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# You Are Still Here

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*Small Acts of Coming Back to Yourself*

From a single mum of four — who has lived this.

A decorative graphic consisting of three vertical stems with several leaves, rendered in a light green color against a dark green background. The stems are positioned on the left, center, and right sides of the page, with leaves branching out from them.

## INSIDE THIS BOOK

- 40 small acts of self-love
- 40 ways to rebuild self-trust
- 50 doorways back to joy
- 20 things to let go of today
- Things you may have forgotten you like
- Things you no longer need permission for
- Things you can stop explaining
- Evidence that you are safe now
- Things that make a house feel like home
- Pieces of yourself worth looking for again

## Contents

A Note From Me.....	3
This Is the Part Nobody Talks About.....	4
40 Small Acts of Self-Love.....	6
20 Things You Can Let Go of Today.....	9
You Get Through This.....	11
I Don't Know Who I Am Anymore.....	13
Small Things to Bring Back Into Life.....	14
Things You May Have Forgotten You Like.....	16
Pieces of Yourself Worth Looking For Again.....	17
Things You No Longer Need Permission For.....	18
Things That Were Never Your Responsibility.....	19
Things You Can Stop Explaining.....	20
Evidence That You Are Safe Now.....	21
Signs You Are Healing.....	22
Things That Make a House Feel Like Home Again.....	23
40 Ways to Rebuild Self-Trust.....	24
50 Small Doorways Back to Joy.....	29
Things That Mean You're Coming Back to Life.....	33
You Are Still Here.....	34

## A Note From Me

*I want you to know something before you read a single word of this: I wrote this for you the way I wish someone had written something for me.*

*I am a single mum of four. My children are now 14, 12, 11 and 5. I have lived inside the particular kind of exhaustion that follows a toxic or high-conflict relationship – the kind that isn't just tired in your body, but tired in your soul. The kind where you lie in bed at night and realise you cannot remember the last time you felt like yourself. Or worse – you can't remember who yourself even was.*

*I have stood in the kitchen at 7am, children needing things, the weight of the whole world on my shoulders, and thought: I genuinely don't know how I am going to do this today. And then I did it anyway. And then I did it again the next day. And the day after that.*

*That is not nothing. That is everything.*

*This little book is built around lists. Short ones. Ones you can read in five minutes with a cold cup of tea. Ones you can scan, circle, come back to. Because a woman in the early stages of rebuilding doesn't need more to get through. She needs something she can actually pick up and use.*

*You don't have to read it cover to cover. You don't have to do anything in it perfectly. You just have to still be here – and you are.*

*With so much love,*

*Kylie*

## This Is the Part Nobody Talks About

*Before anything else – this.*

You are exhausted in a way that sleep doesn't fix. You've been managing everything – the children, the house, the finances, the co-parenting, the emotions you don't have time to feel – and underneath all of it is a tiredness that goes bone-deep. That kind of tired doesn't come from not sleeping enough. It comes from having to be strong for too long, for too many people, with not nearly enough support.

You have lost yourself somewhere in all of this. You used to know things about yourself – what you liked, what made you laugh, what you were good at, what mattered to you. And now when you reach for those things, your hand comes back empty. The woman you were before feels like a stranger, or a memory, or someone who belonged to a different life entirely. That is one of the loneliest feelings in the world.

You don't trust yourself anymore. After a relationship that slowly convinced you that your instincts were wrong and your feelings were too much, it makes complete sense that you now second-guess every decision, every thought, every response. You were taught – not always with words – that you couldn't be trusted. Unlearning that takes time. More time than anyone tells you it will.

You are trying to be a good mother through all of this, and that trying costs you everything you have. Every day you show up for your children – you wipe tears and make lunches and manage school runs and hold bedtime routines together – while inside you are quietly falling apart. That doesn't make you a bad mother. That makes you a human being carrying an extraordinary weight with extraordinary love.

You don't know what brings you joy anymore. Joy feels like something that belongs to people with easier lives. You might feel guilty even wanting it. You might feel so numb that you can't imagine feeling light again. That numbness isn't a character flaw. It is your nervous system doing its job – protecting you from too much at once.

The joy isn't gone. It's just waiting for you.

This stage is real, and it is hard, and it will not last forever. I know that might be hard to believe right now.

But I am living proof that you get through it – not by having it all figured out, but by doing the next small thing.

And then the next one.

## 40 Small Acts of Self-Love

*None of these require money, a lot of time, or being in a good headspace first.*

Self-care after a toxic relationship isn't bubble baths and spa days. It is the small, quiet act of choosing yourself – just a little – in the middle of a life that has been asking everything of you. Read through and see if anything whispers your name.

1. Put one hand on your chest and breathe in slowly. That's it. That counts.
2. Make your bed. One act of doing something for yourself – even if only you will ever see it.
3. Drink a full glass of water before you do anything for anyone else. You matter first.
4. Go outside for five minutes. Just five. Feel the air on your face.
5. Write down three things that happened today that weren't terrible. They don't have to be big.
6. Listen to one song that made you feel something good in a former life. Let it remind you she's still in there.
7. Sit quietly in the car for two minutes before going inside. You are allowed a buffer.
8. Say no to one thing this week that you only agreed to out of guilt. No is a complete sentence.
9. Text one person who makes you feel safe and just say hello. Connection in small doses counts.
10. Buy yourself one small thing you actually like. A specific tea. A notebook. A lip balm. Something just for you.
11. Watch something that makes you laugh. Not educate you. Not inspire you. Just laugh.
12. Eat one meal sitting down, without your phone. Taste it.
13. Write a letter to yourself from five years in the future. Let future-you be kind.

14. Let yourself cry if the tears are there. They are not weakness — they are release.
15. Find one photo of yourself that you like. Look at her. She is still you.
16. Stretch for three minutes when you wake up. Your body has been carrying a lot.
17. Light a candle in the evening. Warmth and light, just because.
18. Unfollow any social media accounts that make you feel worse. Your feed is your mental neighbourhood. Choose your neighbours.
19. Make your favourite meal for dinner, not just what the kids will eat. You are a person at that table too.
20. Ask for help with one thing this week. Receiving is also a skill.
21. Go to bed 20 minutes earlier than usual. Just once. See how it feels.
22. Repeat this to yourself: I am doing the best I can with what I have. Because you are.
23. Spend five minutes in the sun. Vitamin D is not a luxury.
24. Let yourself want things again. Even small things. A different couch. A holiday someday. A feeling.
25. Journal for five minutes — not about problems, just about what you notice today. The sky. The light. The way your coffee smelled.
26. Put your phone in another room for one hour. See what your nervous system does when it isn't on alert.
27. Say something kind about yourself out loud. Even quietly. Even if it feels ridiculous.
28. Dance in the kitchen. Alone is fine. Awkward is fine.
29. Read a few pages of something purely for pleasure. Not self-help. Not parenting. Just pleasure.
30. Take a longer shower than you need to. Stay in the warm water.
31. Write down one thing you're proud of yourself for this week. Keep the list. Return to it.

32. Call your own name gently. You are someone worth gentle treatment.
33. Tidy one small corner of your space. External order can bring internal quiet.
34. Give yourself permission to not be okay today. That is also a form of self-care.
35. Look at what your body can do, not what it looks like. It has carried children and heartbreak and mornings. That is extraordinary.
36. Start a playlist called something like 'mine'. Songs that are just yours.
37. Notice when you are being hard on yourself and just... pause. You don't have to fix it. Just notice.
38. Allow yourself a nap without guilt. Rest is not laziness. Rest is repair.
39. Step outside alone for a moment and look at the sky. You are small, and the world is big, and you are still here in it.
40. Remember that you choosing yourself is not selfish. It is the very thing that makes you available to your children.

## 20 Things You Can Let Go of Today

*On easing the pressure of being everything to everyone.*

When you are parenting alone, and healing at the same time, the bar you hold yourself to is often impossibly high. Your children need a mother who is present and imperfect far more than they need a mother who is perfect and absent from herself.

*"Good enough" parenting is not a failure. It is a gift. It teaches your children that people are human, that love is not contingent on performance, and that life does not need to be flawless to be wonderful.*

1. The perfect dinner. Scrambled eggs, toast and fruit is a meal. They will not remember whether the meal was Instagram-worthy. They will remember that you were there.
2. The spotless house. A home that is lived in looks like one. Children raised in real homes know they belong in them.
3. Being emotionally available every moment. You are allowed to say 'Mummy needs five minutes' and go to the bathroom and sit on the floor. That is regulation, not failure.
4. Saying yes to every activity and request. Saying 'not today' is not deprivation. It is honesty.
5. Making every birthday or event perfect. The love behind it matters infinitely more than the execution. A lopsided cake made with care will be remembered longer than a perfect one you stress-baked.
6. Being the fun parent all the time. You do not have to earn your children's love with entertainment. Presence is enough.

7. Keeping it all together in front of them. Age-appropriate honesty — 'Mummy is having a hard day' — teaches children that feelings are safe to have.
8. The reading log that isn't fully filled in. Let it go. Read with them when you can. Enjoy it when you do.
9. Screen time guilt. On the hard days, a movie together on the couch is connection, not neglect.
10. Being consistent every single day. Consistency over time is what matters. Not every single day.
11. The perfectly packed lunchbox. A note inside that says 'I love you' does more for your child than a balanced nutritional profile.
12. Always having the right answer. 'I don't know, let's figure it out together' is one of the best things a parent can say.
13. The after-school activities you can't actually afford or manage right now. Children thrive with a present, available parent over a stretched, exhausted one doing all the things.
14. Keeping sibling peace at all times. They will argue. You are not failing when they do.
15. Being the calm one every time. Some days you will raise your voice. Repair matters more than perfection.
16. Comparing your family to others'. You don't know what is happening in other people's houses. You only see the curated version.
17. Bedtime being exactly the same every night. Some nights it runs late. Some nights everyone ends up in your bed. That can be okay for now.
18. Having a tidy car. Nobody who matters will judge you for it.
19. Doing all of this without support. Asking for help — from family, friends, school, community — is wisdom, not weakness.
20. Being more than enough. You are already enough. Exactly as you are, on this hard day, right now.

## You Get Through This

*Insight from someone who is living on the other side.*

I want to tell you something that I genuinely wish someone had told me in the early days: this stage is a stage. It does not feel that way when you are inside it. When you are inside it, it feels permanent — like the heaviness is just who you are now. But I am sitting here, as a single mum of four — the same four who were there through the hardest of it — and I can tell you with every part of me: it shifts. Not all at once. Not in a straight line. But it shifts.

*There were days I did not know who I was. Days I looked in the mirror and didn't recognise the person looking back — not because of how I looked, but because I had spent so long shrinking and adapting and managing that I genuinely could not tell you what I actually thought about things. What I actually liked. What I actually needed. I had learned to disappear so quietly that I had almost disappeared to myself.*

Coming back to yourself after that kind of relationship is not a dramatic transformation. It is not a single moment of clarity. It is a thousand small moments — the morning you realise you made a decision and didn't second-guess it for three hours. The afternoon you laugh and feel it in your whole body. The quiet Tuesday when you notice something beautiful and think: I love that. That is mine.

I won't tell you it isn't hard. It is. Parenting alone while you are still healing is one of the most demanding things a human being can do. There is no one coming home to take over. But every single day, you do it anyway.

And that matters. That counts. That is not nothing.

*"I started The Overwhelmed Single Mum Reset™ because I needed it to exist. I built it for the woman I was – for the woman who needed something practical and warm and honest that didn't ask her to have it all together in order to begin."*

Here is what I know from the other side:

- ◆ The numbness is temporary. Feeling will return – slowly, then suddenly.
- ◆ Your instincts will come back online. They are not gone. They are recovering.
- ◆ You will find out who you are again – and in many ways, you will like her more.
- ◆ Your children are watching you survive something hard with love still intact. That is a lesson they will carry their whole lives.
- ◆ The small things you do today are not insignificant. They are the rebuilding.
- ◆ You are not behind. You are exactly where you are. And from here, you can only move forward.

***I did not get to the other side by having it figured out. I got there by still being here. And so will you.***

## I Don't Know Who I Am Anymore

*And it's okay that you don't – yet.*

*You used to know yourself. Or at least, you thought you did. And then somewhere in the relationship – slowly, quietly, without a single announcement – you started to disappear. Maybe you stopped saying what you actually thought. Maybe you stopped doing the things you loved because it wasn't worth the reaction. Maybe you moulded yourself so carefully around someone else's moods and expectations that, by the end, you genuinely couldn't find yourself underneath it all. That is not a personality flaw. That is what prolonged emotional manipulation does to a person.*

Not knowing who you are right now is not a sign that you have no self. It is a sign that your self was systematically hidden – sometimes by that person, and sometimes, in an act of self-protection, by you. She is still there. She just needs some very gentle excavating.

You do not need to rush this. What you need to do is start noticing. Noticing what makes you feel a flicker of something. Noticing the small whispers of preference and instinct and curiosity that survived everything you went through.

*"You are not starting from scratch. You are starting from experience – which is a far more interesting place to begin."*

The woman you are becoming is not a replacement for the woman you were. She includes her. She has learned what she learned. She has survived what she survived. And she gets to decide – maybe for the first time in a long time – who she actually wants to be.

## Small Things to Bring Back Into Life

*Not big transformations. Tiny acts of reconnection.*

### Your favourite mug

It sounds silly.

But many women stop noticing what they like.

Choose the mug you love.

Not the practical one. Not the one everyone else uses.

The one you like.

*This is how identity returns.*

### Music

Play music from before the relationship.

The songs from your teens. Your twenties.

The music you loved before life became survival.

*Music often reconnects us with parts of ourselves that words can't reach.*

### Sitting in the sun

Five minutes. No phone. No productivity. No fixing.

Just warmth on your face.

*Trauma shrinks life. Simple sensory experiences help expand it again.*

### Photos of you

Many mums have hundreds of photos of their children and almost none of themselves.

Take photos.

*Exist in the story of your own life.*

### Small opinions

Start expressing preferences.

"I'd rather have pizza." "I like this colour." "I don't want to go there."

*They seem insignificant. They're actually rebuilding trust in yourself.*

## Old hobbies without pressure

Not to become good at them. Not to make money. Not to achieve anything.

Just because you once enjoyed them.

Reading. Gardening. Drawing. Photography. Walking. Baking.

*The goal is enjoyment, not performance.*

## Rest without earning it

This one is hard.

Many women leave believing they must constantly prove their worth.

Try sitting down before everything is finished. The dishes can wait.

*Your value does not come from how much you accomplish.*

## Perhaps the most important thing

You do not have to "find yourself." That phrase creates pressure.

*Instead, think of it as meeting yourself again.*

The woman underneath the exhaustion.

The woman underneath the self-doubt.

The woman underneath years of being told who she was.

**She is usually still there. A little quieter. A little bruised. But very much alive.**

And she tends to return not through grand breakthroughs, but through hundreds of tiny moments where she learns, over and over:

*"I am allowed to have needs."*

*"I am allowed to take up space."*

*"I am allowed to trust myself."*

*"I am allowed to build a life that feels peaceful."*

Those small moments are often the first signs that you're coming home to yourself.

## Things You May Have Forgotten You Like

*Circle anything that sparks even a tiny feeling of interest.*

Many women leave a toxic relationship not knowing what they enjoy anymore. The relationship may have minimised your interests, mocked your preferences, or simply taken up so much space that there was none left for you.

- Hot showers
- Fresh sheets
- Walking barefoot on grass
- Reading fiction
- Cafés
- Ocean air
- Country drives
- Podcasts
- Gardening
- Music
- Baking
- Watching sport
- Craft
- Photography
- Swimming
- Sunsets
- Animals
- Markets
- Libraries
- Dancing in the kitchen
- Watching rain

*The goal isn't the activity. The goal is remembering you are a person with preferences.*

If nothing on this list sparks anything yet – that's okay too. Numbness is normal. Keep the list. Come back to it.

## Pieces of Yourself Worth Looking For Again

*Before life became survival, who were you?*

You don't have to answer all of these now. But sit with them when you're ready. The answers often contain clues to rebuilding.

- What made you laugh?
- What music did you love?
- What did you dream about?
- What hobbies did you enjoy?
- What did friends describe you as?
- What did you spend hours doing without noticing the time?
- What were you good at that you stopped doing?
- What kind of people did you love being around?
- What did you believe in?
- What did you want your life to look like?

*She hasn't disappeared. She's been waiting for the noise to quiet down enough that you could hear her again.*

## Things You No Longer Need Permission For

*This list can feel surprisingly emotional the first time you read it.*

In a controlling or toxic relationship, even the most basic acts can start to feel like they require approval. You may have stopped doing certain things to avoid conflict. You may have forgotten that these were ever yours to begin with.

- Rest
- Change your mind
- Say no
- Have boundaries
- Spend time alone
- Ask for help
- Buy yourself flowers
- Eat lunch
- Take a nap
- Pursue a hobby
- Have different opinions
- Be happy
- Leave messages unanswered
- Protect your peace
- Make decisions without explaining them
- Spend money you earned
- Feel proud of yourself
- Take up space
- Trust your instincts
- Simply exist as you are

## Things That Were Never Your Responsibility

*This list often creates tears. Let them come.*

One of the lasting effects of a toxic relationship is a distorted sense of responsibility. You may have spent years trying to manage things that were never yours to manage – and blaming yourself when they couldn't be managed.

- Managing their emotions
- Preventing their anger
- Keeping them happy
- Absorbing their moods
- Fixing their childhood wounds
- Saving the relationship alone
- Accepting disrespect to keep the peace
- Sacrificing yourself endlessly
- Being perfect enough to earn kindness
- Making them feel secure by making yourself smaller
- Explaining yourself until they believed you
- Loving them out of their behaviour

*None of that was your job. You were handed someone else's work and told it was yours. It wasn't.*

## Things You Can Stop Explaining

*You don't owe anyone a lengthy justification for these.*

Many women who have left controlling relationships become chronic over-explainers. It was a survival strategy — if you explained yourself thoroughly enough, maybe the conflict wouldn't come. You can start to let that go.

- No.
- I can't make it.
- That doesn't work for me.
- I've made my decision.
- I'm unavailable.
- I disagree.
- I've changed my mind.
- I need some space.
- That's not something I'm comfortable with.
- I don't want to.
- Because it's what I've decided.
- I'd rather not.

*A simple, calm statement is enough. You don't have to justify your 'no' until someone accepts it.*

*The urge to over-explain will likely still come. You don't have to act on it.*

## Evidence That You Are Safe Now

*For when your nervous system hasn't caught up with reality yet.*

Many women remain stuck in survival mode long after the relationship has ended. Your nervous system learned to stay alert. It's doing its job – it just hasn't yet received the message that things have changed.

Read through this list slowly. Let each line land.

- ✓ Nobody yelled at me today.
- ✓ Nobody checked my phone.
- ✓ Nobody criticised dinner.
- ✓ Nobody demanded an explanation for where I was.
- ✓ Nobody controlled my spending.
- ✓ Nobody punished me for resting.
- ✓ Nobody made me feel small for having an opinion.
- ✓ Nobody monitored my movements.
- ✓ Nobody made me feel guilty for existing.
- ✓ I made a decision today and nobody questioned it.
- ✓ I laughed today and nobody mocked it.
- ✓ I went to sleep without dreading tomorrow.

***This is what safety looks like. Your nervous system is learning. Give it time.***

*You might like to write your own version of this list – specific to your life now. Sometimes seeing it in your own words makes it more real.*

## Signs You Are Healing

*That nobody talks about.*

Many women think healing means feeling happy. Or feeling 'over it.' Or having a clear, confident sense of who they are. Often it looks much quieter than that.

- ◆ Crying less frequently
- ◆ Not checking your phone constantly
- ◆ Feeling bored occasionally (boredom means safety)
- ◆ Sleeping better
- ◆ Laughing unexpectedly
- ◆ Making quicker decisions
- ◆ Caring less what they think
- ◆ Feeling anger instead of confusion (anger means your sense of self is returning)
- ◆ Enjoying quiet
- ◆ Having hope for the future – even a small flicker
- ◆ Noticing when something feels wrong and trusting it
- ◆ Feeling present in your body
- ◆ Making plans and looking forward to them
- ◆ Feeling proud of yourself, even briefly

*If any of these are true for you – even one – you are healing. It may not feel like enough. It is.*

## Things That Make a House Feel Like Home Again

*After separation, homes can feel empty. Small comforts matter.*

After a relationship ends, the space you live in can feel unfamiliar or hollow. Making it feel like yours again is not superficial – it is part of the rebuilding.

- Lamps instead of overhead lights
- Fresh flowers – even supermarket ones
- Your favourite blankets, on the couch where you actually sit
- Scented candles or a diffuser
- Family photos that make you smile
- Plants – something alive and growing
- Soft music playing in the background
- A reading chair or corner that is just for you
- Fresh towels that feel good
- Your special coffee mug in plain sight
- Artwork or colours that you actually like
- A bed that is made the way you like it
- A kitchen that smells like something you cooked
- Children's drawings on the fridge
- Open curtains and natural light

***You get to decide what home looks like now. That is not a small thing.***

## 40 Ways to Rebuild Self-Trust

*Small daily acts that remind you – your instincts are still there.*

Self-trust is one of the quietest casualties of a toxic relationship. It is dismantled slowly – through being told your feelings were wrong, your instincts paranoid, your reactions too much. Rebuilding it happens in hundreds of small moments.

1. Keep one small promise to yourself today. Not a big one. Just one. Tell yourself you will, and then do it. That is the whole exercise.
2. Notice a feeling and name it without judging it. "I feel anxious right now." Not "I'm being ridiculous." Your feelings are data, not defects.
3. Make one decision without asking anyone else first. What to have for lunch. Which route to take. Practice trusting your own answer.
4. When your gut says something, write it down. Don't act on it yet – just record it. Over time, look back and notice how often it was right.
5. Do one thing you said you'd do yesterday that you didn't. No self-criticism. Just do it today. Completion builds trust.
6. Say no to one thing that doesn't feel right. Even something small. Practise honouring your own read on a situation.

7. Eat when you're hungry. After a relationship where your needs were minimised, eating when your body asks is an act of self-trust.
8. Rest when you're tired, even briefly. Your body knows things. Trust what it tells you.
9. Stop yourself mid-apology and ask: did I actually do something wrong? If the answer is no, let the apology go.
10. Choose something based entirely on what you want. Not what is easiest. Not what avoids conflict. What do you actually want?
11. Complete a tiny task you've been avoiding. The avoidance costs more than the task. Doing it reminds you that you are capable.
12. Notice when you're people-pleasing and just pause. You don't have to stop yet. Just notice. Awareness is the first step.
13. Trust your read on a person. If someone makes you feel uncomfortable, that feeling is information.
14. Don't explain a decision you've made to someone who didn't ask. Practice making a choice and letting it stand.
15. If you change your mind, let it be a choice – not a capitulation. There is a difference between reconsidering and caving to pressure.
16. Write down one thing you handled well today. Not perfectly. Just well. Give yourself that credit.

17. When you feel uncertain, sit with it before seeking reassurance. Sometimes the answer is already inside you. Give it space to surface.
18. Follow through on a boundary, even a tiny one. Small boundaries kept build enormous trust in yourself.
19. Ask yourself 'what do I actually think?' before asking others. Form your own view first. Then share it if you want to.
20. Trust that your emotional reaction is valid. "Something about this doesn't feel right" is enough.
21. Make a list of decisions in the last year that turned out fine. Evidence matters when self-doubt is loud.
22. Notice the difference between anxious overthinking and genuine gut instinct. Overthinking spirals. Instinct is quieter — a still, flat knowing.
23. Stop researching a decision you've already made. You made it. You had reasons. Trust them.
24. When someone questions a choice you're comfortable with, notice you don't have to defend it. "I've thought about it and I'm happy with my decision" is complete.
25. Acknowledge when something hurt you, privately. You are allowed to be the witness to your own experience.
26. If you feel dread about something, take it seriously. Dread is a signal. You don't have to know exactly what it's telling you — just don't dismiss it.

27. Let yourself be right about something small today. You knew the kids would be hungry. You were right. Let yourself register that.

28. When you make a mistake, notice how you respond to it. The goal is to respond to yourself with the grace you'd extend to a friend.

29. Do something kind for yourself that you planned in advance. Plan it and follow through. Future-you is worth being reliable for.

30. Practice finishing your own sentences. You were interrupted and talked over. Let yourself complete a thought.

31. Keep a note called 'I was right about that.' Add to it whenever your instinct proved correct. Read it on the hard days.

32. When something feels off, don't talk yourself out of it immediately. Let your nervous system be heard before your rational mind overrides it.

33. Notice when you're waiting for someone to validate a decision you've made. That's your cue that you actually already know the answer.

34. Tell yourself the truth about something today. Even something small you've been glossing over.

35. Celebrate a small win without immediately minimising it. "I sorted that out" – full stop.

36. Let your preferences matter. You like your coffee a certain way. These small preferences are a self. Let her have them.

37. When unsure, ask: what would I tell my best friend to do? Then consider taking your own advice.

38. Do one thing today that scares you just slightly. Not enormously. Just a little. And notice that you were okay.

39. At the end of the day, ask: did I show up for myself, even once? If yes – and once is enough – acknowledge it.

40. Remind yourself that rebuilding self-trust is not linear. Some days you'll slip back. That is not failure. The direction matters more than the pace.

## 50 Small Doorways Back to Joy

*You don't have to feel joy to begin looking for it.*

Joy after a toxic relationship can feel inaccessible — like a language you once spoke fluently but have forgotten. This list is not about manufacturing joy. It is about opening small doors and seeing what air comes through.

1. Walk somewhere new — a different street, a different park — and notice everything.
2. Revisit a book, film, or album you loved as a teenager.
3. Buy yourself flowers. Grocery store ones are perfect.
4. Learn one tiny thing you've always been vaguely curious about. Just the basics.
5. Sit outside with a hot drink and do absolutely nothing.
6. Watch the sun set, even from a window.
7. Dig in some dirt — a pot plant counts.
8. Cook something you loved before the relationship — something that is just yours.
9. Look through old photos from a time when you felt like yourself.
10. Write a list of things you used to love, without judging any of them.
11. Go to a library and choose a book based entirely on the cover.
12. Sit somewhere quiet and listen — birds, traffic, wind, rain. Just listen.

13. Watch a documentary about something you know nothing about.
14. Paint, colour, draw – something with your hands, with no expected outcome.
15. Try a new flavour of something. Coffee, tea, ice cream. Just something new.
16. Wear something you like just because you like it.
17. Make a playlist of songs from a happy chapter of your life.
18. Write down ten things you think are beautiful.
19. Bake something from scratch. Smell it. Eat it warm.
20. Start a small collection of something meaningless and lovely – shells, stamps, interesting stones.
21. Go to a market and walk slowly. Just look.
22. Watch your children play without intervening and notice what they love.
23. Find a podcast on a topic you've always been curious about.
24. Let yourself daydream about a future holiday – even just to imagine it.
25. Find one YouTube channel that makes you feel good and bookmark it.
26. Lie on the grass and look at the clouds.
27. Write a list called 'things I want to try someday' – no plan required.
28. Say yes to something small and spontaneous.

29. Phone or message someone who always makes you feel lighter.
30. Make art with your kids with no attachment to the outcome.
31. Plant something and watch it over days. Even a seed in a cup.
32. Go op-shopping and find one beautiful thing for a few dollars.
33. Look up at a night sky.
34. Revisit a place that holds a good memory.
35. Sing along to something. In the car, in the shower – doesn't matter.
36. Let yourself feel proud of something without immediately qualifying it.
37. Watch something live – a market, a school event, street performers. Just witness life happening.
38. Do one thing this week that is only for you and has no productive purpose.
39. Notice three things on your walk today that are beautiful or interesting.
40. Write your name somewhere private and look at it. You exist.
41. Give yourself permission to like something 'basic.' There's joy in the ordinary.

42. Revisit a hobby you left behind and try it once with zero expectation.
43. Visit somewhere local you've never actually been.
44. Spend 10 minutes in a bookshop or op shop with no agenda.
45. Let yourself be moved by something — a song, a sunset, a good ending. Don't explain it away.
46. Cook something that smells amazing — even if it's just garlic in a pan.
47. Start a 'small joys' note on your phone and add to it whenever something counts.
48. Give yourself a slow morning once a week, even just 20 minutes earlier.
49. Notice when you feel genuinely comfortable. That is joy in its quietest form.
50. Trust that the capacity for joy did not leave you. It is waiting. Let it find you in small things.

## Things That Mean You're Coming Back to Life

*Recovery rarely arrives in one big moment.*

Women who have been in survival mode for years often think recovery arrives all at once – a morning when they wake up feeling whole. Usually it arrives quietly, disguised as ordinary life returning.

- ◆ Singing along to the radio.
- ◆ Buying something because you liked it.
- ◆ Making future plans.
- ◆ Sleeping through the night.
- ◆ Rearranging a room because you wanted it different.
- ◆ Taking photos again.
- ◆ Laughing until you cry.
- ◆ Feeling excited about something.
- ◆ Looking in the mirror and recognising yourself.
- ◆ Realising you didn't think about them all day.
- ◆ Making a decision without asking anyone's permission.
- ◆ Cooking something just because you felt like it.
- ◆ Feeling bored – not anxious. Just ordinary boredom.
- ◆ Daydreaming about the future.
- ◆ Feeling at home in your own house.
- ◆ Noticing something beautiful and stopping for it.
- ◆ Feeling proud of your children without grief underneath it.
- ◆ Choosing how to spend an hour and enjoying it.

*That ordinary life can feel extraordinary when you've spent so long just trying to get through each day.*

*You will have more and more of these moments. They will stop feeling like surprises. They will start to feel like you.*

## You Are Still Here

That is not a small thing. That is the whole thing.

You walked through something that was designed — even if not consciously — to make you smaller. And yet here you are. Reading. Breathing. Still choosing, somewhere in the back of everything, to keep going.

This book is a very gentle beginning. The beginning of remembering that you are a person — not just a mother, not just a survivor, but a full and complicated and worthy human being who deserves kindness, ease, rest, and joy.

The Overwhelmed Single Mum Reset™ exists because I needed it. Because this stage — the rebuilding stage — is rarely spoken about honestly. Everyone wants to tell you it gets better (and it does) but nobody sits with you in the thick of it and says: this part is hard, and you are not doing it wrong.

So let me say it now.

***This part is hard. And you are not doing it wrong.***

One small thing at a time. One day. And then another.

*I'll be here with you.*

**The Overwhelmed Single Mum Reset™ · @SAFESingleMum**