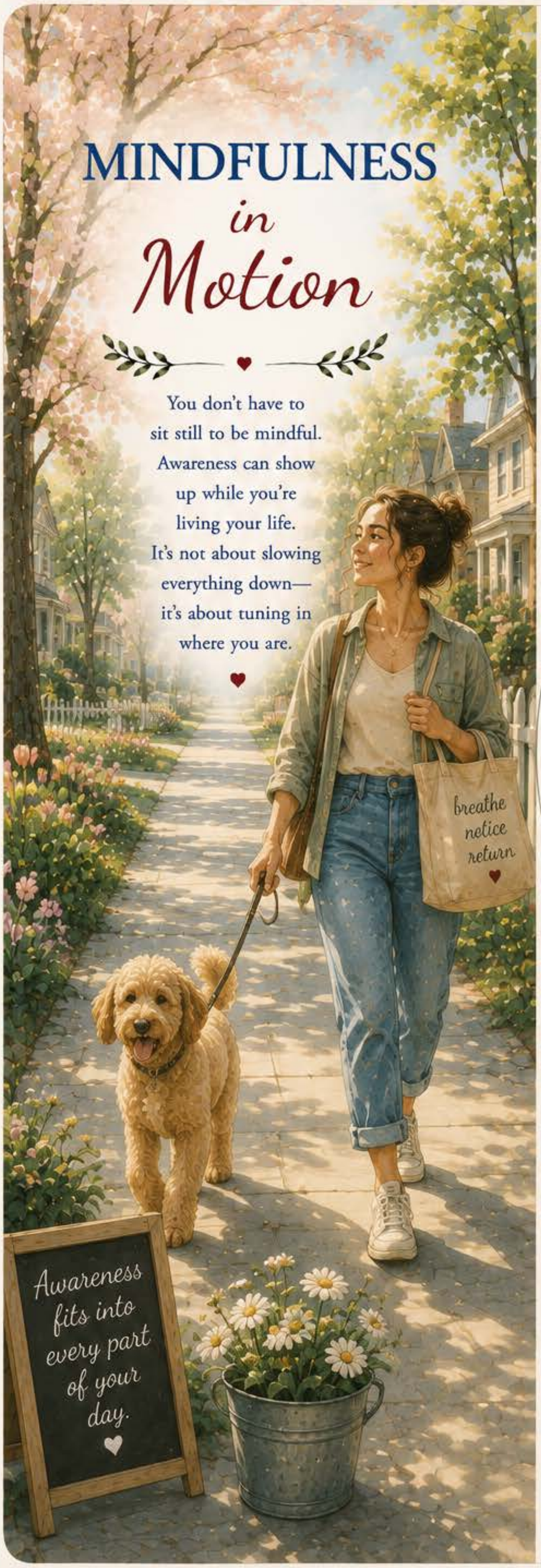
Create your go-to menu of tiny pauses you can use
anytime, anywhere.

| WHEN I... (Situation) | I'LL PAUSE BY... (What I'll do) | THEN I'LL... (What I want to create) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |



*Affirmation*

A few seconds of awareness
can change the direction
of my entire day.




## Let's Reflect

Mindfulness doesn't require a special place
or a special time.
It can happen in the moments you already live.

### ♥ MINDFUL MOMENTS WHEEL

Choose one simple awareness habit
you can practice in each area of your day.
Write it in the space provided.






### Reflection

When I bring awareness
into these everyday moments,
I feel more connected to myself
and less swept away by stress.

Which moment from your day is the easiest for you to be aware in? Why?

# NAMING WHAT'S *Really Happening*

When we stop judging ourselves and start naming what's really happening in our bodies, we reduce shame and create space to respond with compassion instead of reacting from survival mode.




## *Let's Reflect*

When we name what's happening instead of judging ourselves, we calm our nervous system and create space to respond with clarity and care.

### ♥ NAME IT TO TAME IT

Use this tool to check in with yourself right now.
Circle or highlight what fits best.

### 1 RIGHT NOW I FEEL...




### 2 MY BODY IS...




### 3 WHAT I ACTUALLY NEED IS...

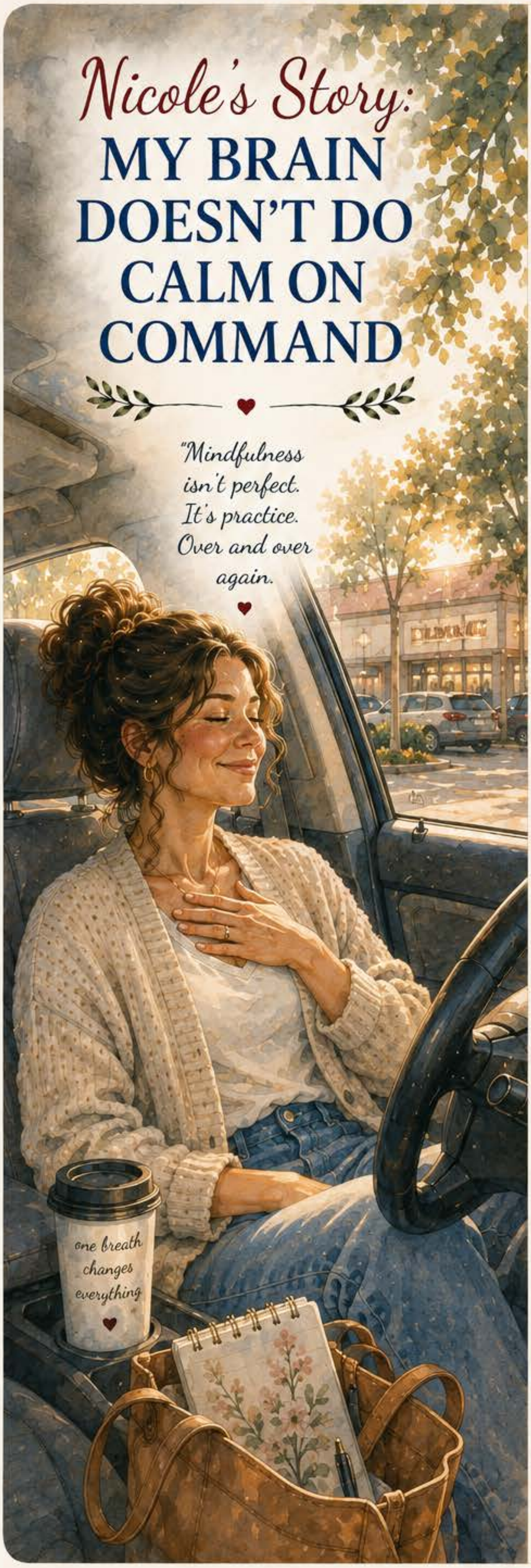





*Take a breath.*

I don't have to fix everything right now.
I just need to respond with kindness.

# Nicole's Story: MY BRAIN DOESN'T DO CALM ON COMMAND




## Let's Reflect

### Nicole's Story

When I first heard about mindfulness, I pictured someone sitting cross-legged on a cushion, serenely clearing their mind for an hour. That was never going to be me.

Most days looked more like this: alarms, emails, lunch boxes, deadlines, dishes, dog walks, practice drop-offs, texts I forgot to answer. By 5 p.m., my brain was a browser with 47 tabs open. Calm on command? Not even close.

One day, I decided to try "mindfulness" in the only way that made sense to me—my way.

I started small. While my coffee brewed, I noticed the steam. In the carpool line, I felt my feet on the pedals. Folding laundry? I paid attention to the soft towels.

Did I still get overwhelmed? Absolutely,
Did I space out or get impatient? All the time.
But I kept noticing. And each tiny moment of awareness felt like a little win.

Mindfulness isn't about being perfect.
It's about remembering—over and over again—to come back to the here and now.

1 Which part of Nicole's story felt familiar?



2 What tiny moments of presence already happen in my life?



Every small moment of awareness is a step back to myself.




## Let's Wrap It Up

You don't have to do it perfectly.
You just have to keep returning.
One small moment at a time.

### ♥ KEY TAKEAWAYS

What are the most important reminders from this chapter?

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

### ♥ MY THREE FAVORITE AWARENESS PRACTICES

List the three practices from this chapter that feel most helpful to you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

### ♥ THIS WEEK I'LL PRACTICE...

Choose one or two small ways you'll bring more awareness into your everyday life.

_____

_____

_____

_____

### ♥ ONE SENTENCE I'LL REMEMBER WHEN LIFE GETS BUSY...

Write a simple reminder you can return to when you feel overwhelmed.

_____

♥

I *don't* have to escape my life to return to myself.

# Chapter 5

# Your Body Is Talking— *Listen*

Stress begins in your body before your mind notices. Your nervous system is on your side, not your enemy.



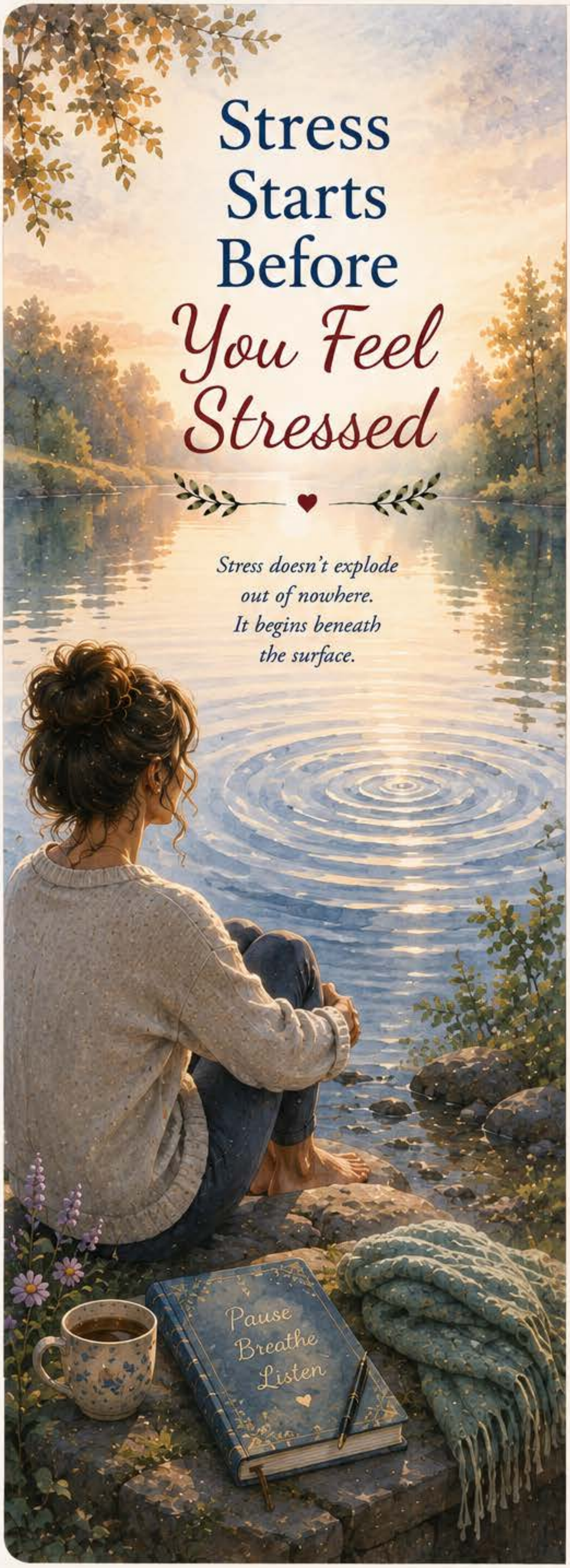

## Let's Reflect

1. When does my body usually tell me I'm stressed?

2. Which signals do I tend to ignore?

3. What do I hope changes during this chapter?

I don't have to wait for a breakdown to start listening.




## Let's Reflect

### STRESS TIMELINE

Think of a recent moment when you felt stressed.
Follow the path your stress took.

**1 TRIGGER**

What happened or what set it off?

↓

**2 BODY SIGNAL**

What did your body notice first?

↓

**3 THOUGHT**

What went through your mind?

↓

**4 REACTION**

How did you respond?

I usually notice stress at step _____.

# My Regulation *Red Flags*

Your body sends signals long before your mind realizes you're overwhelmed. These are your early warning signs.

## *Red Flag Inventory*

**CIRCLE** the warning signs you notice in your body.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Tight jaw | Racing thoughts | Shallow breathing | Irritability |
| Restlessness | Overthinking | Brain fog | Exhaustion |

### RANK YOUR TOP 5 EARLIEST WARNING SIGNS

Choose the five that show up for you first and rank them from 1 (first) to 5 (fifth).

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

### WHICH SIGN USUALLY APPEARS FIRST?

**For me, it's:** _____

Noticing earlier gives you the power to respond with care instead of react with stress.

*You've got this.*

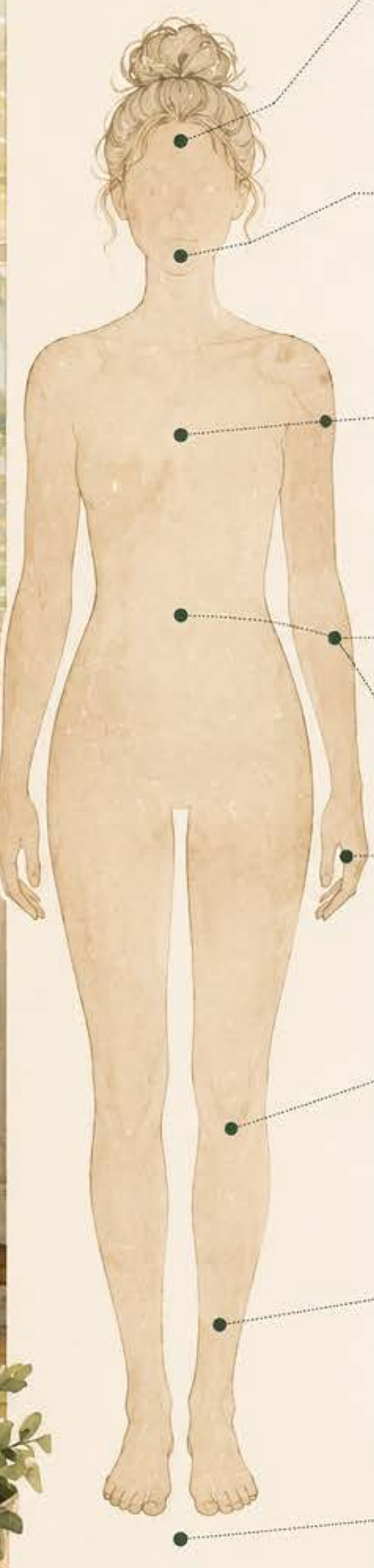
# What My Body *Is Trying to Say*

Your body speaks
long before your mind
puts it into words.
*Let's listen.*




## *Body Translation Guide*

Your body is always trying to communicate with you.
Use this guide to tune in and translate the message.



### HEAD
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### JAW
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### CHEST
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### STOMACH
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

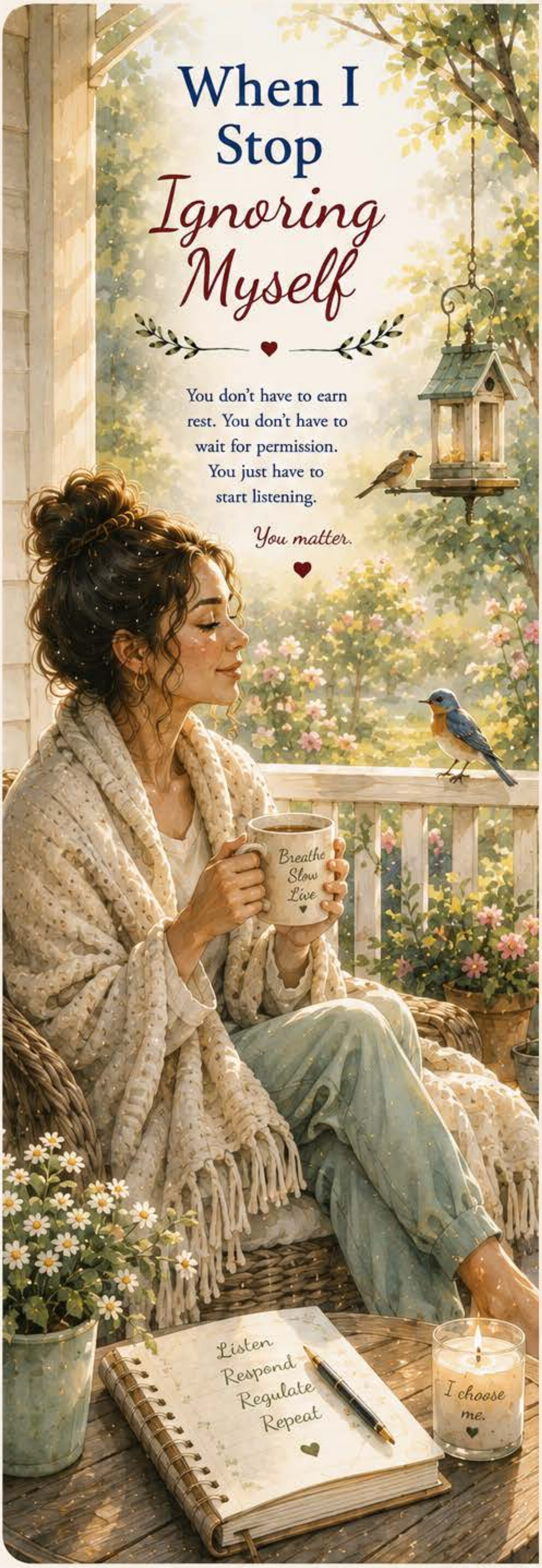
### SHOULDERS
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### HANDS
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### LEGS
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

### ENERGY
When I notice... _____
_____
My body may be telling me... _____
_____

My body isn't the problem.
*It's part of the solution.*




## Listening Practice Flowchart

This simple flow helps you respond to your body with compassion instead of pushing through.

**1 I NOTICE**

What is my body telling me right now?

↓

**2 I PAUSE**

I give myself permission to stop.

*I take a slow breath.*

↓

**3 I ASK**

What do I need right now?
What is my body asking for?

↓

**4 I CHOOSE**

What is one gentle, supportive choice I can make for myself?

- Today my body needs...
- Instead of pushing through...
- One kindness I'll give myself...

# My Nervous System *Isn't the Enemy*

Your nervous system
is wired to protect you.
It's not trying
to ruin your day—
it's trying to keep
you safe.

*Let's show it some gratitude.*




## *Reframing Cards*

Match each common thought with a more compassionate, nervous-system–friendly replacement.

| | COMMON THOUGHT | → | COMPASSIONATE REPLACEMENT |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I'm overreacting. | | My body is trying to protect me. |
| 2 | I should be able to handle this. | | My body is noticing something I care about. |
| 3 | There's nothing wrong. | | My body is sending me an important signal. |
| 4 | I'm just being too sensitive. | | My body is picking up on something that matters to me. |
| 5 | I need to calm down and push through. | | My body needs support, not shame. |
| 6 | This feeling will never end. | | My body is doing its best to keep me safe right now. |
| 7 | I'm weak. | | My body is strong for trying to protect me. |
| 8 | It's all in my head. | | My brain and body are working together to keep me safe. |

Maybe my body is trying to...

# Learning to Respond *Instead of React*

You don't have to
react to every feeling,
thought, or trigger.
You get to choose
a different path.

*Pause. Breathe. Choose.*




## *Pause Plan Decision Tree*

Use this tree to slow down and make a conscious choice instead of reacting on autopilot.

**NOTICE**
Something just happened.
What am I feeling or sensing
right now?

↓

**PAUSE**
Stop. Take one slow breath.
Give yourself a moment.

↓

**ASK**
Is this urgent or truly important?

**NO** → **LET IT WAIT**
This can wait.
I don't have to
react right now.

**YES** → **CHOOSE**
What response
aligns with who I
want to be?

↓

**ACT WITH INTENTION**
I choose my response.
I respond with clarity and care.

When I notice... _____

I'll pause by... _____

Then I'll choose... _____

### *My Pause Streak*

Building the habit, one pause at a time.

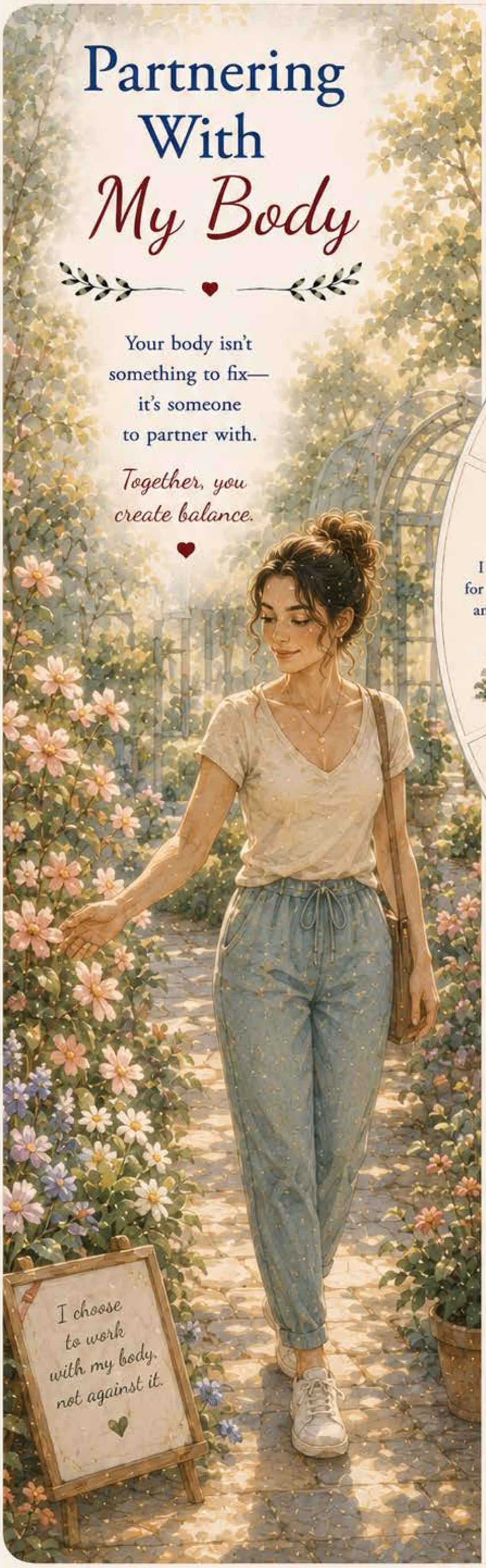
| MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Every pause is progress. ♥

# Partnering With *My Body*

Your body isn't something to fix— it's someone to partner with.

*Together, you create balance.*




## *Partnership Wheel*

Small choices. Big impact.
Support your nervous system in every area of your life.

**REST**
I schedule regular breaks and allow myself to slow down.

**MOVEMENT**
I move daily in ways that feel good and release stress.

**BREATHING**
I take slow, deep breaths throughout the day.

**NOURISHMENT**
I fuel my body with foods that nourish and sustain me.

**BOUNDARIES**
I honor my limits and protect my time and energy.

**SLEEP**
I create a restful routine and prioritize quality sleep.

**JOY**
I make space for fun, laughter, and the things I love.

**CONNECTION**
I surround myself with people and places that feel safe and kind.

My body helps me by... _____

_____

_____

I'll listen sooner when... _____

_____

_____

One promise I'll make myself... _____

_____

_____

When I work with my body,
my body works for me.

*We've got this, together.*

# Ashley's Story: My Body Was Screaming, and I Kept Whispering Back 'I'm Fine'




## Ashley's Story

Ashley thought she was just tired. Or stressed. Or behind. She told herself it was normal—everyone feels overwhelmed sometimes, right?

But her body knew the truth.

For weeks, her shoulders ached. Her sleep was wrecked. Her stomach was in knots. She had headaches that wouldn't go away. Her heart raced at the smallest things. Still, she pushed through. She said yes when she wanted to say no. She smiled when she wanted to cry. She kept the peace—and ignored the signals.

One Saturday, she ran errands with a long to-do list and a short fuse. By the time she got to the last store, her chest felt tight, her patience was gone, and she could feel tears hovering just under the surface.

She piled items in her cart she didn't even need and rushed through the checkout. When she got to her car, she sat there for a long time, gripping the steering wheel, trying to hold it all together.

Finally, her body won.

She closed her eyes and took a slow breath. And another. And another. The tears came—but so did the truth.

*My body has been trying to get my attention.*

From that moment, Ashley started listening.

She began pausing before saying yes.

She rested without guilt.

She fed her body real food.

She moved her body because it felt good, not because she "had to."

It wasn't an overnight transformation. But it was the first time Ashley chose to work with her body instead of against it.

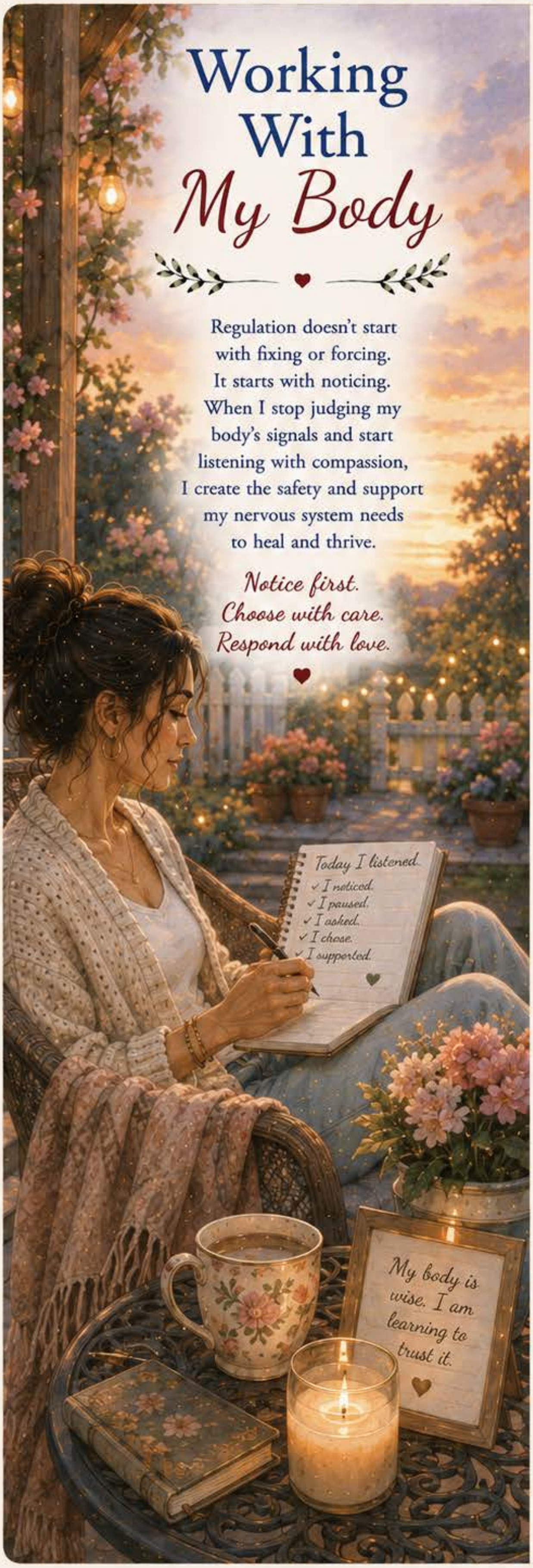
Now she knows—her body isn't the enemy.

*It's her most loyal ally.*

## Reflection

Which part of Ashley's story felt familiar?

What signal has my body been trying to tell me lately?




# Let's Wrap It Up

You've learned so much in this chapter about listening to your body and responding with care. Take a moment to reflect and create your plan to keep honoring your body every day.

## 1. KEY TAKEAWAYS

What are the most important lessons from this chapter?

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

## 2. MY TOP FIVE PERSONAL RED FLAGS

The early warning signs my body gives me when I'm disregulating or heading toward burnout.

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4 _____

5 _____

## 3. MY REGULATION RESCUE PLAN

When I notice a red flag, I will:

PAUSE BY: _____

SUPPORT MYSELF WITH: _____

CHOOSE THIS INSTEAD: _____

## 4. ONE BODY SIGNAL I'LL NEVER IGNORE AGAIN...

_____

_____

_____

### Affirmation

♥

*My body is not working against me.*
*It is always working for me.*

♥

# Chapter 6

# Real Tools for When You're About to Lose It

Regulation doesn't require perfection—it requires practical tools you can use in the moments that matter most.

*You don't have to be perfect. You just have to be prepared to come back to yourself.*




## Reflection

Take a few quiet minutes to reflect on where you are right now and what you need.



When do I feel like I'm about to lose it?



What usually helps me calm down?



What do I hope to learn in this chapter?

*You don't need a perfect plan. You need a plan that works when life feels anything but perfect.*

# My Emergency Regulation Toolkit

You don't need the perfect tool.
You just need the right tools
that work for **YOU** in the
moments that matter most.

## Calm Kit Builder

Fill your Calm Kit with the tools that help you
reset, soothe, and come back to yourself.
What belongs in **YOUR** kit?



### Comfort

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



### Grounding

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



### Breathing

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



### Movement

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



### Sensory

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____



### Encouragement

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

The first tool I'll reach for is...

_____

*A calm kit isn't about having everything—*
*it's about having what works for* **YOU.**
*We build it now, so it's ready when you need it most.*

# Finding My *Reset Button*

Different moments need different tools.

Let's find what helps you reset, regulate, and come back to yourself.




## *Tool Match-Up*

Draw a line to match each situation with the tool that will help you reset and regulate best.

| SITUATION | REGULATION TOOL |
|---|---|
| Overthinking | Cold water |
| Panic | Physiological sigh |
| Exhaustion | Stretching |
| Anger | Music |
| Brain Fog | Grounding |
| Overwhelm | Quiet break |

*One tool that surprises me with how much it helps is...*

# Breathing That Actually Helps

Your breath is one of the fastest ways to calm your nervous system.
These simple techniques help you reset, shift your state, and come back to yourself.

## Breathing Guide

Practice each technique and notice how your body responds.
Then rate how helpful it feels for you.

### 1 Physiological Sigh
(Quick Reset)




1. Take a normal inhale through your nose.
2. Take a second, short inhale on top of that.
3. Exhale slowly and fully through your mouth.

How helpful was this for you?

☆ Not for me ☆☆ Helpful ☆☆☆ My favorite

### 2 4–6 Breathing
(Slow & Steady)




1. Inhale gently through your nose for 4 seconds.
2. Exhale slowly through your mouth for 6 seconds.
3. Repeat for 4–6 rounds.

How helpful was this for you?

☆ Not for me ☆☆ Helpful ☆☆☆ My favorite

### 3 Belly Breathing
(Deep & Grounding)



1. Place one hand on your chest and one on your belly.
2. Inhale through your nose so your belly rises.
3. Exhale through your mouth so your belly falls.
4. Repeat for 5–10 breaths.

How helpful was this for you?

☆ Not for me ☆☆ Helpful ☆☆☆ My favorite

### Remember

You don't need a perfect breath.
You just need a breath that helps.

# Interrupting *the Spiral*

Overwhelm doesn't show up all at once. It builds. The earlier you notice it, the sooner you can interrupt it.

*You have more power than you think. Use it.*




## *Panic Interrupt Flowchart*

Use this flow to stop the spiral and come back to yourself.

**1 NOTICE**

What was happening? What did I notice in my body, thoughts, or emotions?

**2 NAME**

What was I feeling? What was this moment really about for me?

**3 GROUND**

What did I do to get back into my body and the present moment?

**4 BREATHE**

What breathing technique did I use? How did it help?

**5 CHOOSE**

What did I choose next? What small, aligned action could I take?

*The more I practice interrupting the spiral, the more power I have to change the outcome.*

One thing I'm proud of from this experience is...

# Resetting My Nervous System

You can't always control what happens, but you can choose how you reset. Your body just needs the right signals to know it's safe again.




A reset is not giving up.
It's giving yourself what you need to keep showing up.

## Reset Menu

Choose the tools that help you reset when you're feeling overwhelmed or on edge. Check the ones you want to try.



☐ **Cold water**
Splash your face or hold cold water to wake up your system.



☐ **Press feet into floor**
Feel your feet grounded. Push down and connect with the present.



☐ **Stretch**
Release tension in your neck, shoulders, and back.



☐ **Shake hands**
Shake out your hands to release built-up stress energy.



☐ **Long exhale**
Slow, longer exhale than inhale tells your body to relax.



☐ **Step outside**
Fresh air and natural light can reset your nervous system fast.



☐ **Gentle movement**
Walk, sway, or move slowly to help your body release stress.

*After a stress spike I usually need...*

*My body is always doing its best for me.*
*I can listen, support it,*
*and help it reset.*




# My Calm Kit Checklist

When life gets loud,
your Calm Kit helps you
come back to yourself.

*Be prepared.*
*Be gentle with you.*
*You've got this.*

## Portable Calm Kit

Build your Calm Kit for the places you spend the most time. Fill in what helps you feel safe, grounded, and like yourself again.



### PURSE

What I keep with me on the go

Already Packed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Some of it
- ☐ Not yet



### CAR

What helps me reset anywhere

Already Packed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Some of it
- ☐ Not yet



### NIGHTSTAND

What helps me wind down and sleep

Already Packed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Some of it
- ☐ Not yet



### DESK

What helps me stay calm and focused

Already Packed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ Some of it
- ☐ Not yet

*You can't control everything,*
*but you can build a Calm Kit*
*that helps you handle anything.*

# Practice Before You *Need It*

The skills you practice
when life is calm
are the ones that
will catch you
when life gets hard.




## *Weekly Practice Tracker*

The more you practice, the more natural regulation becomes. Small steps. Every day.

| DAY | Breath | Grounding | Movement | Pause | Reflection |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MON | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| TUE | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| WED | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| THU | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| FRI | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| SAT | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| SUN | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

Look back on your week. What did you notice?

_____

_____

_____

*The easiest tool for me is...*

*because* _____

_____

*You don't rise to the level of your goals. You fall to the level of your systems.*




# Megan's Story: Calm Felt Impossible Until It Didn't

## Megan's Story

There was a season when Megan felt like she was barely holding it together.

Her to-do list was endless. Her mind never stopped. Her chest felt tight most of the day. And at night, panic would sneak in—racing thoughts, shallow breaths, and that desperate feeling that something bad was about to happen.

Megan tried to push through. She told herself to "just calm down" or "get it together." But nothing worked. The more she pushed, the worse she felt.

One night, after a full-blown panic attack, she realized she couldn't keep living this way. She started small. She learned a few breathing techniques. She made herself a Calm Kit. She practiced grounding when her mind spun.

The first few times felt awkward—even a little silly. But slowly, something shifted. She noticed the early signs of overwhelm. She caught the spiral sooner. She had tools to come back to her body.

Megan didn't become a different person. Life didn't become stress-free. But she became more resilient. She learned that calm isn't something you wait for—it's something you build, one small choice at a time.

1 Which part of Megan's story felt most familiar?

2 What's one small tool I'm willing to try this week?




# Let's Wrap It Up

You've learned a lot in this chapter.
Now it's time to keep it simple, choose what works,
and build a plan you can actually use.

## 1. KEY TAKEAWAYS

What are the most important things you want to remember?

- _____
- _____
- _____

## 2. MY TOP THREE REGULATION TOOLS

The three tools I know I can reach for:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

## 3. MY GO-TO RESET PLAN

When I feel overwhelmed, I will:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

## 4. ONE PROMISE I'LL MAKE MY NERVOUS SYSTEM...

I promise to...

_____

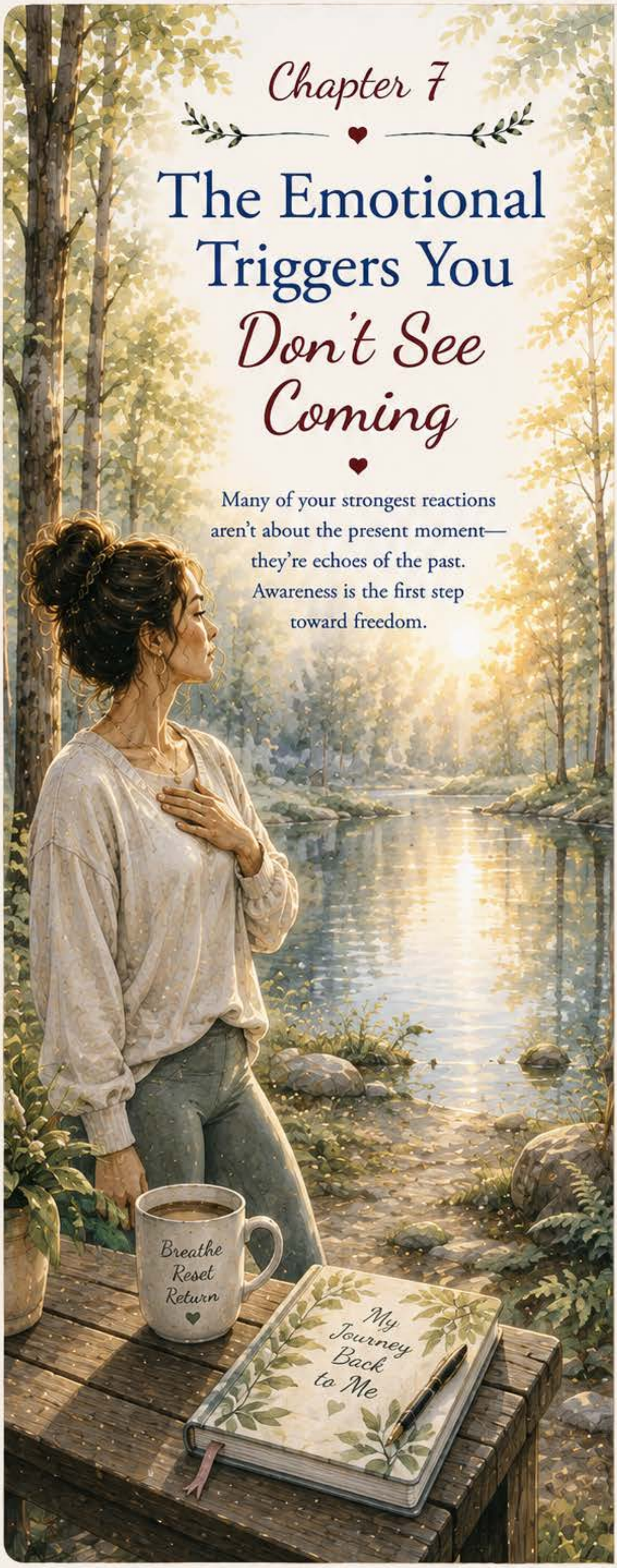
_____

_____

**AFFIRMATION**

*I don't have to be perfect*
*to find my way back to calm.*

♥




# Chapter 7

# The Emotional Triggers You Don't See Coming

Many of your strongest reactions aren't about the present moment—they're echoes of the past. Awareness is the first step toward freedom.

## Let's Reflect

1 What situations trigger me most often?

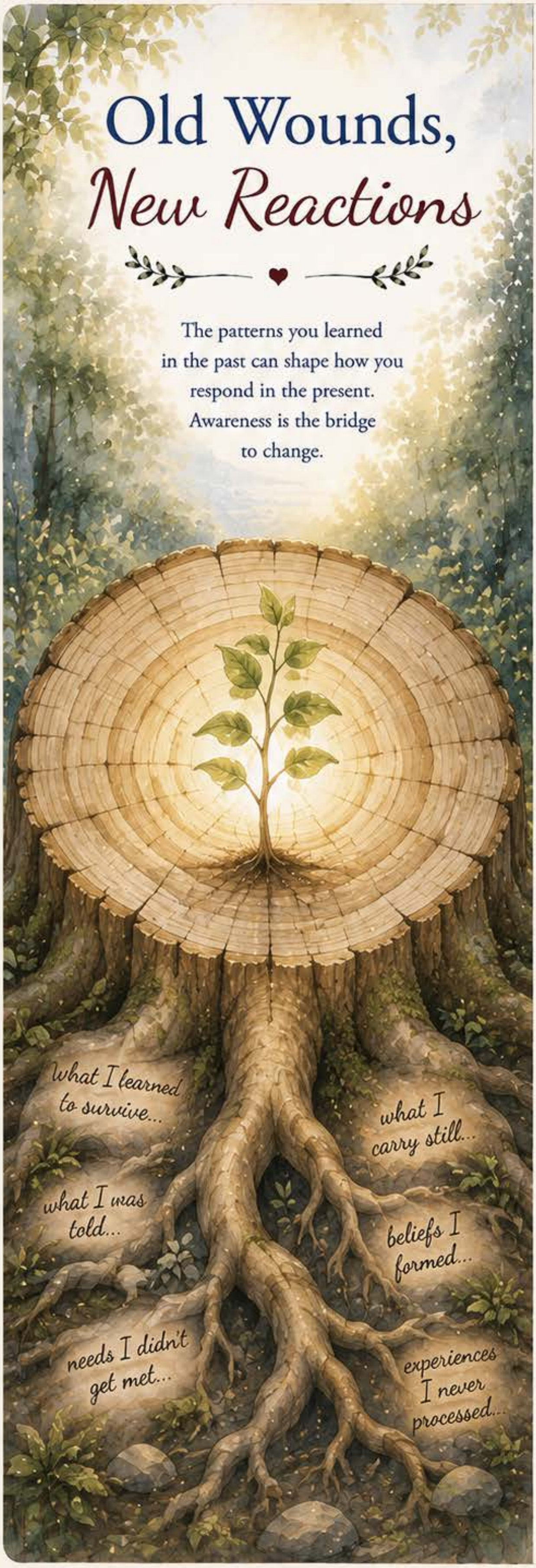
2 Do my reactions sometimes feel bigger than the moment?

3 What do I hope to understand about myself in this chapter?

*You can't change what you don't understand. Awareness creates choice.*

# Old Wounds, *New Reactions*

The patterns you learned
in the past can shape how you
respond in the present.
Awareness is the bridge
to change.




## *Let's Explore*

Sometimes our strongest reactions today
are rooted in experiences from long ago.
Take a few minutes to connect the dots.

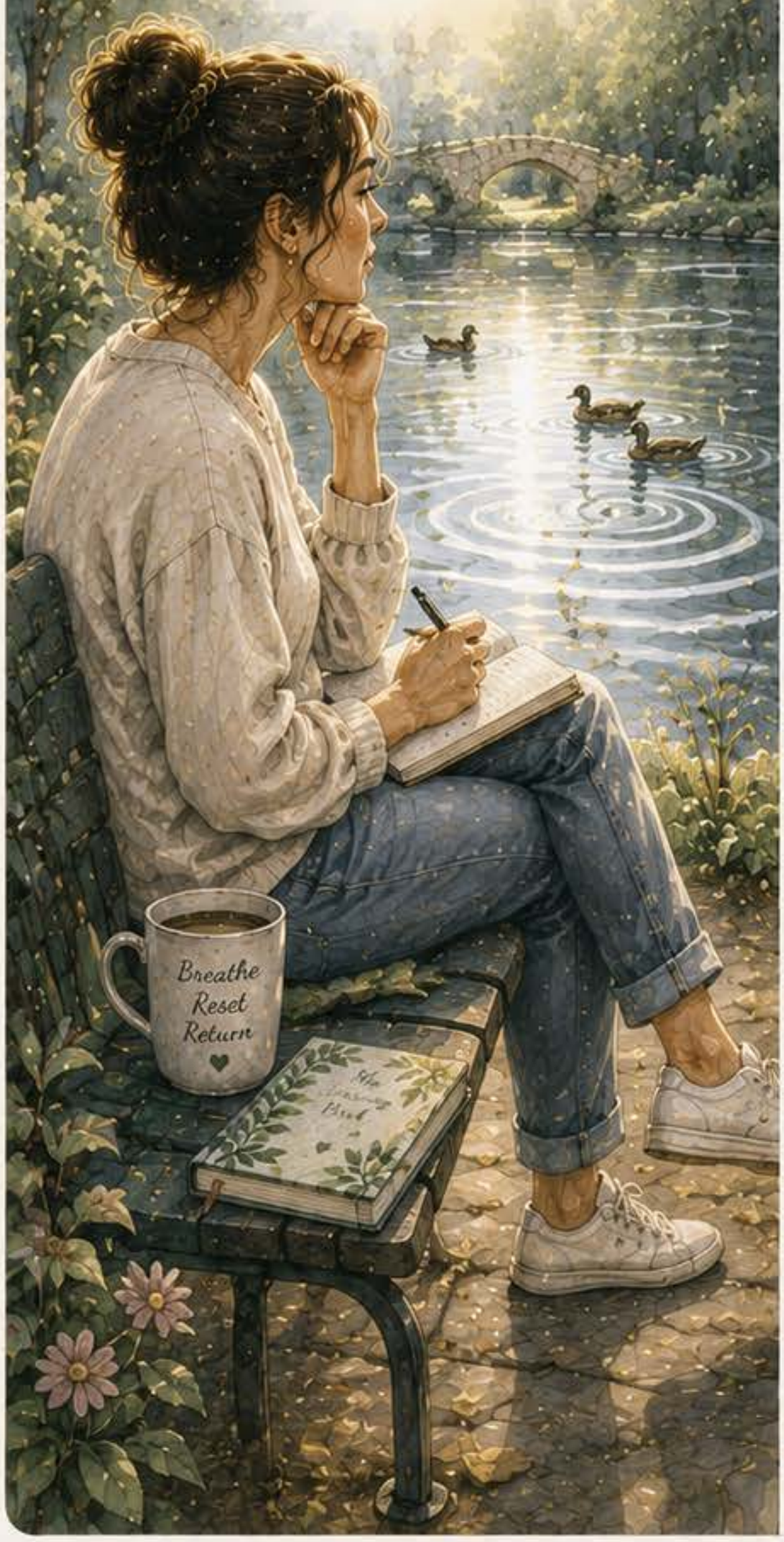
| PAST EXPERIENCES | PRESENT REACTIONS |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

One reaction I'd like to understand better is...

*I am allowed to heal*
*the parts of me that are still*
*living in the past.*

# Am I Reacting to *Now or Then?*

The more clearly you can separate what is happening now from what your past is trying to protect you from, the more freedom you create to respond instead of react.




## *Let's Sort It Out*

Use this page to separate what is true in this moment from what your past may be reminding you of. Be honest and gentle with yourself.

| FACTS ABOUT TODAY<br>What is actually happening right now? | WHAT MY PAST IS WHISPERING<br>What old stories, fears, or memories might be activated? |
|---|---|
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Today is different because...

*Awareness creates space.*
*Space creates choices.*
*And choices create freedom.*

# Survival Mode Check-In

Awareness is the first step out of survival mode and back into your life.




## Let's Check In

When your nervous system is in survival mode, it can be hard to think clearly or respond calmly. Let's see what's showing up for you right now.

### SURVIVAL MODE INVENTORY

Check all that apply:

- ☐ Racing thoughts _____
- ☐ Doom scrolling _____
- ☐ Snapping or irritability _____
- ☐ Brain fog / hard to focus _____
- ☐ Can't decide / feel stuck _____
- ☐ Numb / disconnected _____
- ☐ Over-functioning / doing too much _____
- ☐ Shutting down / avoiding everything _____
- ☐ Other: _____

### RATE YOUR CURRENT NERVOUS-SYSTEM STATE

On a scale of 1 (low overwhelm) to 10 (completely overloaded), where are you right now?

| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ | ○ |

Calm & Grounded — Overwhelmed & Maxed Out

What's contributing most to your current state?

_____

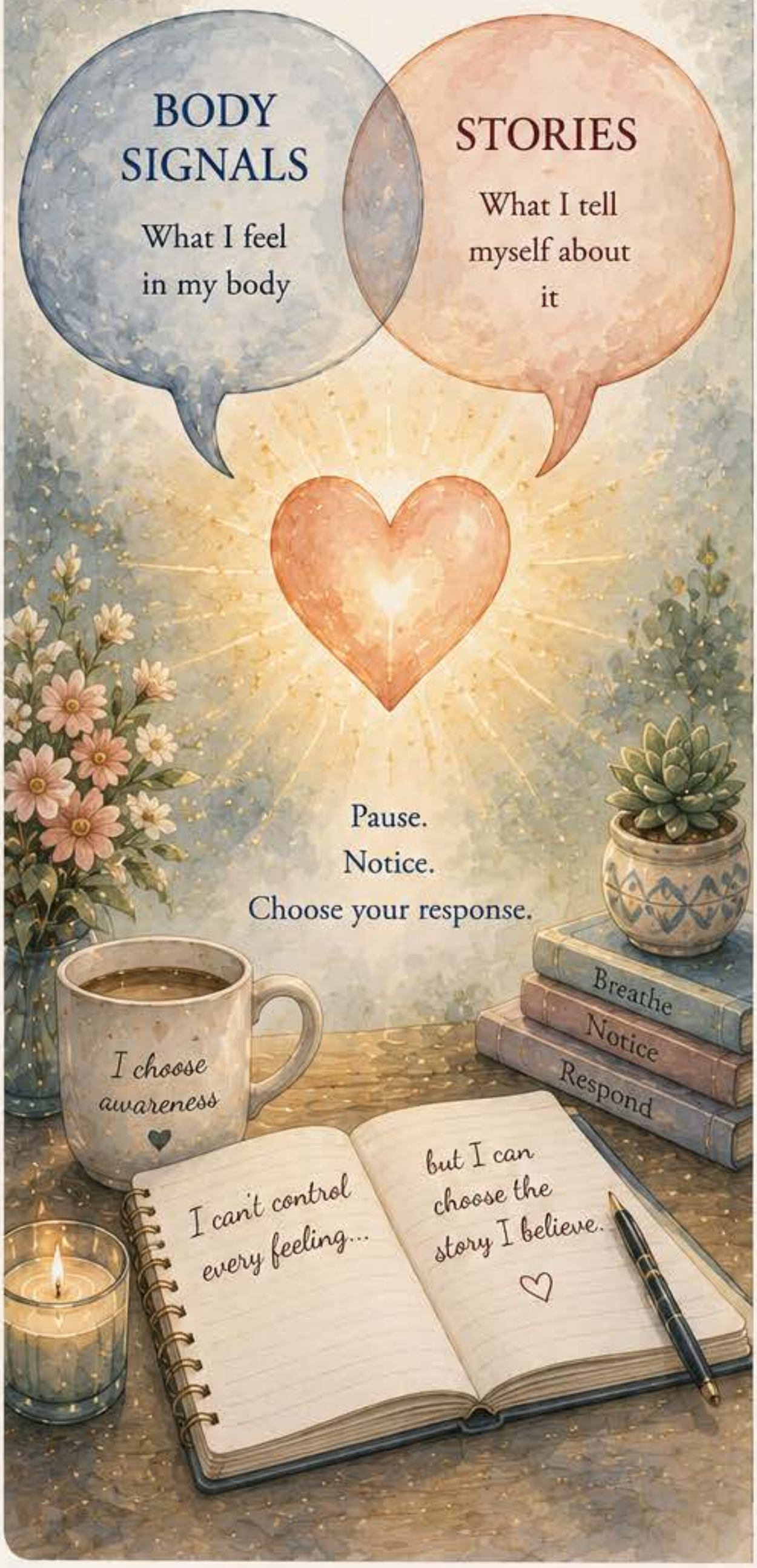
_____

_____

*You can't regulate what you don't recognize.*

# Signals vs. Stories

Your body sends signals.
Your brain creates stories.
Awareness gives you a choice.




## Let's Connect the Dots

Match each body signal with the story your brain might be telling you.

| BODY SIGNALS | COMMON STORIES |
|---|---|
|  1. Tight chest | A. They're mad at me. |
|  2. Knot in my stomach | B. I'm failing. |
|  3. Heat or flush | C. I need to fix this. |
|  4. Shaky hands | D. I'm not good enough. |

The story I tell myself most often is...

*Awareness is the space between the signal and the story.*

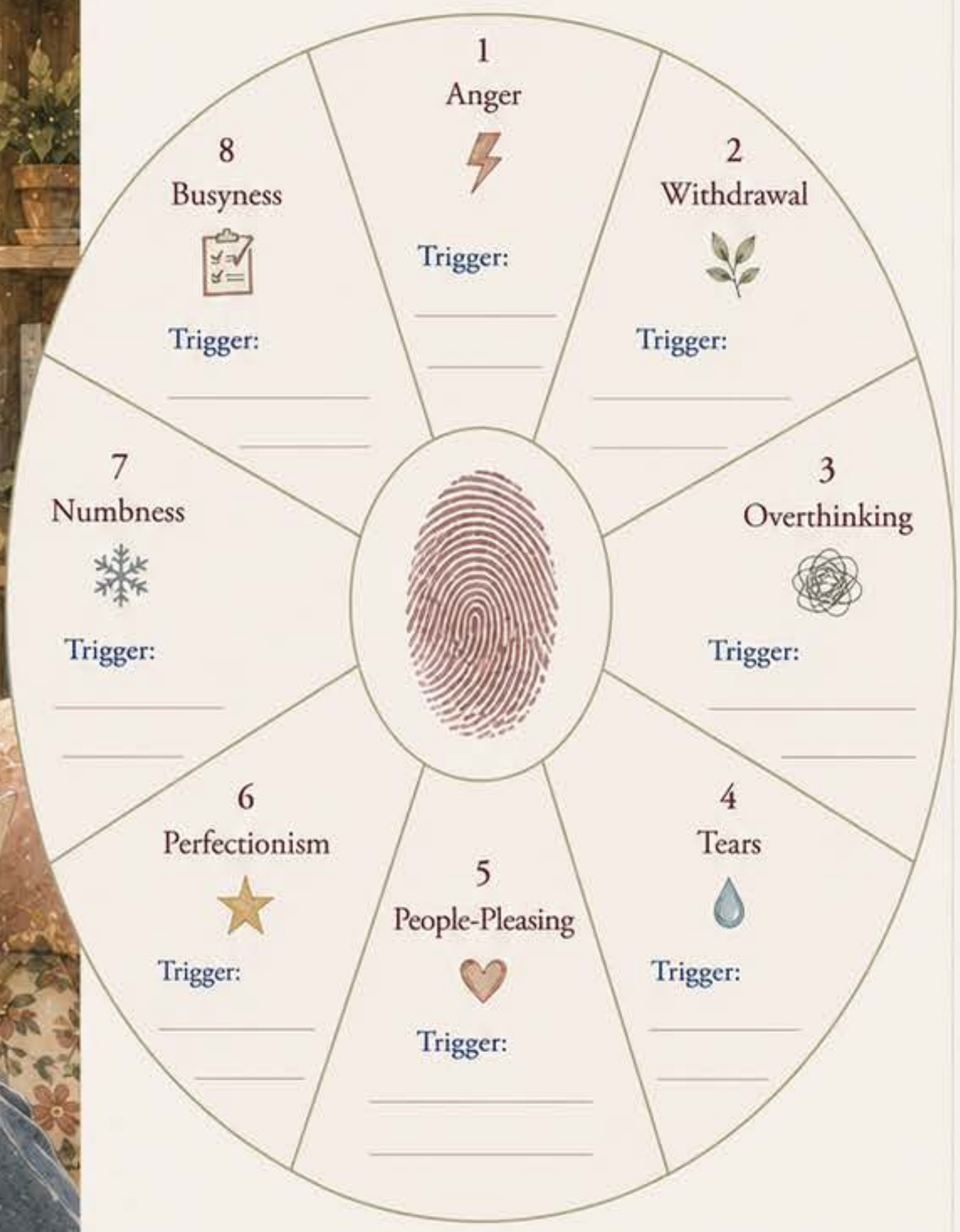



# My Emotional Fingerprints

We all have patterns that show up when we're stressed, overwhelmed, afraid, or uncomfortable. Awareness helps you catch the pattern so you can choose a new response.

## Let's Take a Closer Look

Look at the patterns below.
Shade the ones that are most familiar for you.
Then write one common trigger that brings it out.




What do I notice about my patterns?

*Awareness turns patterns into possibilities.*

# Before I Reach *My Limit*

Your body gives you warnings long before you hit overload. Noticing early helps you choose a different outcome.




## *Fuel Gauge Tracker*

Use this gauge to check in with your nervous system. The earlier you notice, the more choices you have.




| | GREEN | YELLOW | ORANGE | RED |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| What my body feels like... | | | | |
| What I need... | | | | |
| What helps me recover... | | | | |

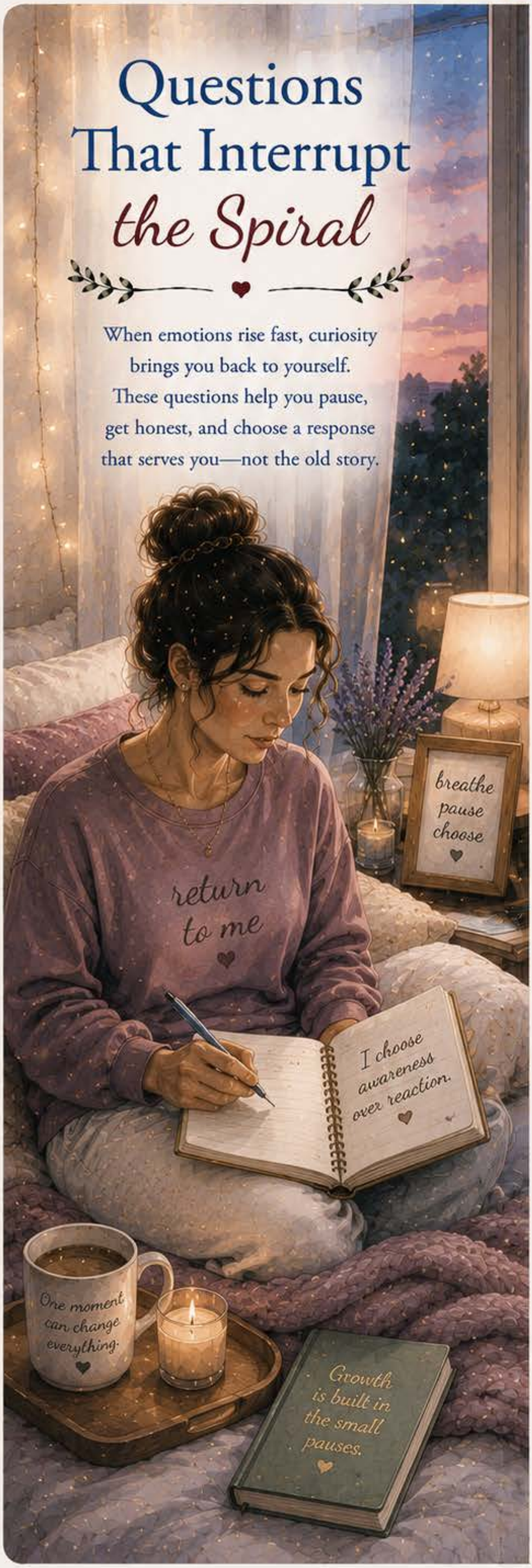
What's one early warning sign I want to notice sooner?

I'm practicing catching myself in the _____ zone.

*Awareness is my power.*
*I choose to listen early.*

# Questions That Interrupt the Spiral

When emotions rise fast, curiosity brings you back to yourself. These questions help you pause, get honest, and choose a response that serves you—not the old story.




## Let's Interrupt the Spiral

Use this decision tree when you feel triggered, overwhelmed, or yourself starting to spiral.

**1. TRIGGER**
What just happened?

Name it. Get it out. Awareness is the first step.

**2. PAUSE**
Stop. Take a breath. Give yourself a moment.

**3. IS THIS ABOUT NOW OR THEN?**
Is this situation about what's actually happening right now?

**NOW**

Stay in the present. Focus on facts, not assumptions.

**THEN**

I'm being triggered by an old story. Bring yourself back to today.

**4. WHAT IS MY BODY SAYING?**
What sensations am I feeling right now?

Tension? Heat? Tight chest? Shaky? Nausea?

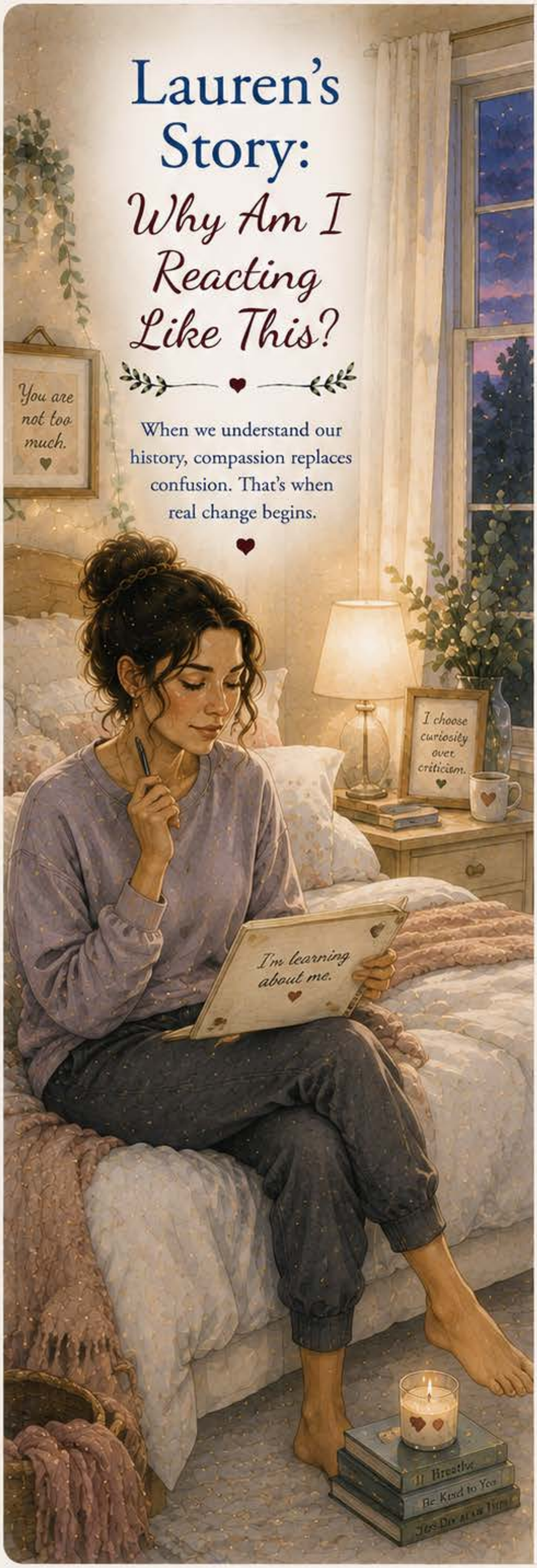
**5. WHAT DO I ACTUALLY NEED?**
What would help me feel supported in this moment?

Safety? Space? Comfort? Connection?

**6. CHOOSE A HEALTHY RESPONSE**
What is one small, intentional action I can take that supports me and the situation?

Respond with intention, not reaction.

*Curiosity creates space.*
*Space creates choice.*
*Choice creates freedom.*




# Lauren's Story: *Why Am I Reacting Like This?*

When we understand our history, compassion replaces confusion. That's when real change begins.

## *Lauren's Story*

Lauren had a good day—until her partner didn't text back right away. Within minutes, her chest tightened. Her mind raced: *Did I do something wrong? Is he mad at me? Why does he pull away sometimes?*

By the time he finally responded, she was already irritated and distant. He was confused. She felt guilty.

Later that night, Lauren sat with her journal and asked herself the question she had been avoiding: *Why am I reacting like this?*

As she wrote, a memory surfaced—being a teenager and waiting for her mom to come home from work. Some nights she did. Other nights she didn't. Lauren had learned to scan, wait, and worry.

That moment of realization hit her hard. *This isn't really about a text. This is about the old fear of being left.*

The next time it happened, Lauren paused. She placed her hand on her heart and asked, *Is this about now or then?* Her breath slowed. She reminded herself that today is not *back then.*

Lauren didn't stop having feelings. But now she understood them. And that changed everything.

## REFLECTION

- Which part of Lauren's story felt familiar?
- What old pattern am I beginning to recognize in myself?

*Understanding my past helps me choose my next step.*

# Understanding My *Emotional Triggers*

Awareness brings choice.
Choice creates change.
Change brings freedom.




## *Let's Wrap It Up*

Take a moment to honor the awareness you've built in this chapter.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

### MY BIGGEST EMOTIONAL TRIGGER

_____

_____

_____

### MY THREE MOST HELPFUL AWARENESS QUESTIONS

1 _____

_____

2 _____

_____

3 _____

_____

♥

### ONE OLD STORY I'M READY TO RELEASE...

_____

_____

*Affirmation*

My past may explain my reactions, but it doesn't have to control them.

♥

# Chapter 8

# Stopping the Spiral Before It Starts

Regulation begins in the whispers.
Your body speaks first.
When you listen early,
you don't have to recover late.




## Let's Reflect

Take a few minutes to check in with yourself.
Honesty here creates freedom later.

♥ How do I usually know I'm reaching my limit?

♥ What signals do I tend to ignore?

♥ What do I hope changes during this chapter?

Awareness is not weakness.
*It's the beginning*
*of choosing yourself.*

# The Whisper Before the Spiral

Your body whispers long
before it ever shouts.
Learn to hear the whispers
so you can choose
regulation instead of
running on empty.




## Warning Sign Radar

Fill in each area with the earliest signs
you notice when your system is getting overwhelmed.

### BODY

### THOUGHTS

### EMOTIONS

### BEHAVIORS

The first whisper I usually notice is... _____

The earlier I listen,
the sooner I can choose
a different path.

# My Personal *Spiral Pattern*

Spirals don't happen all at once.
They follow a pattern.
The more you understand your
pattern, the easier it becomes
to interrupt it.




## *Spiral Map*

Map your pattern so you can catch it sooner
and change the direction.

### 1. TRIGGER
What happens? What sets me off?

### 2. EARLY WARNING
What are my first signs?

### 3. THOUGHT
What goes through my mind?

### 4. EMOTION
What do I start to feel?

### 5. BEHAVIOR
What do I do or how do I react?

### 6. SPIRAL
What's the pattern result?

### WHERE CAN I INTERRUPT THE PATTERN?
Circle or star the step where I can catch myself
and choose something different.




# What My *Overthinking* Is Trying to Protect

Overthinking isn't the enemy. It's your mind's attempt to create safety. When you understand the fear underneath, you can respond with compassion instead of judgment.

## *Protection vs. Reality Sort*

Match the overthinking thought on the left with the deeper fear it's trying to protect me from on the right.

| OVERTHINKING THOUGHT | DEEPER FEAR UNDERNEATH |
|---|---|
| 1. What if I mess this up? | I'm afraid of disappointing someone. |
| 2. What if they're mad at me? | I'm afraid of not being accepted. |
| 3. What if they think I'm stupid? | I'm afraid of failure or judgment. |
| 4. What if I say the wrong thing? | I'm afraid of conflict or rejection. |
| 5. What if I'm not enough? | I'm afraid of losing control. |
| 6. What if this goes wrong? | I'm afraid of not being good enough. |
| 7. What if I let someone down? | I'm afraid of embarrassment. |
| 8. What if I'm too much? | I'm afraid of abandonment. |

MY MIND IS TRYING TO PROTECT ME FROM…

# Breaking the *Thought Loop*

Your mind will try to solve
discomfort by thinking more.
Your job is to interrupt the loop
and return to the present.




## *Loop Breaker*

Use this circle to interrupt the loop.
Move through each step to break the cycle
and return to the present moment.

### 1. THOUGHT
What am I thinking?

GROUNDING ACTION:

### 2. FEELING
What am I feeling?

GROUNDING ACTION:

### 3. BODY
What am I noticing in my body?

GROUNDING ACTION:

### 4. PAUSE
I create space before I react.

GROUNDING ACTION:

### 5. REDIRECT
Where will I move my focus?

GROUNDING ACTION:

### 6. RETURN TO PRESENT
What is I true right now?

GROUNDING ACTION:

You don't have
to believe every
thought.
You just have to
refuse to chase
every one.

## *Remember*

Interrupting the loop isn't about stopping thoughts — it's about changing the pattern.

# Creating Space Before I React

You always have a choice
in how you respond.
A pause creates space.
Space creates power.
Power creates freedom.




## Response Decision Tree

Use this tree to slow down and choose a response that supports your peace, not your reactivity.

**1. TRIGGER**
Something happens.
What triggered me?

**2. PAUSE**
I stop. I don't rush to react.

**3. BREATHE**
I take 3 slow breaths.
I return to my body.

**4. ASK: WHAT'S TRUE RIGHT NOW?**
- What facts do I know?
- What am I assuming?
- What else could be true?

**FACT**
I know this for sure.
What is the truth?

**UNCLEAR**
I'm not sure yet. I need more information.
What would help?

**STORY**
This might be a story, not the truth.
What am I making it mean?

**5. CHOOSE RESPONSE**
I choose a response that aligns with my values and protects my peace.
What response feels aligned?

I can't always control what happens,
but I can always choose how I respond.

# My Regulation Rescue Plan




You can't always prevent stress, but you can be prepared to care for yourself when it shows up. This plan is your reminder that you have tools — and you know how to use them.

## Rescue Plan Checklist

Build your personal plan for when warning signs appear. List your go-to strategies and why they help you.

| WHEN I NOTICE... | I'LL DO... | IT HELPS BECAUSE... |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | | |
| ☐ | | |
| ☐ | | |
| ☐ | | |
| ☐ | | |

★ = *My favorite / first-choice tools*

### My Top 3 Go-To Tools

1. _____ ★
2. _____ ★
3. _____ ★

### Remember

You don't need all the tools.
You just need the ones that support you.

# The Green, Yellow, Orange, Red Plan

The earlier you respond, the easier it is to stay regulated. Use this plan to catch yourself early and choose support, not survival.













My goal:

Respond early. Support myself.
Stay regulated.

## Traffic Light Planner

Use this plan to recognize your level, meet your needs, and choose your next best step.

### GREEN

I feel good and regulated.
Things are manageable.

- How I feel: _____
- What I need: _____
- What I'll do: _____

### YELLOW

I'm showing early signs.
I need to slow down.

- How I feel: _____
- What I need: _____
- What I'll do: _____

### ORANGE

I'm overwhelmed.
I need support now.

- How I feel: _____
- What I need: _____
- What I'll do: _____

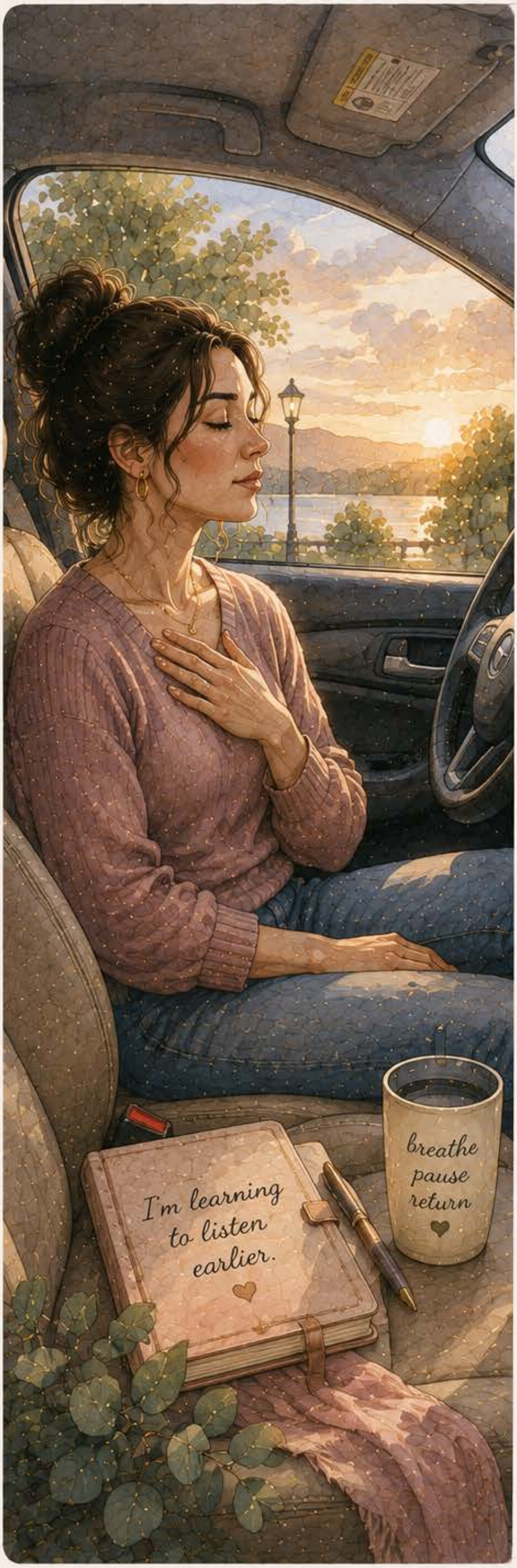
### RED

I'm in crisis mode.
I need immediate help.

- How I feel: _____
- What I need: _____
- What I'll do: _____

### Remember

Every level is information, not failure.
The goal isn't perfection — it's awareness and support.




# Christina's Story

## I Didn't Notice the Warning Signs Until I Was Already Drowning

For as long as I can remember, I prided myself on being strong and capable. I handled everything—work, home, everyone else. I didn't need anyone. Or so I thought.

Looking back, the signs were there. My shoulders were always tight. I woke up tired, even after a full night's sleep. I snapped over little things. I felt anxious in the morning even before I got out of bed. I told myself it was just part of being a responsible adult.

Then came the constant overthinking. Replaying conversations. Worried I'd made the wrong decision. Needing everything to be perfect or I felt like a fraud. I started canceling plans because I was "too busy" or "too exhausted." The truth? I was overwhelmed.

The day I broke down, it didn't come out of nowhere. I remember sitting in my car in a parking lot, crying so hard I could barely breathe. I felt like I was drowning and had no idea how I got there.

That's when I realized—I hadn't failed. I just hadn't learned to listen. The whispers were there all along. I just didn't know how to hear them.

## Reflection

- Which warning sign in Christina's story felt familiar?

- What's one whisper I'll start listening to sooner?

# Listening Before the *Spiral Begins*

Awareness isn't about
being perfect.
It's about noticing sooner
so you can choose differently.




## *Let's Wrap It Up*

You've taken an important step toward
listening to yourself sooner.
Keep practicing. Keep trusting.
You've got this.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 
- 
- 
- 

### MY EARLIEST WARNING SIGNS

- 
- 
- 
- 

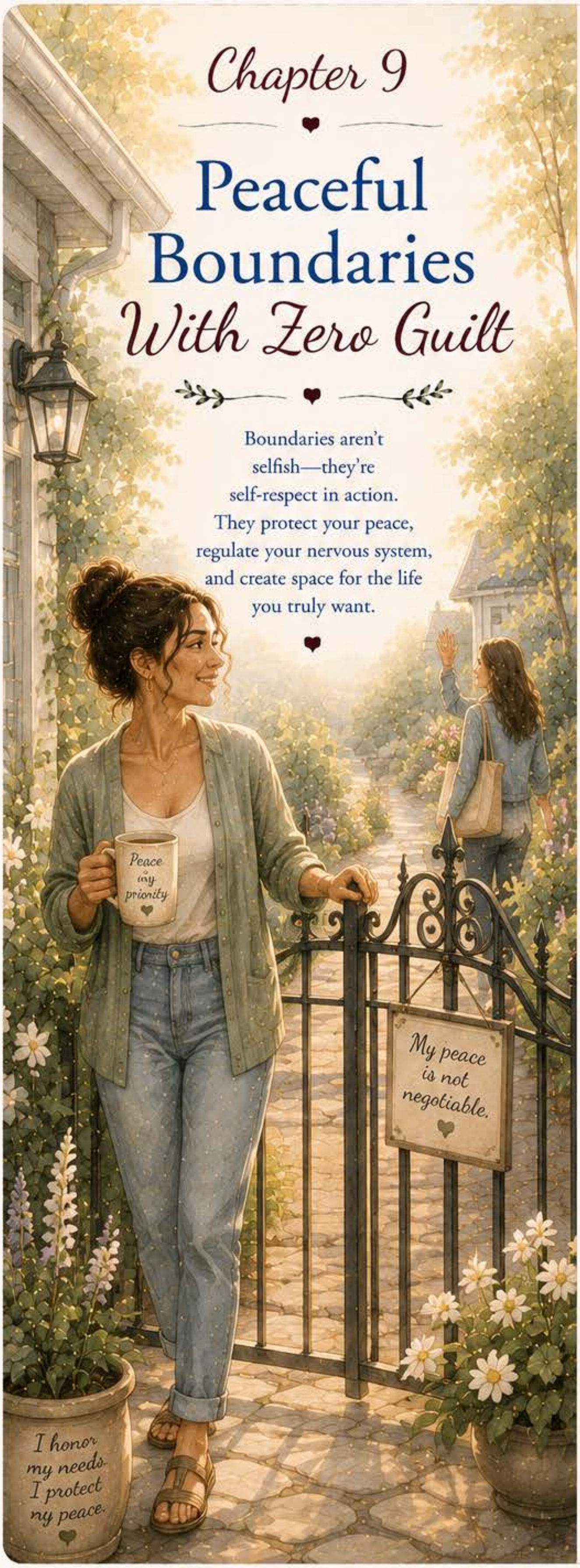
### MY GO-TO SPIRAL INTERRUPTOR

- 
- 
- 

### ONE PROMISE I'LL MAKE MYSELF WHEN I NOTICE THE WHISPERS...

### AFFIRMATION

Every time I notice sooner,
I give myself another chance
to choose calm.




# Chapter 9

# Peaceful Boundaries With Zero Guilt

Boundaries aren't selfish—they're self-respect in action. They protect your peace, regulate your nervous system, and create space for the life you truly want.

## Reflection

Take a few moments to get honest with yourself. Awareness is the first step toward change.

- When is it hardest for me to say no?

- What usually happens inside my body before I say yes?

- What do I hope changes during this chapter?

# When My Body Says No




## Body Boundary Check-In

When someone asks me for something...
My body usually tells me no by...

### HEART

My body usually tells me no by...

### STOMACH

My body usually tells me no by...

### SHOULDERS

My body usually tells me no by...

### THOUGHTS

My body usually tells me no by...

The sooner you notice,
the more choices you have.

# Fear or Willingness?

Every time we say yes,
we're making a choice.
Let's make sure it's coming
from the right place.




## Decision Compass

When someone asks me for something,
where is my yes coming from?

Sort the common requests below into the column that feels most true for you.

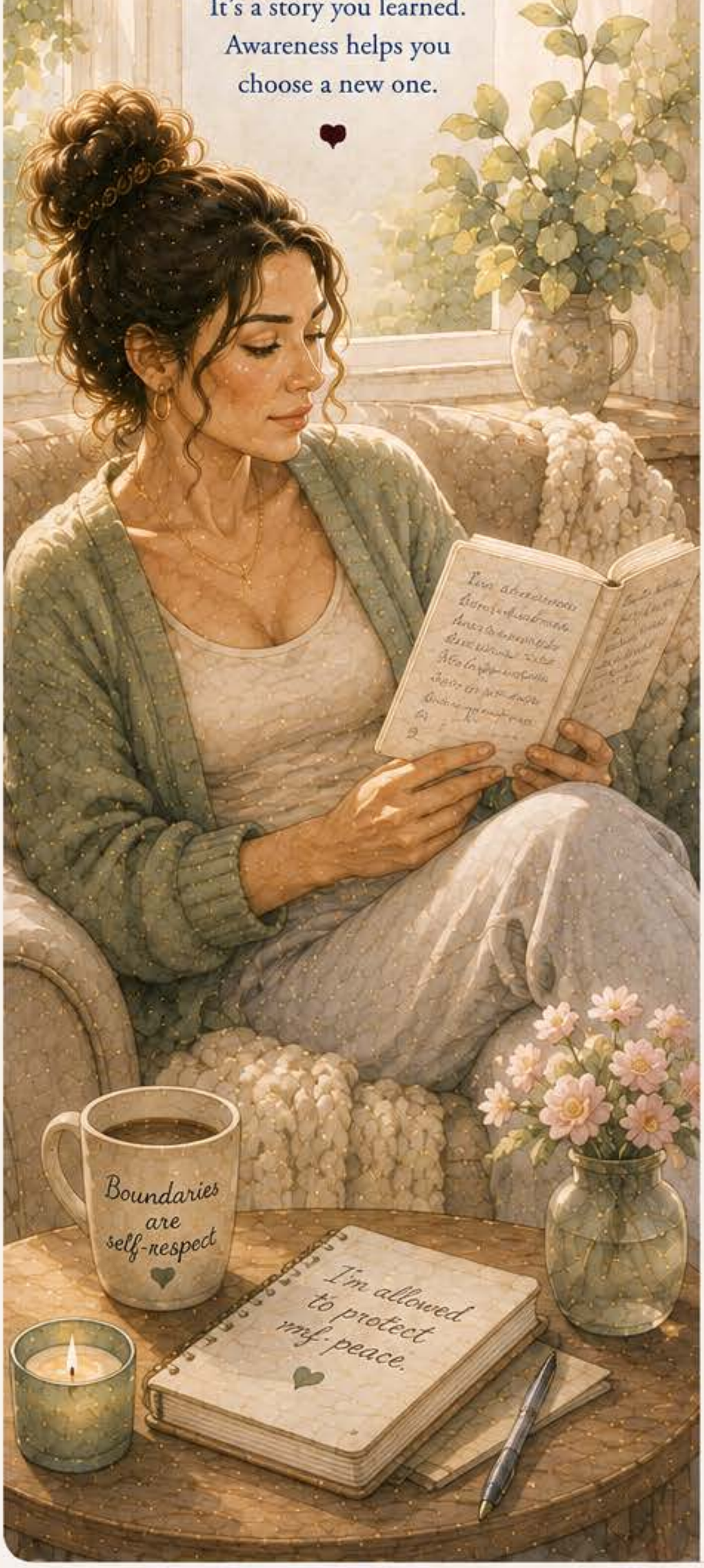
- Watch my kids
- Cover my shift
- Help with a project
- Lend money
- Take on extra work
- Drive someone somewhere
- Say yes to a favor
- Attend an event
- Do something I don't want to
- Take on someone else's task
- Be available last-minute
- Pretend I'm okay

| I'm saying yes because I want to... ♥ | I'm saying yes because I'm afraid to say no... ♥ |
|---|---|
| | |

*A willing yes nourishes me.*
*A fearful yes depletes me.*

# The Guilt Conditioning *Audit*

Guilt isn't truth.
It's a story you learned.
Awareness helps you
choose a new one.




## *Where Did I Learn This?*

These beliefs didn't come from nowhere.
Let's trace the roots so you can choose
what to release and what to keep.

Match each belief with the place it most likely came from.

FAMILY · CULTURE · WORK · RELATIONSHIPS · CHILDHOOD

| BELIEF | MOST LIKELY SOURCE |
|---|---|
| ♥ Good women always help. | • |
| ♥ It's selfish to put myself first. | • |
| ♥ I should be able to handle anything. | • |
| ♥ Saying no will make people upset or think I'm rude. | • |
| ♥ I have to earn love by being useful. | • |
| ♥ Keeping the peace is more important than my happiness. | • |
| ♥ I'm responsible for other people's feelings. | • |
| ♥ If I set a boundary, I'll be rejected. | • |

♥ One belief I'm ready to question is...

Awareness is the first step.
Questioning is the next.
Freedom is the result.
♥

# No Is a Complete *Sentence*

Clear boundaries don't require long explanations. A calm, simple "no" is a powerful act of self-respect.




## *Boundary Builder*

Rewrite the long explanations below into clear, short boundary responses. You don't owe anyone a reason.

| LONG EXPLANATION | SHORT RESPONSE |
|---|---|
| ♥ I wish I could, but I'm really overwhelmed right now and I have so much going on with work, family, and everything else that I just don't think I can take anything else on. | *I won't be able to.* |
| ♥ I already have plans that I can't change, and I know this might be disappointing, but I just don't have the time or energy to do this right now. | *That doesn't work for me.* |
| ♥ I appreciate you thinking of me, but I'm going to have to pass. I just need some time for myself and I can't commit to anything else right now. | *I'm not available.* |

### MY OWN BOUNDARY RESPONSES

1.

2.

3.

Simplicity is not harsh.
It is clarity.

# The Boundary Thermometer

Your boundaries have
a temperature.
The sooner you notice
where you are, the sooner
you can choose differently.




## Boundary Gauge

Check in with yourself throughout the day.
Move through the thermometer and
choose what you need before resentment sets in.

### 1 COMFORTABLE (GREEN ZONE)

- What it feels like:
- What I need:
- My next healthy choice:

### 2 STRETCHING (YELLOW ZONE)

- What it feels like:
- What I need:
- My next healthy choice:

### 3 DRAINING (ORANGE ZONE)

- What it feels like:
- What I need:
- My next healthy choice:

### 4 RESENTFUL (RED ZONE)

- What it feels like:
- What I need:
- My next healthy choice:

I honor my limits so I can protect my peace.

# Staying Open Without Shutting Down

Boundaries don't
push people away—
they create space for
real connection.

❤




## Healthy Connection Plan

Boundaries keep me connected to myself
so I can show up fully for the people I love.

Look at the two approaches below.
What feels familiar? What feels aligned?

| SHUTTING DOWN<br>Creates distance<br>and disconnection | HEALTHY BOUNDARIES<br>Creates connection<br>and respect |
|---|---|
| What it looks like: | What it looks like: |
| What it sounds like: | What it sounds like: |
| What it feels like<br>in my body: | What it feels like<br>in my body: |
| The impact on<br>my relationships: | The impact on<br>my relationships: |

### I can stay connected by...

Healthy boundaries are not walls.
They are bridges to better connection.




# My Boundary Practice Plan

Small, consistent choices create powerful change. Every healthy boundary is a vote for the life you want to live.

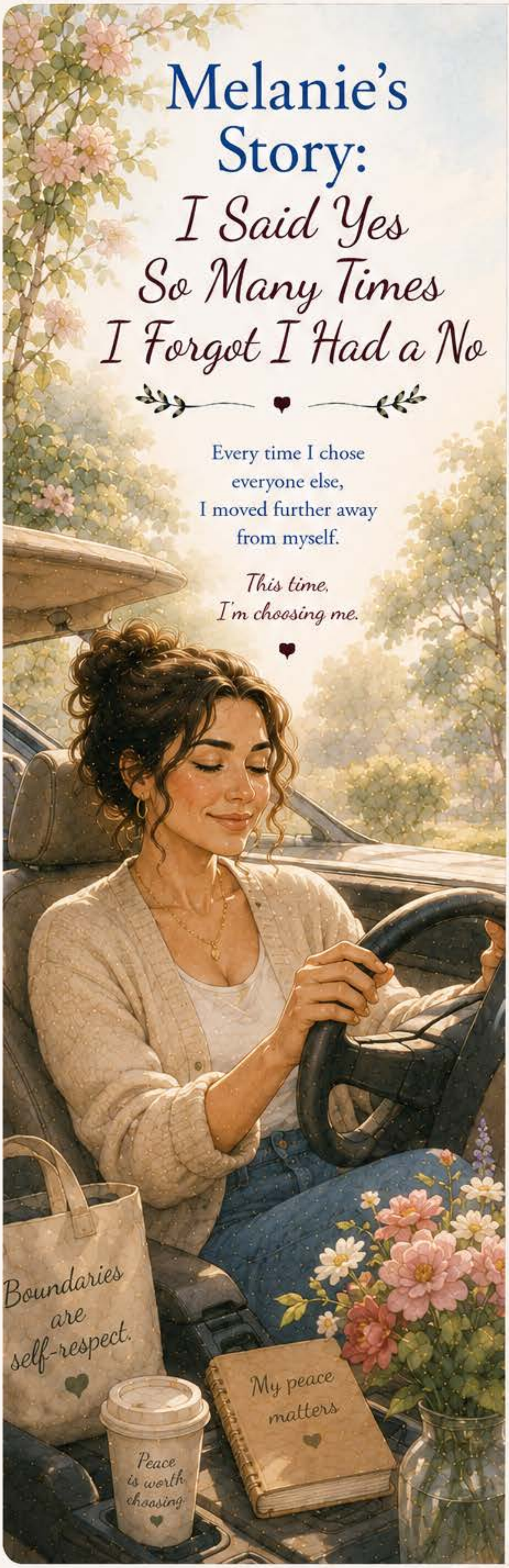
## Seven-Day Boundary Challenge

Practice one day at a time. Awareness. Choice. Action.
Tiny wins build unshakable confidence.

| MY DAILY PRACTICE | DAY 1 | DAY 2 | DAY 3 | DAY 4 | DAY 5 | DAY 6 | DAY 7 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **PAUSED** I took a breath before responding. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **CHECKED IN** I noticed how my body and mind felt. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **SAID NO** I honored my limit and said no or not now. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **PROTECTED MY TIME** I chose something that matters to me. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| **RESTED WITHOUT GUILT** I allowed myself to rest and let go of the guilt. | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |

*The easiest boundary for me is...*

Boundaries aren't about changing who you are.
They're about protecting who you are.




## Melanie's Story

Melanie was the person everyone counted on. At work, she took on extra projects. At home, she handled the dinners, the errands, the schedules. With friends, she was the one who always said yes, even when she was exhausted.

She told herself she was just being helpful. Kind. Reliable. But deep down, she was running on empty—and feeling invisible in the process.

One afternoon, a coworker asked Melanie to take on another last-minute task. Her first instinct was the usual, "Sure, no problem!" But this time, something in her body stopped her. Her chest felt tight. Her jaw clenched. A quiet voice whispered, *Not again.*

She took a breath. Paused. And said, *"I won't be able to take* that on right now."

The silence on the other end surprised her. So did the fact that the world didn't fall apart.

When she hung up, she sat in her car and cried—not because she felt guilty, but because she felt proud. For the first time in a long time, she chose herself.

That moment didn't fix everything. But it was the beginning. Melanie started practicing small no's. Protecting her time. Listening to her body. And slowly, she remembered who she was underneath all the pleasing.

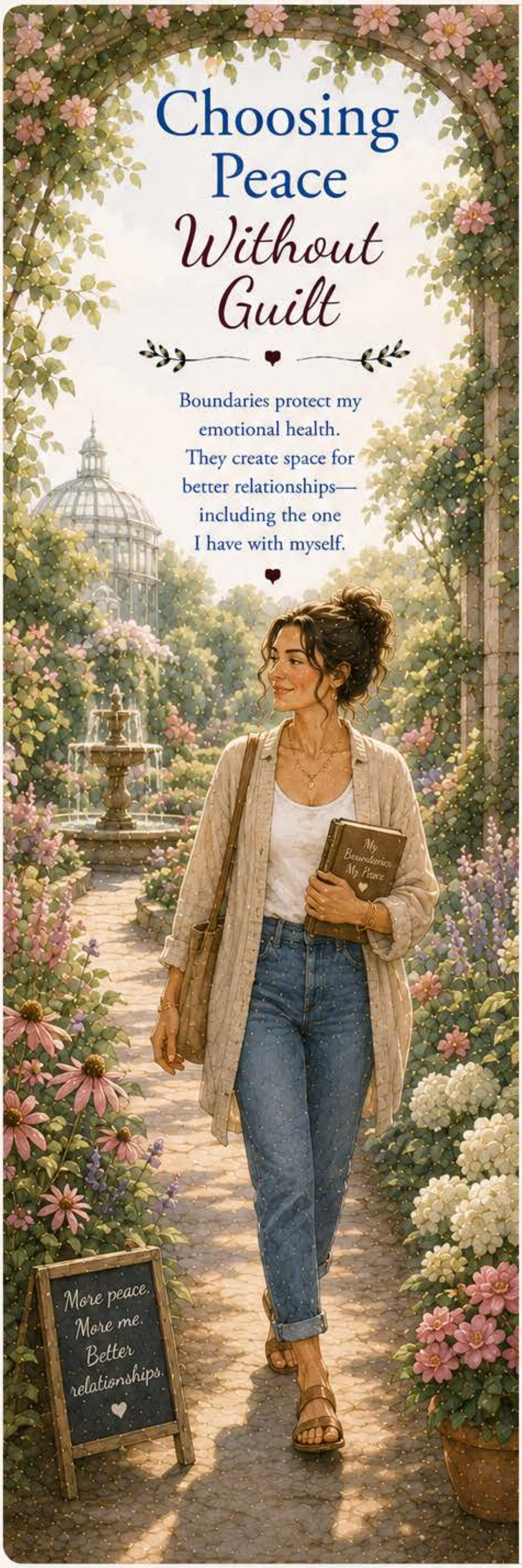
*Boundaries weren't rejection.*
*They were self-respect.*

## Let's Reflect

- Which part of Melanie's story felt familiar?

- Where do I want to start honoring my own no?

Every time you honor your no,
you come home to yourself.




## Let's Wrap It Up

Every boundary I set is a choice for peace. When I honor my limits, I show up with more love, more presence, and more truth.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

### MY THREE MOST IMPORTANT BOUNDARIES

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

### ONE PLACE I'LL STOP OVER-EXPLAINING

_____

_____

_____

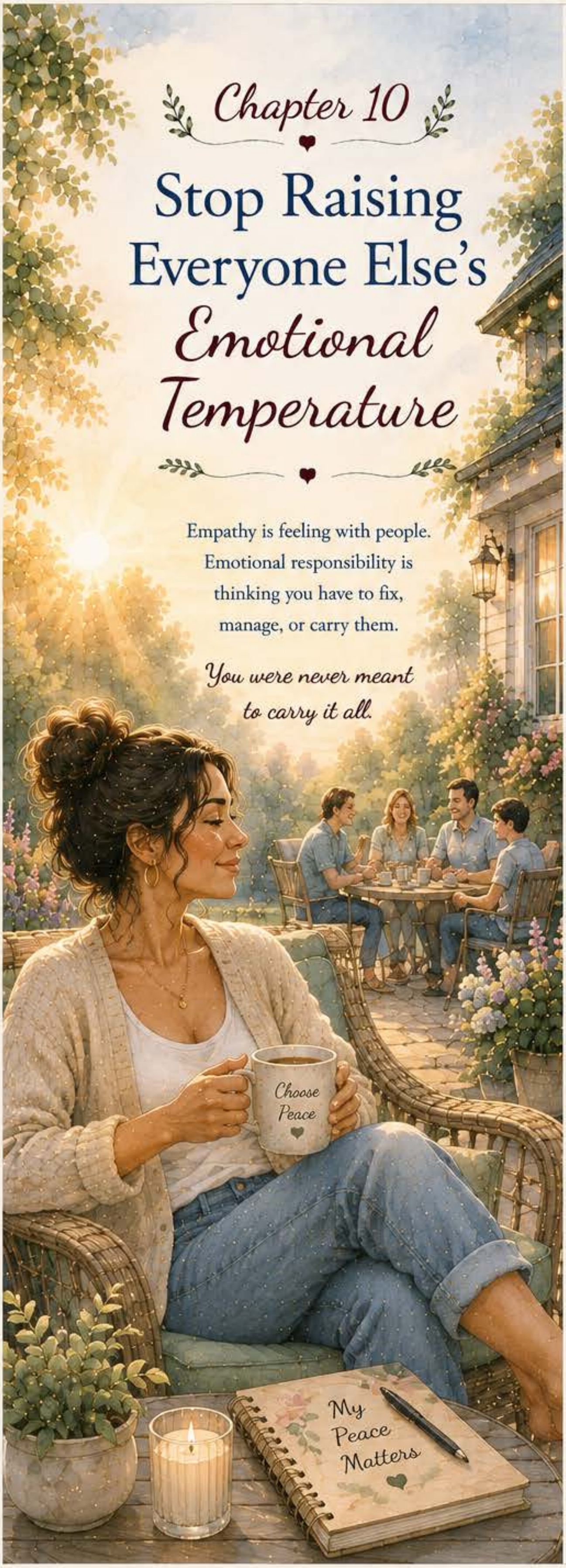
### ONE PROMISE I'LL MAKE MY NERVOUS SYSTEM...

_____

_____

### AFFIRMATION

*Every healthy boundary is an act of self-respect, not selfishness.*




## Chapter 10

# Stop Raising Everyone Else's Emotional Temperature

Empathy is feeling with people.
Emotional responsibility is
thinking you have to fix,
manage, or carry them.

*You were never meant to carry it all.*

## Let's Reflect

Take a moment to check in with yourself.
There are no wrong answers—just honesty.



- Whose feelings do I usually take responsibility for?

- How does my body react when someone around me is upset?



- What do I hope changes during this chapter?






# Is This Mine to Carry?

We can't change what's not ours to change.
But we can stop carrying what was never ours.

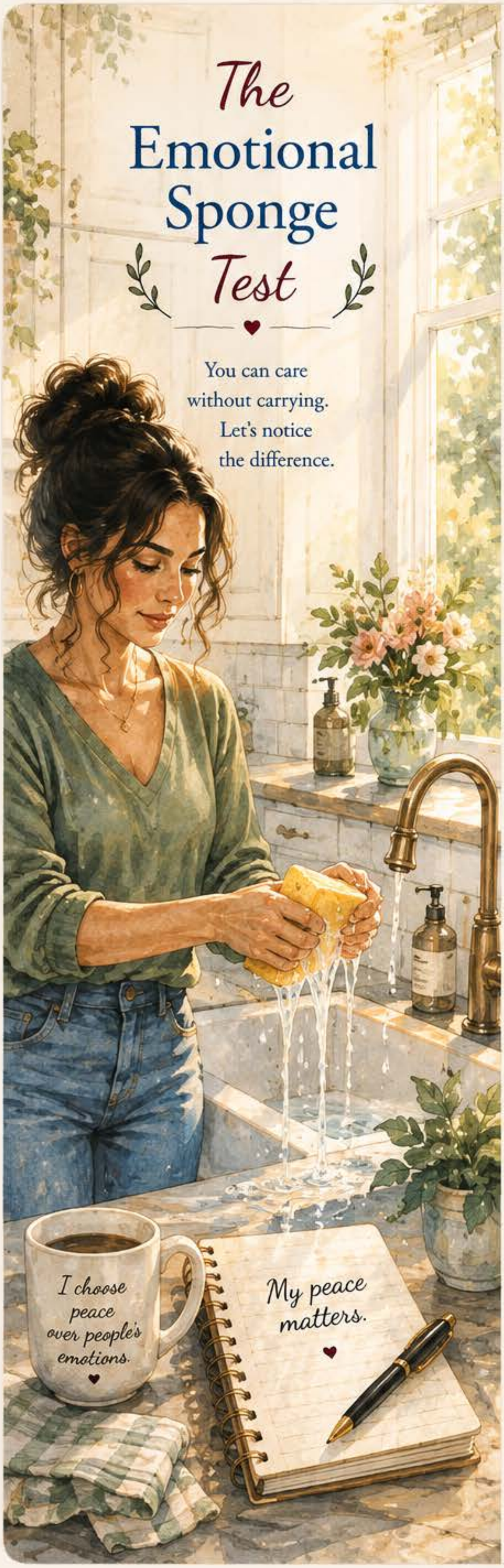
## EMOTIONAL OWNERSHIP SORT

Read each situation below.
Decide if the emotion belongs to you (Mine to Carry)
or to someone else (Theirs to Carry).
Write the number in the correct basket.

1. My feelings
2. Their bad mood
3. My choices
4. Their disappointment
5. My mistakes
6. Their anxiety
7. My reactions
8. Their healing
9. My boundaries
10. Their past
11. My values
12. Their stress
13. My growth
14. Their opinions
15. Their choices
16. How they treat me
17. My peace
18. Their emotions

| MINE TO CARRY | THEIRS TO CARRY |
| --- | --- |
| | |

*One burden I'm ready to put down is...*




# The Emotional Sponge Test

You can care without carrying. Let's notice the difference.

## ABSORB OR OBSERVE?

Read each situation below. Circle the ones where you usually ABSORB the emotions.

1. A loved one is in a bad mood.
2. Someone is stressed at work.
3. A friend vents frustration.
4. My partner is quiet or distant.
5. My child is upset.
6. Someone criticizes me.
7. Plans change last minute.
8. Someone is having a hard day.
9. There's tension in the room.
10. I sense disappointment in someone.
11. Someone is passive-aggressive.
12. A friend cancels on me.
13. Someone doesn't text back.
14. My boss is short with me.
15. Someone else's past comes up.
16. I feel like I need to fix it.
17. I worry about their reaction.
18. I replay the conversation.
19. I feel responsible for their happiness.
20. I feel guilty when they're sad.

## OBSERVE INSTEAD PLAN

Choose 3–5 situations you circled above and write how you will PRACTICE OBSERVING instead of absorbing.

| SITUATION | INSTEAD OF ABSORBING, I WILL... | MY GROUNDING REMINDER |
|---|---|---|
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

## MY NEW REMINDERS

- I am allowed to care deeply AND stay emotionally steady.
- Feelings are not facts.
- I can be present without taking it in.

*One truth I'm remembering today...*



# Compassion Without Carrying

You can care deeply
without carrying the weight.
Compassion stays present—
it doesn't try to fix,
control, or rescue.




## Supporting vs. Rescuing

Read each behavior below and decide if it is SUPPORTING (shows compassion without taking over) or RESCUING (tries to fix, control, or carry it for them). Write the number in the correct column.

1. I listen without interrupting.
2. I give advice when they didn't ask.
3. I validate their feelings.
4. I take over their problem to make it easier.
5. I ask what they need.
6. I fix it so they don't have to feel bad.
7. I sit with them in their hard moment.
8. I explain why they shouldn't feel that way.
9. I remind them of their strength.
10. I get anxious until they feel better.
11. I let them make their own choices.
12. I try to convince them what to do.
13. I respect their process.
14. I make it about me.

| SUPPORTING (Shows Compassion) | RESCUING (Takes Over) |
|---|---|
| | |

## Compassion looks like...






# The Invisible Emotional Labor Audit

So much of what you do
isn't seen, thanked,
or even acknowledged—
but your body feels it
all the same.

*It's time to name it,*
*release what isn't yours,*
*and protect your*
*emotional energy.*

We often carry emotional responsibilities that no one else sees. Let's bring them into the light.

## EMOTIONAL LABOR INVENTORY

Check the boxes for the emotional labor you do regularly. Then star (★) the three that drain you the most.

- ☐ Monitoring moods ☆
- ☐ Keeping the peace ☆
- ☐ Fixing problems ☆
- ☐ Anticipating reactions ☆
- ☐ Remembering everything ☆
- ☐ Apologizing unnecessarily ☆
- ☐ Overexplaining ☆
- ☐ Emotional buffering ☆

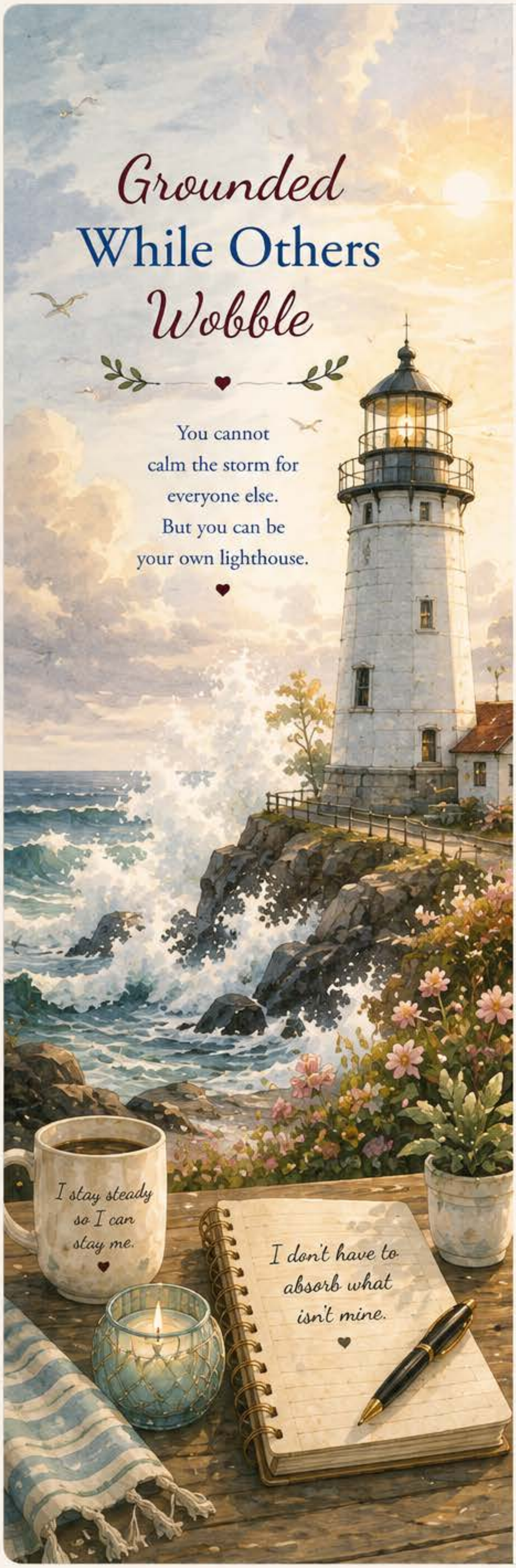
## REFLECTION

♥ Which ones surprise you?

♥ How does this invisible work impact your body, mood, and energy?

♥ What would it feel like to put down even one of these?

*One invisible burden I'm ready to release is...*
♥




You can care about someone
without carrying their feelings.
Use this grounding ladder to stay steady
when others feel unsteady.

## THE GROUNDING LADDER

Follow these steps when someone around you is upset
and your body starts to react.

1

### SOMEONE'S UPSET

Notice what's happening around you.
They are having their experience.

2

### NOTICE MY BODY

What am I feeling?
Where do I feel it in my body?

3

### PAUSE

Take a breath.
Give yourself a moment
before you react.

4

### ASK: "IS THIS MINE?"

Is this their emotion or mine?
I can care without carrying it.

5

### STAY GROUNDED

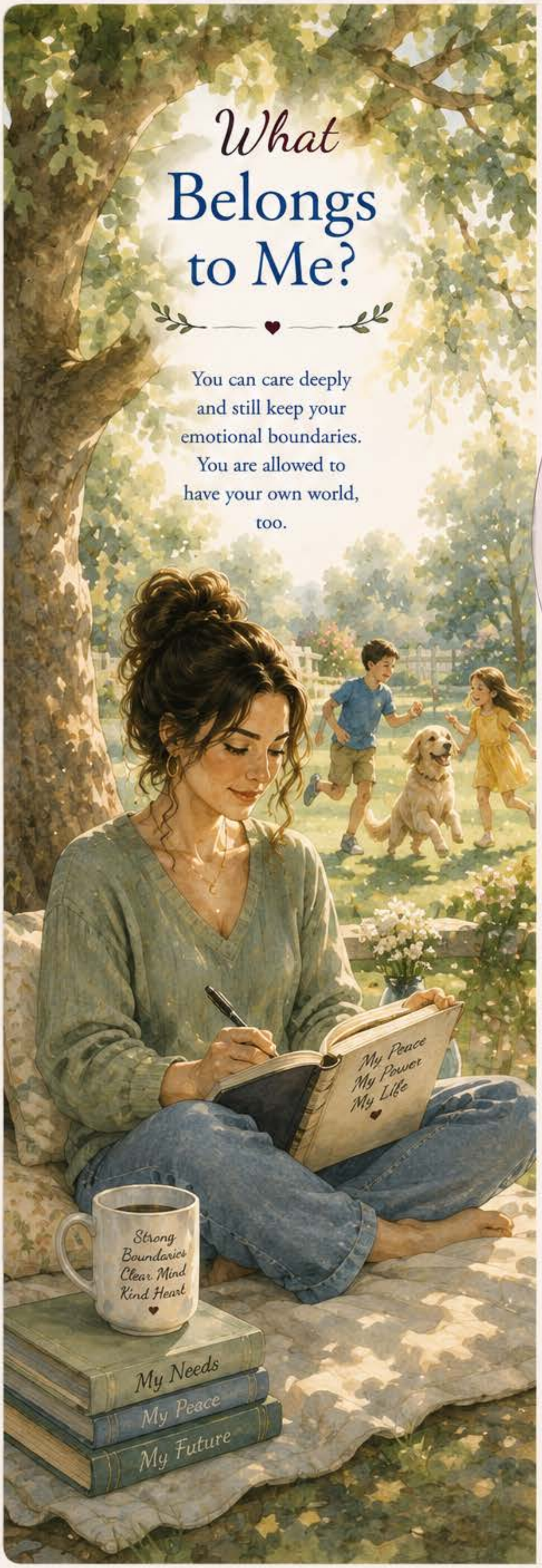
Return to my breath.
Feel my feet. Stay in my lane.
I am safe. I am steady.

6

### RESPOND WITH COMPASSION

I choose a kind, calm response
without over-functioning
or taking over.

*My grounding reminders:*




# What Belongs to Me?

You can care deeply
and still keep your
emotional boundaries.
You are allowed to
have your own world,
too.

## Circle of Control

You can't control other people's thoughts, feelings, or choices. But you can control your own.

**NOT MY CONTROL**

- Their mood
- Their reactions

**MY CONTROL**

- My thoughts
- My feelings
- My choices

- Their opinions
- Their healing

Add other things that are NOT within your control.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

**REMEMBER THIS**

Your peace is not up for negotiation.

**REFLECTION**

Where do I need more boundaries in my life?

What belongs to me to carry?

What can I release today?




# My New Emotional Agreement

I no longer agree to
carry what isn't mine.
I choose peace,
presence, and
emotional freedom.

## My Personal Agreement

I am done over-functioning.
I am done absorbing what isn't mine.
I am done raising everyone else's emotional temperature.
Starting today, I make a new agreement—with myself.

### I WILL NOTICE...

I will become aware of...

### I WILL RELEASE...

I will stop carrying...

### I WILL REMEMBER...

I will remind myself...

### I WILL CHOOSE...

I will commit to...

*This is my promise to myself.*
*I choose peace over pressure.*
*I choose presence over people-pleasing.*
*I choose me.*

Signed: _____ Date: _____




# *Katie's Story:* I Thought Everyone Else's Emotions Were My Job

For as long as Katie could remember, she was the one everyone leaned on. It started early—being the peacemaker between friends, the one who "just knew" when her mom was upset, the daughter who tried to keep everything calm.

As an adult, it didn't stop. Katie could walk into a room and instantly feel the tension. She'd take it on. She'd smooth it over. She'd listen, reassure, fix, and carry it all.

It felt like love. It felt like her job.

Until one day, after yet another heavy conversation with a coworker, Katie drove to her car in tears. She was exhausted—from everyone else's emotions. She realized she had been absorbing moods, solving problems, and trying to fix what wasn't hers to fix.

She sat there for a long time.

Then she whispered,

*"I can care without carrying."*

It was the first truth that ever felt like freedom.

From that moment on, Katie began to choose differently. She still cared deeply—but she stopped taking responsibility for other people's emotions. She learned to listen without losing herself. To support without over-functioning. And for the first time in her life, she felt light.

## REFLECTION

- Which part of Katie's story felt most familiar?
- Whose emotional weight am I ready to put down?

*One emotion I no longer need to carry is...*




# Let's Wrap It Up

You can care deeply about people
without carrying their emotions.
You are allowed to set down what isn't yours.
You are allowed to come back to yourself.

## ☑ KEY TAKEAWAYS

- _____
- _____
- _____

## THREE EMOTIONS I'LL STOP CARRYING FOR OTHERS

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

## MY NEW GROUNDING REMINDER

When others are upset,
I will remind myself...

_____

_____

_____

_____

## ♡ ONE PROMISE I'LL MAKE MYSELF WHEN SOMEONE ELSE IS UPSET...

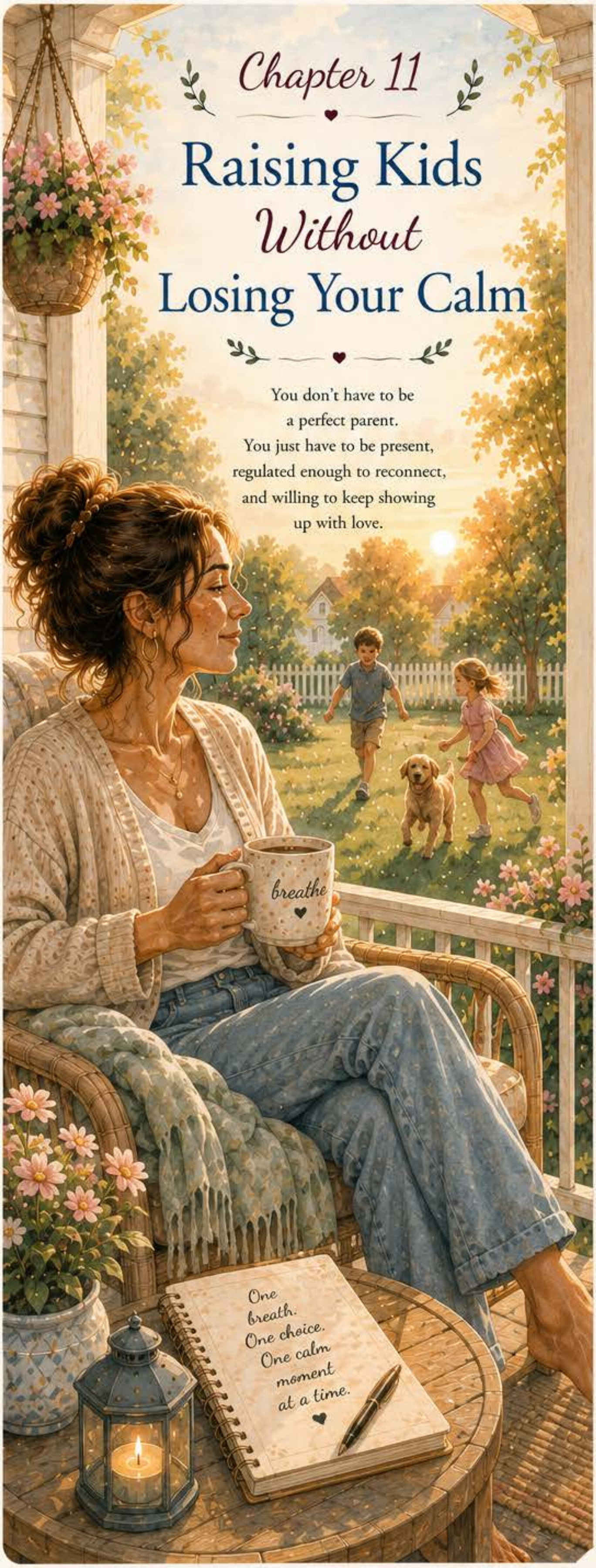
_____

_____

_____

### *Affirmation*

*I can care deeply without*
*carrying what isn't mine.*




## PARENTING CHECK-IN

Circle the words that describe how parenting feels most days:

Calm · Rushed · Joyful · Exhausted · Connected · Overstimulated · Patient · Guilty · Present · Reactive

♥ The parenting moment that stretches me most is...

♥ When I lose my calm, my body usually...

♥ By the end of this chapter, I hope I can...

## REMEMBER THIS

*Your children don't need a perfect parent.*
*They need a present one.*




## EXPECTATION AUDIT

Read each statement below.
Decide if it's a realistic expectation
or perfection pressure.
Write each statement in the column
that feels right for you.

| REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS ♥ | PERFECTION PRESSURE ♥ |
|---|---|
| | |

♥ One expectation I'm ready to let go of is...

### Gentle Reminder

♥

You don't have to do it all.
You just have to keep showing up
with love.




# Before I *Respond* to My Child

You can't give your child
the calm you don't
create for yourself.
Pause first.
Respond with love.

## PAUSE BEFORE PARENTING FLOWCHART

When your child is upset, pushing back,
or you feel your tension rising, follow these
steps to stay regulated and respond with love.

**1 CHILD'S BEHAVIOR**

What is happening right now?

*What am I noticing?*

**2 NOTICE MY BODY**

What am I feeling in my body?

*Where do I feel it in my body?*

**3 BREATHE**

Take a slow,
intentional breath.
Inhale calm.
Exhale tension.

*How did that breath help me?*

**4 CHOOSE MY RESPONSE**

What response aligns
with the parent
I want to be?

*What is the most loving choice right now?*

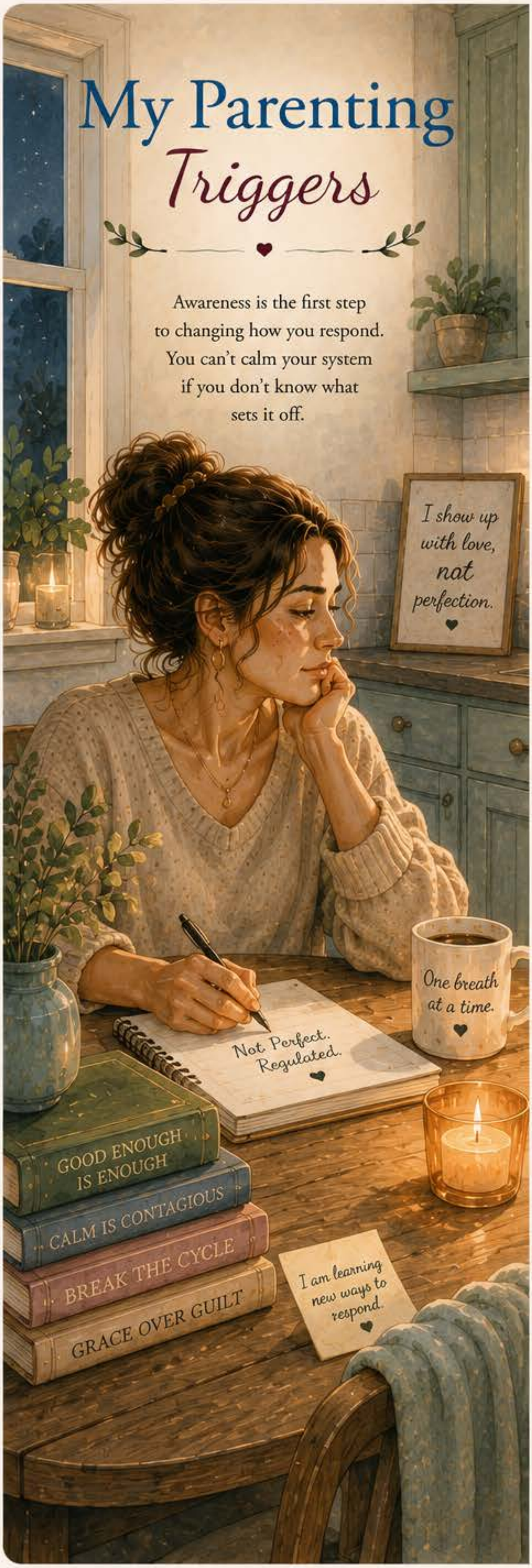
**5 CONNECT**

Respond with presence,
compassion,
and connection.

*How can I reconnect with my child?*

### GENTLE REMINDER

You don't have to respond perfectly.
You just have to return to connection.




## TRIGGER TRACKER

Think about moments that tend to push your buttons. What happens, how you feel, how your body reacts, and what you need instead.

The more aware you become,
the more choice you create.

| SITUATION<br>What happened? | WHAT I FELT<br>Emotions I felt | WHAT MY BODY DID<br>Physical responses | WHAT I NEEDED INSTEAD<br>What would have helped me |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

### GENTLE REMINDER

Your triggers aren't flaws.
They are information.
Awareness brings you power.




## PERFECTION VS. CONNECTION

Match each perfectionistic thought on the left with a healthier, more connected replacement on the right.

| PERFECTIONISTIC THOUGHT | | HEALTHIER REPLACEMENT |
|---|---|---|
| I should always stay calm. | • • | I can stay calm most of the time, and that's enough. |
| If I mess up, I'm failing my child. | • • | I'm human. Repair is more powerful than perfection. |
| My child's behavior is my responsibility. | • • | My child is learning to be human. My job is to guide, not control. |
| Other parents have it together. Why can't I? | • • | I only see a piece of their day. I'll stop comparing. |
| I have to do everything right. | • • | I can do my best, and my best looks different each day. |
| I don't have time to take care of myself. | • • | Taking care of myself helps me show up better for them. |
| If I don't fix this right now, it will ruin them. | • • | I can trust myself and handle this one moment at a time. |

### My child needs me to...

# Repair Is *Powerful*

It's not about getting
it right every time.
It's about coming back,
connecting, and showing your
child that love is bigger
than the hard moments.




## REPAIR SCRIPT BUILDER

Repairing after a tough moment teaches your child that relationships are safe, even when things are hard. Use this simple script to reconnect.

**1**

### I WAS FEELING...

Name your feeling.

**2**

### I'M SORRY FOR...

Take responsibility.

**3**

### NEXT TIME I WILL...

Share what you'll do differently.

**4**

### I LOVE YOU NO MATTER WHAT.

End with love and connection.

## GENTLE REMINDER

You don't have to be perfect.
You just have to be willing to repair.

# What My Kids Learn From Me

Your children are always watching.
Not just what you say,
but how you handle life.
You are their first teacher
in emotional regulation.




## MODELING MATTERS CHART

Children learn emotional regulation
by observing how we think, feel, and respond.
Fill in examples from your daily life.

| WHAT I DO (My Actions) | WHAT MY CHILD LEARNS (Their Takeaway) |
|---|---|
| Example: I take a few deep breaths when I feel stressed. | Example: It's okay to pause and calm down. |
| Example: I talk about my feelings out loud. | Example: Feelings are normal and okay to express. |
| Example: I stay calm when plans change. | Example: Flexibility helps us handle surprises. |
| Example: I apologize when I make a mistake. | Example: It's important to own my mistakes and repair. |
| Example: I set boundaries with kindness. | Example: My needs matter too. |
| | |
| | |

### GENTLE REMINDER

You don't have to be perfect.
You just have to be present.
Your calm is their greatest gift.




## CALM PARENTING TOOLKIT

Use this plan to guide you through the moments
that challenge you most.
You don't have to remember everything—
you just have to have a plan.

### 1. WHEN I NOTICE...

What are the early signs that
I'm getting overwhelmed?

### 2. I'LL PAUSE BY...

What will I do in that moment
to stop and take a breath?

### 3. MY RESET TOOL...

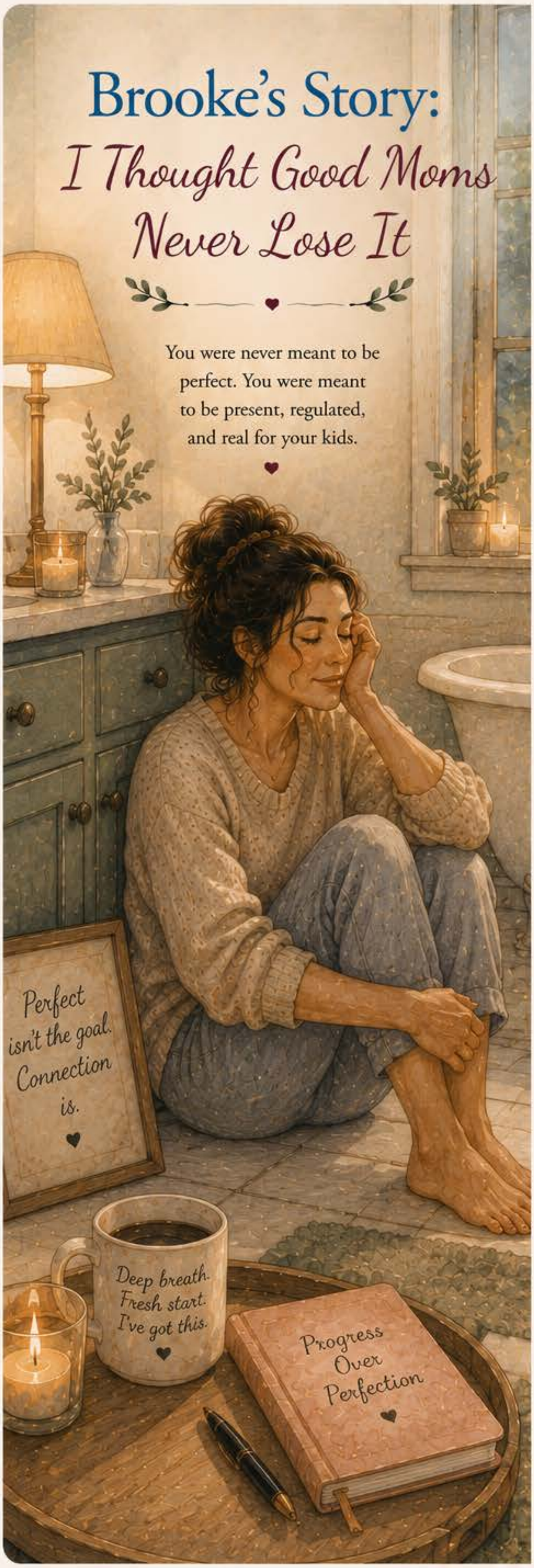
What tool or practice helps me
calm my body and mind?

### 4. HOW I'LL RECONNECT...

How will I repair and connect
with my child afterward?

## GENTLE REMINDER

You don't need a perfect plan.
You just need a plan that helps you
come back to calm and connection.




# Brooke's Story: *I Thought Good Moms Never Lose It*

You were never meant to be perfect. You were meant to be present, regulated, and real for your kids.

## BROOKE'S STORY

Brooke prided herself on being the kind of mom who always had it together. Her house was clean (enough), her kids were well-behaved (most of the time), and she somehow managed to keep up with school events, meals, and endless laundry. But inside, Brooke was exhausted—and terrified of losing control.

One Tuesday afternoon, after a long day of work and back-to-back activities, her six-year-old spilled his juice all over the floor. Something in Brooke snapped. She yelled. Her voice was sharp, her words hurtful. Her son's face crumpled, and he ran to his room in tears.

Immediately, Brooke felt the guilt wash over her. "I'm such a bad mom," she thought. "Good moms don't lose it." She replayed the moment over and over, wishing she could take it back.

Later that night, as she tucked him in, he looked up and said, "Mom, will you still love me in the morning?" Her heart broke.

That night, Brooke cried in the shower. She realized something important: her kids didn't need a perfect mom—they needed a regulated mom. They needed her to repair, to take a breath, and to stay connected.

The next day, Brooke apologized. She told her son the truth: "Mommy got overwhelmed yesterday. I'm sorry I yelled. It wasn't okay. I love you so much." They hugged, and he smiled.

Brooke is still learning. She still has hard days. But now she knows: her kids don't need perfect. They need her.

## REFLECTION

- Which part of Brooke's story felt most familiar?
- How can I show myself more compassion as a parent?

# Parenting From Peace *Instead of Pressure*

When you choose peace over pressure,
you teach your children the most
important lessons of all:
how to feel, how to heal,
and how to love.




## *Let's Wrap It Up*

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

What stood out most to you in this chapter?

### THREE WAYS I'LL CARE FOR MY OWN NERVOUS SYSTEM

1.

2.

3.

### ONE PARENTING EXPECTATION I'M RELEASING

### ONE PROMISE I'LL MAKE MYSELF AS A PARENT...

AFFIRMATION

My children don't need
a perfect parent.
They need a present one.

# Chapter 12

# Becoming the Calmest Version of Yourself

Peace isn't perfection—
it's learning to return
to yourself again and again.



## PEACE CHECK-IN

Circle the words that best describe how you feel most days.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Calm | Hopeful | Overwhelmed |
| Grounded | Reactive | Peaceful |
| Exhausted | Confident | Anxious |
| | Present | |

♥ Real peace means...

♥ The biggest change I've noticed in myself is...

♥ By the end of this workbook, I hope...

# What Peace Really Means

Peace isn't the absence of stress,
perfection, or problems.
It's the presence of regulation—
the ability to come back to yourself
again and again.




## PEACE REDEFINED

Sort the statements below.
What truly supports your peace?

A perfect day • Feeling all the feelings
Everyone agreeing with me • Coming back to myself
A quiet house • Regulating my body
No mistakes • Setting loving boundaries
Having it all together • Allowing discomfort
Control • Trusting my inner voice
No stress • Choosing my responses
People pleasing • Being present
Predictability • Self-compassion
Avoiding hard conversations • Rest when I need it

### PEACE IS...

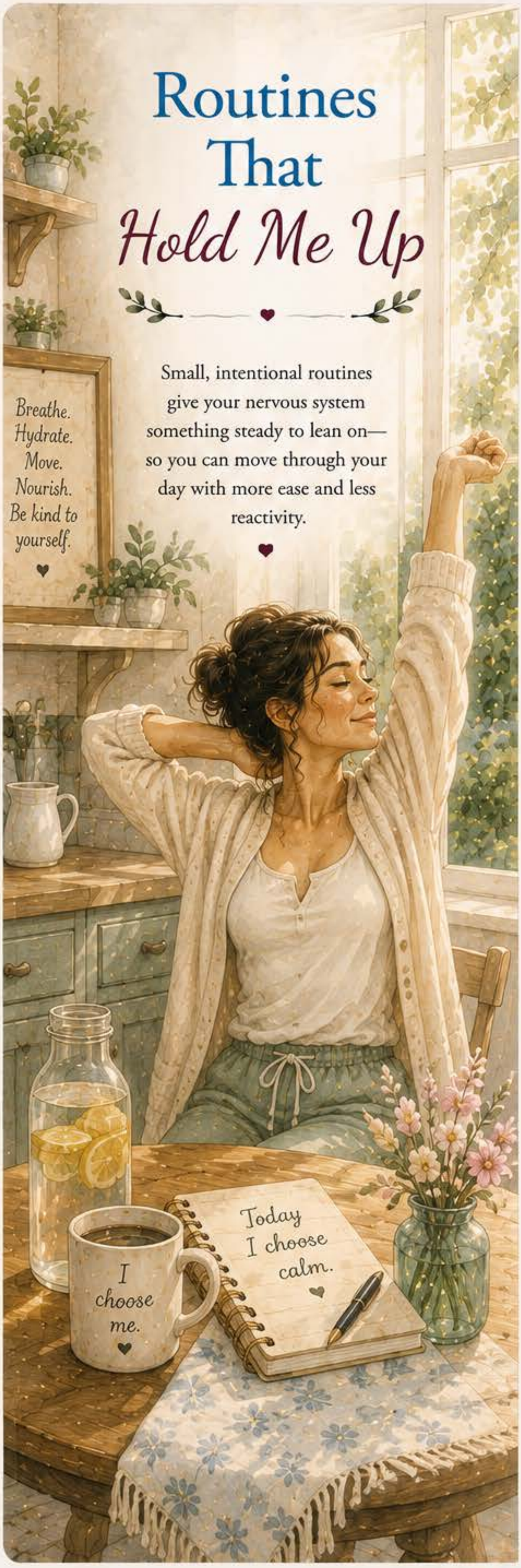
### PEACE IS NOT...

### MY VERSION OF PEACE LOOKS LIKE...

# Routines That Hold Me Up

Small, intentional routines give your nervous system something steady to lean on—so you can move through your day with more ease and less reactivity.

♥




## REGULATION ROUTINE BUILDER

♥

You don't need complicated routines.
You need tiny, consistent ones that support your body, mind, and nervous system.

♥

### MORNING

One small regulating habit I can do in the morning:

### MIDDAY

One small regulating habit I can do midday:

### EVENING

One small regulating habit I can do in the evening:

♥ The easiest routine I'll begin tomorrow is...

# Choosing From *Clarity*

When you pause,
you give yourself the space
to choose with intention
instead of reacting from
overwhelm.




## PANIC OR CLARITY?

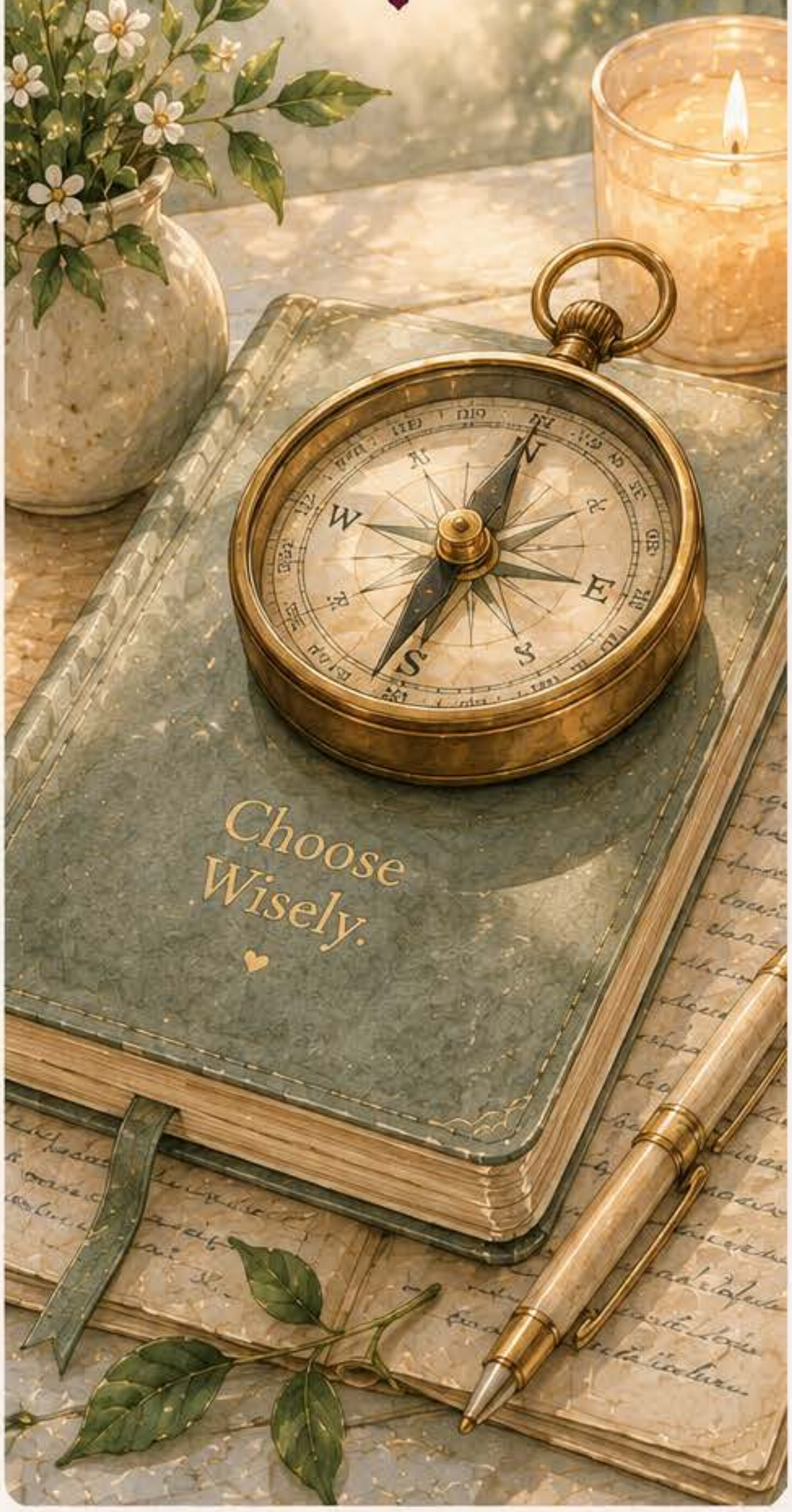
Our nervous system reacts fast.
Our wise self chooses slow.
Let's practice the difference.

| I'M REACTING BECAUSE... | I'M CHOOSING BECAUSE... |
| --- | --- |
| | |

Today I'll choose from...

# My Decision Filter

The calmer you are,
the clearer your choices.
Use this compass to guide
you back to what
truly matters.




## DECISION COMPASS

Use this simple process to make choices
from regulation, not reaction.
*Think of a current decision as you move through each step below.*

1

### PAUSE

Stop. Create space.
What decision am I facing?

2

### BREATHE

Take a slow, intentional breath.
What does my breath feel like right now?

3

### CHECK MY BODY

Where do I feel tension, tightness,
or ease in my body?
What is my body telling me?

4

### DOES THIS ALIGN?

Does this choice align with my values,
boundaries, and what matters most?
How does this choice support (or
drain) my peace?

5

### DECIDE

What choice feels calm, clear,
and right for me?
What is my next aligned step?

### MY DECISION RIGHT NOW IS...




## PEACE PROTECTORS AUDIT

Take a look at the habits, situations, and patterns in your daily life. Which ones build your peace? Which ones quietly drain it?

### BUILDS MY PEACE

### DRAINS MY PEACE

## MY TOP 3 PEACE PROTECTORS

Star the three habits you want to protect most.

☆ _____

☆ _____

☆ _____

## WHY PROTECTING THESE MATTERS...

# Living Calm One Day *at a Time*

Calm isn't something
you find one day.
It's something
you choose
over and over.

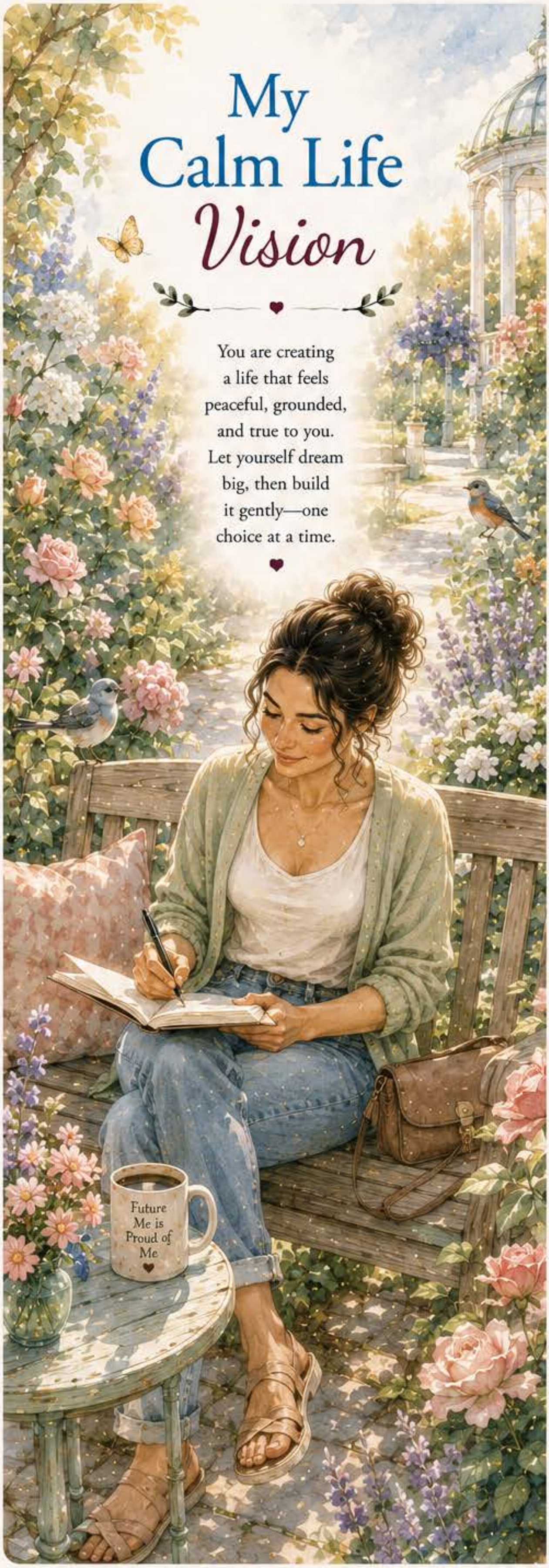



## DAILY CALM CHECKLIST

Small choices. Big difference.
Check the boxes as you move through your day.

- ☐ **PAUSED** — I gave myself a moment before reacting.
- ☐ **BREATHED** — I took a slow, intentional breath.
- ☐ **HONORED MY LIMITS** — I respected my time, energy, or needs.
- ☐ **STAYED PRESENT** — I stayed with what I was doing, not my worries.
- ☐ **RETURNED TO MYSELF** — I came back to calm after feeling off track.
- ☐ **CELEBRATED PROGRESS** — I noticed and appreciated my wins, big or small.

TODAY'S BIGGEST WIN WAS...




## VISION WORKSHEET

*Imagine yourself living as the calmest version of you.*

### ♥ HOW I'LL FEEL

### ♥ HOW I'LL RESPOND

### ♥ HOW I'LL CARE FOR MYSELF

### ♥ WHAT I'LL LET GO OF

### ♥ WHAT I'LL KEEP BUILDING

# Tara's Story: I Didn't Know *Calm* Could Feel Like This




## TARA'S STORY

Tara used to think calm people had it all together—perfect routines, endless patience, and no problems. She thought she just wasn't that kind of person.

Then life kept happening.

The demands, the expectations, the mental lists that never ended. She was always "managing" everything and everyone except herself.

One afternoon at the pharmacy, standing in line with a prescription in hand, Tara noticed something was different. Someone in front of her coughed. In the past, she would have tensed, worried, rushed, or spiraled into what-ifs. But this time, she took a slow breath.

*I'm okay. I don't have to rush this moment.*

And just like that, she felt it—a quiet inside. Not excitement. Not perfection. Just… ease.

Tara realized calm wasn't about having a perfect life. It was about regulating her mind and body so she could meet life without losing herself.

*I didn't become a different person.*
*I became regulated.*

## REFLECTION

- Which part of Tara's story felt most familiar?

- Where have I already become calmer than I used to be?

# Living the *Peace* I've Built

You are not who you
used to be—and that
is something beautiful.
You've done the work.
Now keep living it.




## LET'S WRAP IT UP

Take a moment to celebrate how far you've come.
You are building a calm, regulated life—one choice at a time.

### ♥ KEY TAKEAWAYS

♥ _____

♥ _____

♥ _____

### ♥ THREE WAYS I'VE CHANGED

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

### ♥ THREE HABITS THAT PROTECT MY PEACE

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

### ♥ ONE PROMISE I'LL KEEP MAKING TO MYSELF...

_____

_____

### AFFIRMATION

*The calmest version of me*
*isn't someone I have to become.*
*She's someone I choose,*
*one peaceful moment at a time.*




## A NEW WAY OF BEING

Regulation isn't about getting it perfect.
It's about coming back to yourself—again and again.
You now have the tools to pause, breathe,
choose, and protect your peace.
This isn't the end of your journey.
It's the beginning of a beautiful, regulated life
you get to create—one day at a time.

## *Before You Go...*

You may not feel different every day.
But one day you'll notice you paused
instead of reacted. You rested without guilt.
You trusted yourself.

*That's regulation.*

It isn't loud.
It's built quietly, one choice at a time.

There will still be hard days.
That doesn't mean you're doing it wrong.
It means you're human.

Keep practicing. Keep coming back.
Keep choosing you.

Thank you for letting me walk beside you.
I hope this workbook becomes something
you return to whenever you need to
remember who you are.

♥

REMEMBER THIS...

♥

*You were never broken.*
*You never needed to become*
*someone else.*
*The woman you've been*
*searching for has been*
*here all along.*
*Keep choosing her.*
*One calm moment at a time.*