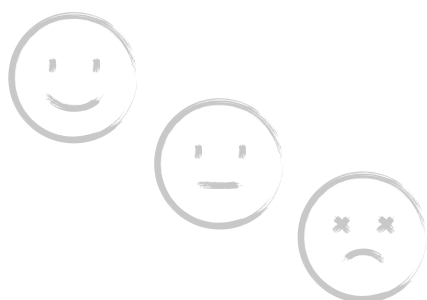


BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

15 Quick Activities to Help Teens Know
What to Do When Stress, Self-Doubt, and
Everyday Challenges Show Up



BY

ETHAN WELLS

© Copyright 2025 - All rights reserved.

The content contained within this book may not be reproduced, duplicated or transmitted without direct written permission from the author or the publisher.

Under no circumstances will any blame or legal responsibility be held against the publisher, or author, for any damages, reparation, or monetary loss due to the information contained within this book. Either directly or indirectly.

Legal Notice:

This book is copyright protected. This book is only for personal use. You cannot amend, distribute, sell, use, quote or paraphrase any part, or the content within this book, without the consent of the author or publisher.

Disclaimer Notice:

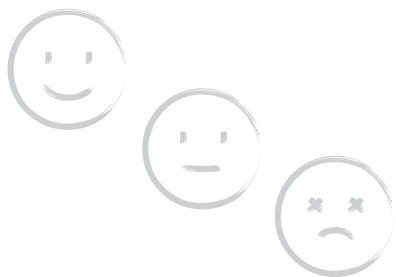
Please note the information contained within this document is for educational and entertainment purposes only. All effort has been executed to present accurate, up to date, and reliable, complete information. No warranties of any kind are declared or implied. Readers acknowledge that the author is not engaging in the rendering of legal, financial, medical or professional advice. The content within this book has been derived from various sources. Please consult a licensed professional before attempting any techniques outlined in this book.

By reading this document, the reader agrees that under no circumstances is the author responsible for any losses, direct or indirect, which are incurred as a result of the use of information contained within this document, including, but not limited to, — errors, omissions, or inaccuracies.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BEFORE WE DIVE IN	1
BONUS 1. OVERCOMING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK	2
Win of the Week	4
BONUS 2. MAKING SPACE FOR MIXED EMOTIONS	9
Gratitude Reframe	11
BONUS 3. REFLECTIONS THAT BUILD YOU	19
Affirmation Mirror	21
BONUS 4. SOUNDTRACK YOUR FEELINGS	27
My Mood Soundtrack	29
BONUS 5. STARTING SMALL, FEELING BRAVE	35
Say Hello Challenge	37
BONUS 6. SAY WHAT YOU THINK (WITHOUT FREAKING OUT)	43
Try Sharing an Opinion	45
BONUS 7. REWRITE THE SCRIPT IN YOUR VOICE	51
My Thoughts, My Style	53
BONUS 8. IT'S OKAY TO ASK	57
Ask for Help	59

BONUS 9. DECODE WHAT YOU FEEL	66
Emotion Decoder Map	68
BONUS 10. FIND YOUR CALM IN THE CHAOS	73
The Grounding Check-In	75
BONUS 11. NOTICE THE PATTERN, CHANGE THE GAME	81
The Mood Tracker Loop	83
BONUS 12. PROTECT YOUR PEACE	90
The Energy Protector Plan	92
BONUS 13. FEEL IT, THEN CHOOSE IT	99
Feel It, Then Choose It	101
BONUS 14. WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW?	106
What Do I Need Right Now?	108
BONUS 15. BREAKING YOUR OWN UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS	114
Redefining What's "Enough"	116
BEFORE YOU GO	122



BEFORE WE DIVE IN

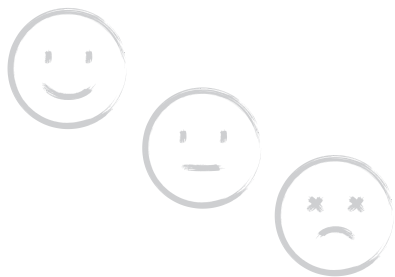
Thank you for picking up this workbook.

One thing I've noticed is that life gives us plenty of situations that affect us emotionally, but very few of them come with instructions. What makes these moments difficult isn't always what happened. Often, it's being left alone with your thoughts afterward, trying to make sense of it all and figure out what to do next.



That's one of the reasons I created this workbook. The 15 activities in these pages are built around situations and challenges that many teens face in everyday life. Each one is designed to help you slow down, reflect, and work through a specific experience from a different angle. Along the way, you may gain a better understanding of what you're feeling, discover a different way of looking at a situation, or find a practical next step that feels right for you.

There are no perfect answers here, and there's no right way to move through these pages. Start wherever you'd like, revisit activities when they become relevant, and take what feels useful. My hope is that this workbook gives you a place to check in with yourself, learn something new, and maybe see things a little more clearly. I'm rooting for you every step of the way.



Lesson 1

OVERCOMING NEGATIVE SELF-TALK

*Because sometimes your brain needs
a reminder of what you've done right.*

Your brain doesn't always feel the same from day to day. Sometimes, things feel manageable, and then there are moments when even small decisions start to feel heavier than they should. You might catch yourself rereading a message before sending it, or replaying something you said in class because it came out a little awkward. This kind of thinking shows up more often than people realize.

That voice in your head isn't always loud. Sometimes, it just sits in the background, saying things like, "Why did you say that?" or "You should've handled that better." When those thoughts keep coming back, it's easy to start treating them like facts.

Moments like that can be easy to miss because your attention naturally lands on what still feels unfinished. The activity that follows gives those quieter moments a little more room to be seen. It doesn't try to shut that voice off. It gives you something else to work with instead, a way to step back and ask, "That felt real, but is it the full picture?" It doesn't ignore what went wrong. It just makes sure that's not the only thing you notice. It's a chance to notice something you did well, not perfectly or in a way that stands out, just something that shows effort, follow-through, or growth. Getting through what you needed to get through can be enough.

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

As you keep doing this, your attention starts to shift. It doesn't happen all at once, but you begin to notice effort, consistency, and small moments that would've been easy to overlook. You don't need someone else to point them out, because you start to recognize them yourself. Those quieter moments still matter, and as you keep noticing them, they begin to shape how you see yourself, not as someone who always gets it right, but as someone who keeps showing up and growing.





WIN OF THE WEEK

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *What Was Your "Win of the Week?"*



 Think of a moment when you did something difficult, faced an uncomfortable feeling, or took care of yourself even when part of you wanted to avoid it.

What happened, and how did you handle it?

 Example: *"I was nervous to join the group project, but I spoke up anyway."*

2. What Made It Hard?



 Was there a thought, emotion, or fear that almost stopped you from doing it? Which of these felt closest to what you experienced? (*Check all that apply*)

☐ Fear of being judged

☐ Overthinking

☐ Feeling overwhelmed

☐ Wanting things to be perfect

☐ Feeling unprepared

☐ Something else: _____

3. What Helped You Get Through That Moment?



 What did you say, do, or remember that helped you keep going?

 Example: *Maybe you took a small first step, reminded yourself you could handle it, asked for support, or gave yourself permission not to do it perfectly.*

4. How Did Your Feelings Change Afterward?



✎ How did you feel once the moment was over compared to before you started?

➡ Example: *Did you feel relieved, proud, calmer, more confident, or surprised you were able to do it?*

** Take a moment to notice that emotions can change, even when they feel overwhelming at first.

5. What Does This Experience Show You About the Way You Handle Difficult Moments?



✎ Think about what this moment revealed about the way you handle difficult emotions, challenges, or pressure.

Complete the sentence below:

"Even when things feel difficult, I am someone who can _____
_____."

 Why is this important for you to remember?

6. *What Would You Want Your Future Self to Remember?*



 Imagine a future version of yourself going through another stressful or overwhelming moment someday.

What is one thing you would want them to remember when emotions start to feel heavy again?

 Example: *"My emotions can feel intense without lasting forever."*

Reflection:

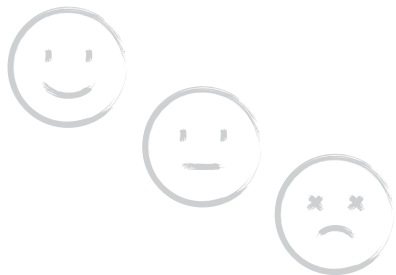
One Step Forward is Still Forward

While working through this activity, you may have noticed that it felt harder than expected to think of a “win,” especially if your mind immediately focused on what still felt awkward, incomplete, or stressful. That reaction is more common than people realize. Many people are used to measuring progress through obvious results rather than the effort, patience, or emotional energy it took to get through a situation. As a result, moments that required maturity, self-control, courage, or persistence can start to feel “too small” to count.



The way you answered these questions may have also revealed something about the standards you hold yourself to. It can be easy to dismiss your effort when an outcome was not perfect or when a situation still felt emotionally messy afterward. Over time, that habit can make progress harder to recognize because your attention stays focused on what still feels unfinished.

That does not mean every difficult experience needs to become a success story. However, taking time to reflect the way you just did can create a more honest view of yourself and your experiences. Difficult moments often contain effort, learning, frustration, resilience, and progress at the same time.



Lesson 2

MAKING SPACE FOR MIXED EMOTIONS

You're allowed to feel more than one thing at a time.

There are days that are just heavy and you can't always say why. Maybe your plans fell through, you argued with someone close to you, or your mood drops without any explanation. Even small moments can stick longer than you expect, and before long, another thought starts to take over. It's the kind that makes you question whether you should even feel this way, and it usually doesn't make things easier. Instead, it gives you something else to feel bad about. After a while, it becomes less about what happened and more about how your mind keeps circling back to it, like thinking about a message you already sent and wondering how it came across.

Sometimes, what stands out first is not the whole story. The next activity gives you a chance to slow things down and look at the moment from a little farther back. Hard moments can start feeling one-sided when your attention stays locked onto the part that hurt, felt awkward, or didn't go the way you wanted. It becomes easier to miss everything else around it. Sometimes, there were parts you handled better than you realized, or details that never stood out while you were in the middle of it. Looking back a little differently doesn't change what happened, but it can change what stands out afterward.

MAKING SPACE FOR MIXED EMOTIONS

There was a group project freshman year I felt awful about for a week. I kept rerunning the part where I lost my train of thought halfway through the presentation. Eventually I noticed something I'd been skipping over: I didn't shut down the way I usually do. I stayed in it, said what needed to be said, and helped fix what I could. I still felt embarrassed, but it wasn't the only thing I saw anymore. The moment started to feel less one-sided.

That's really the point here. It's not about turning a hard moment into a good one. It's about seeing it more fully so it doesn't define the whole experience. That shift might not change how the moment felt right away, but it can change what stays with you after.



ACTIVITY
2

GRATITUDE REFRAME

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *What Was a Moment Recently That Felt Difficult or Heavy for You?*



✎ Think of a recent moment that felt disappointing, stressful, frustrating, embarrassing, or emotionally draining.

It does not have to be a huge moment. Even small situations count. What happened?

2. *What Feelings Showed Up for You During That Moment?*



 Difficult moments can bring up a lot of different feelings, sometimes all at once.

What emotions did you notice at the time? *(Check all that apply)*

- ☐ Embarrassed
- ☐ Disappointed
- ☐ Frustrated
- ☐ Left out
- ☐ Angry
- ☐ Stressed
- ☐ Hurt
- ☐ Not good enough
- ☐ Discouraged
- ☐ Something else: _____

**** More than one feeling can show up at the same time.**

- ✎ Did any of those feelings affect the way you thought about yourself, the situation, or what happened afterward?

➞ Example: *"I felt embarrassed and started thinking I wasn't talented enough."*

3. *What Else Feels Easier to Notice Now?*



- ✎ When you think back on the situation now, does anything feel a little different, clearer, or easier to notice?

Maybe:

- ➞ you learned something about yourself,
- ➞ realized someone cared about you,
- ➞ noticed your own effort,
- ➞ gained perspective,
- ➞ or simply made it through a difficult moment.

- ✎ What stands out to you now?

** If nothing feels positive or meaningful yet, that's okay too. Sometimes, the first step is simply recognizing that you made it through the moment.

4. *Both Feelings Can Exist Together*



✧ Sometimes, difficult moments can hold more than one truth at the same time.

You can still feel hurt, disappointed, or frustrated while also recognizing something supportive, meaningful, or important beside the difficult moment.

Some experiences take time before you can fully see anything meaningful in them.

You do not have to force yourself to feel positive for your experience to matter.

✧ What would it feel like to stop pressuring yourself to feel completely okay about the situation right now? Would it feel lighter, more honest, less stressful, or easier to breathe maybe?

In other words, what do you think might become easier if you stopped expecting yourself to feel completely okay right away?

5. What Is Something You Can Practice Appreciating?



✂ Sometimes, two things can be true at once.

If it feels helpful, try finishing the sentence below:

"Even though _____ was difficult, I can still appreciate _____."

➡ Example: *"Even though I was disappointed, I can still appreciate that I had the courage to put myself out there."*

✂ Do you think practicing this kind of reflection over time could make difficult moments feel even a little less heavy or overwhelming? Why or why not?

** Sometimes, perspective changes happen slowly. Even noticing one small thing differently can still matter.

6. Gentle Practice



- ✧ Over the next few days, see if you notice even one small moment where something difficult also contains something supportive, meaningful, comforting, or worth appreciating.

It does not have to change how you feel right away.

The goal is not to force positivity. The goal is simply to practice noticing more than one truth at the same time.

Over time, small moments of reflection can slowly change the way you respond to difficult experiences.

You may not notice big changes right away, and that is okay. Even brief moments of awareness, self-kindness, or emotional honesty still matter.

- ✧ As you move through the next few days, see if you notice any moments like these:

- I noticed even one small moment differently
- I noticed more than one feeling at the same time
- I caught myself being a little less hard on myself
- I noticed something supportive, even briefly
- I am still practicing this

7. Final Reflection



- ✧ You do not have to fully move past a difficult moment to begin seeing it differently.

Sometimes, growth begins with simply being a little less hard on yourself while you move through it.

What is one thing you want to carry with you after completing this activity?

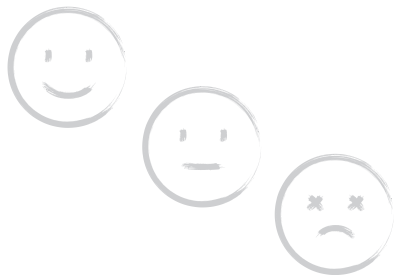
Reflection: Holding Both Things at Once

You may have noticed an interesting pattern while answering these questions. Some parts likely came to mind quickly, especially what went wrong or how the situation felt. Difficult moments tend to stick in a specific way, and our attention naturally returns to the awkward parts, frustrating parts, or moments we wish had gone differently. Then the questions shifted, and suddenly you had to look for something else. Maybe there was a lesson, a helpful moment, a person who showed up, or a small detail that mattered more than you realized at first.



That shift can feel uncomfortable because looking for something meaningful in a difficult experience can seem like changing the story or softening what happened. However, reflecting in this way is not about giving a hard moment a happier ending. It's more about noticing details that were already there but were harder to see while emotions were still loud.

Experiences rarely fit into neat categories. A moment can be embarrassing and still teach you something. You can feel disappointed and still realize someone cared about you. Sometimes, the value in slowing down and looking again is realizing that difficult moments often carry more than one thing at a time.



Lesson 3

REFLECTIONS THAT BUILD YOU

*Your reflection isn't just what you see
—it's what you say to yourself when you see it.*

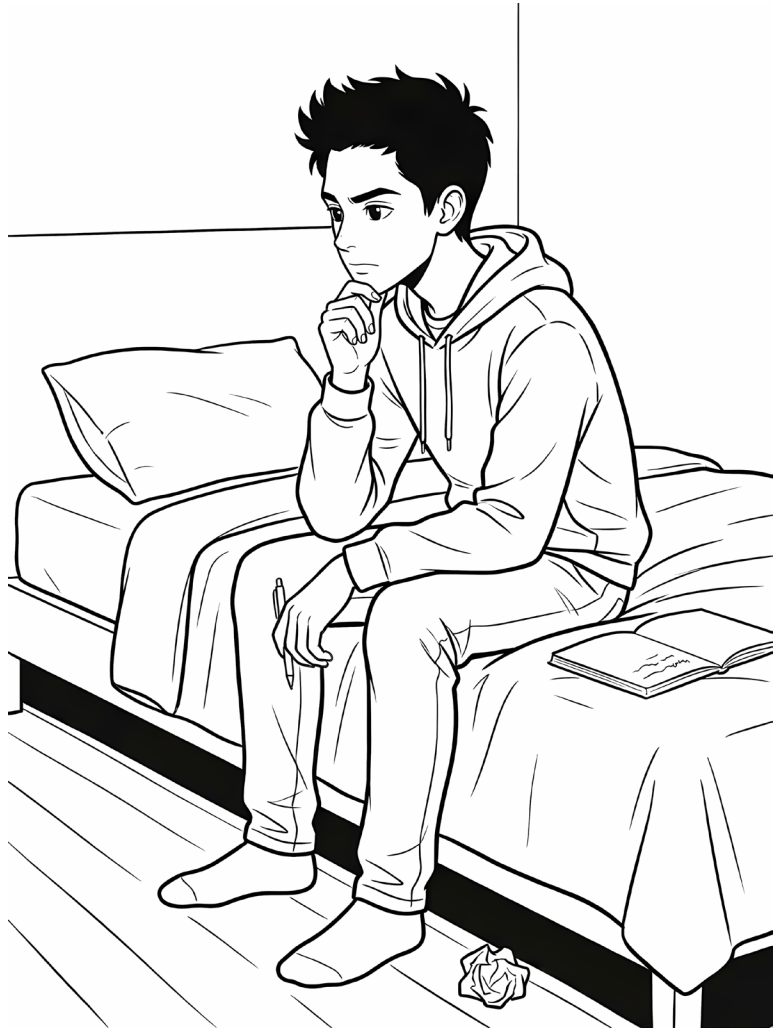
Some mornings, I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, and before I have time to think, something already feels off. It's usually not a big thing. Maybe I look more tired than usual or notice some small detail I probably wouldn't think twice about on another day. Still, once my attention lands there, it can suddenly feel more important than it actually is.

What makes moments like that tricky is how quickly they start reaching beyond the mirror itself. A thought that lasted a second can quietly follow you into the rest of your day. You take longer deciding what to wear, hold back from saying something, or start second-guessing yourself in situations that had nothing to do with the original thought in the first place.

Part of the reason it feels convincing is because it arrives so automatically. There usually isn't a pause where you stop and decide whether the thought makes sense. It shows up, and your brain treats it like something worth paying attention to before you've had much chance to step back from it.

What happens after that first thought can end up shaping the rest of the moment. The activity here slows that reaction down long enough to notice what happens next. Instead of being pulled along automatically, you get a chance to decide whether that first thought deserves as much influence as it is being given.

There are times when one small thought starts taking up more space than it deserves, especially right before something matters. You might begin focusing more on what feels wrong than on what you actually wanted to say or do. The first thought may still show up, but it doesn't automatically deserve the final word.





AFFIRMATION MIRROR

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *When Does Your Inner Voice Become the Hardest on You?*



✂ Think about moments when your inner voice becomes especially critical, discouraging, anxious, or impossible to satisfy.

It does not have to be a huge moment. Even small situations count.

Some moments that trigger harsh self-talk for people include:

- making mistakes
- comparing yourself to other people
- speaking in front of people
- feeling awkward or embarrassed
- trying something new
- looking at yourself in the mirror

REFLECTIONS THAT BUILD YOU

- not meeting your own expectations
- overthinking after conversations
- feeling left out

✎ Do any of these feel familiar to you too? List one recent situation where you noticed yourself being especially hard on yourself.

2. *What Were You Saying to Yourself During That Situation?*



✎ Write the harsh, critical, or discouraging thought you remember saying to yourself during that moment.

3. *How Did Saying Those Things to Yourself Make You Feel Emotionally?*



 Describe what the experience felt like emotionally for you afterward.

4. *What Would Sound More Supportive or Understanding to Hear Instead?*



 If someone spoke to you with more patience, understanding, or kindness during that moment, what do you think they would say instead?

Write a response that feels more supportive, realistic, or steady to you.

 Example: *"Feeling awkward sometimes does not mean something is wrong with me."*

5. *Say It in the Mirror*



- ✎ Try reading your supportive response slowly to yourself out loud, either in a mirror or somewhere private where you feel comfortable.

You do not have to say it perfectly.

You do not have to fully believe it yet either.

Just notice what it feels like hearing supportive words directed toward yourself.

What stood out to you the most while saying the words out loud? Did the experience feel comforting, awkward, unfamiliar, calming, emotional, difficult, or something else?

- ✎ Why do you think hearing the words felt that way for you?

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

 When do you think you would most need to hear those words?

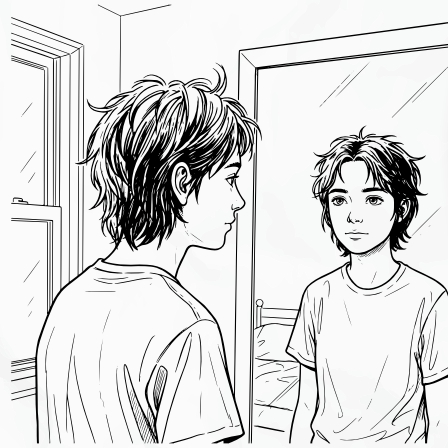
 Examples: *before school, after making a mistake, during overthinking, when comparing yourself to other people*

Reflection:

Speak Kindly to the Person in the Mirror

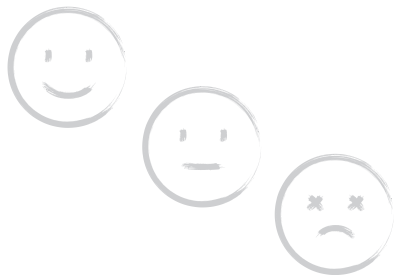
Something about this activity may have felt a little unusual, and not because the questions were difficult. Writing kinder words for yourself can feel surprisingly awkward, especially if you are used to hearing a very different version in your head. You might have written an affirmation and immediately thought, "That sounds nice, but

I'm not sure I believe it." Or maybe reading it back felt strange because those are not words you usually direct toward yourself.



That reaction is more common than people realize. Thoughts that show up often can start feeling familiar, even when they are unfair. Over time, harsh thoughts can sound more believable, not because they are more accurate, but because they have had more practice getting your attention. A kinder response can feel new or uncomfortable simply because it is unfamiliar.

Maybe that says less about the words you wrote and more about what your mind has gotten used to hearing. New ways of talking to yourself rarely feel natural right away, and sometimes, the strange part is not the affirmation itself. It is realizing how different it sounds from the voice you have been hearing all along.



Lesson 4

SOUNDTRACK YOUR FEELINGS

*Because sometimes music understands you
before you understand yourself.*

When your thoughts start piling on top of each other, it can become hard to sort out what you're even feeling anymore. Words don't always help in those situations, but a song can. It doesn't need an explanation to match what's already there. Even when it's not exact, it can still land close enough that something in it feels recognized instead of pushed aside.

That shift is subtle, but it can take the edge off in a way that thinking through it usually doesn't. What matters more than the song itself is when it meets you. It stays with the feeling instead of pulling it somewhere else too quickly, and forcing a different mood too soon usually creates more friction than relief.

Feelings do not always need to be pushed somewhere else right away. This activity starts by meeting the feeling where it already is. It takes a few minutes and starts with noticing what you feel right now, then choosing a song that matches it before letting yourself shift, even slightly, into something steadier. A shift can start there, not as a full change, but as something quieter. The feeling doesn't disappear, but it loosens just enough that your attention isn't stuck in one place.

SOUNDTRACK YOUR FEELINGS

Certain songs start to come to mind without much effort, especially when things feel harder to sort through. It gives your thoughts somewhere to land for a moment, and it can change what you stay with.





MY MOOD SOUNDTRACK

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Check In With Your Body*



- ✂ Before you write a single word, pause. Close your eyes for ten seconds if you can and consider the prompt below:

Where do you feel something in your body right now? Chest tight?
Stomach heavy? Shoulders creeping up toward your ears? Jaw clenched?
Hands restless?

Don't name the emotion yet. Just locate it physically.

Where do you feel it?

 Describe the sensation (pressure, heat, emptiness, buzzing, weight...):

2. *Anchor to a Moment*



 Think of a specific moment from today — or recently — that's still sitting with you. It doesn't have to be dramatic. It just has to be real.

Don't analyze it. Just picture it like a frozen frame.

What do you see in that moment?

3. *If Your Mood Were a Song...*



 With that moment still in mind, pick a song that captures how you're feeling right now. Don't overthink it. Go with your gut.

Title / Artist:



Now, let's dig a little deeper:

What specifically about this song fits? Is it the tempo? A lyric? The way it builds or drops? The silence between the notes?



What does this song reflect about you?

4. Choose Your Next Track, Your Way



You get to decide what you need right now. Both options below are valid. Neither is wrong.

Circle one:

(A) Go Deeper — Pick a song that lets you fully arrive in what you're feeling. Sometimes, you need to sit inside something before you can move through it.

(B) Start to Shift — Pick a song that begins to move you somewhere different. Calmer. Steadier. Lighter. Stronger.

SOUNDTRACK YOUR FEELINGS

 Why did you choose that option?

 Your song:

 Put on your headphones. Listen to the whole thing. Come back when it's done.

5. *Check In Again*



 At the start of this activity, you located a sensation in your body. Check in with that same spot now.

What do you notice? Same? Different? Describe it like a weather report — just facts, no judgment.

6. *What Do You Know Now?*



-  What did you learn about yourself right now that you didn't know when you started this activity?

-  One last thing, and you don't have to answer this out loud. Just let it sit with you:

Is there anything this feeling might be trying to protect you from, or tell you?

Reflection:

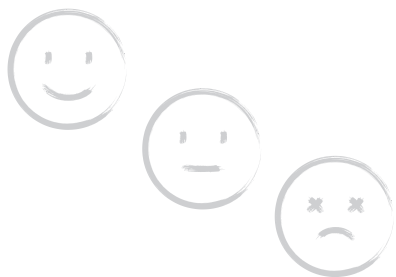
Tuning into Your Power



A song can sound completely different depending on the day you hear it. You might listen to the same track many times and barely think about it, and then one day, a lyric suddenly stands out or a certain part hits harder than expected. Moments like that can feel random at first, although they often catch your attention before you fully understand why.

Putting feelings into words can work the same way. You may have had an easier time choosing songs than explaining what changed afterward because shifts do not always announce themselves while they are happening. Sometimes, you notice them later, like realizing your shoulders relaxed, your thoughts slowed, or something that felt overwhelming no longer seemed quite as loud.

Music also has a strange way of attaching itself to moments. Hearing a certain song later can bring back a memory, a feeling, or even a version of yourself you had not thought about in a while. Small changes do not always demand attention, which is probably why they can be so easy to miss.



Lesson 5

STARTING SMALL, FEELING BRAVE

A simple “hi” can be a bigger deal than it seems.

Small social moments can become surprisingly complicated once your brain starts getting involved. Sitting next to someone you’ve never talked to, walking into a room where you don’t really know anyone, or thinking about saying something and then deciding not to all fall into that space. It’s easy to tell yourself you’ll do it next time.

The difficult part is that waiting can make the moment feel bigger. The more time you spend imagining how something might go, the more pressure starts building around it. A quick comment or simple introduction can slowly turn into something that feels like it has to go perfectly before it feels worth trying.

What often gets overlooked is that most interactions never needed that much pressure in the first place. A short conversation, a quick “hey,” or one small comment can be enough. Not because it guarantees a friendship or changes everything right away, but because showing up counts too.

This activity focuses on one of those moments. It gives you a chance to pay attention to what happens when you stop waiting for the perfect version of it and simply let the moment be what it is.

It might feel awkward, brief, or less exciting than you imagined. Even so, situations start feeling different once you have an experience to look back on instead of another moment you talked yourself out of.





SAY HELLO CHALLENGE

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Name the Fear*



-  What exactly are you afraid will happen if you start a conversation or say hello to someone you don't usually talk to?

-  Look at the fear you wrote above. Now, imagine it actually happened.

What conclusion would you draw about yourself because of what happened? Write the exact words that would go through your mind.

➡ Example: *"I would probably tell myself that I'm awkward or that people don't want to talk to me."*

2. What Small Conversation Would You Like to Try?



✎ Who would you like to talk to, and how do you think you might start the conversation?

Remember, the goal is not to impress anyone. The goal is simply to take one small step outside your comfort zone.

➡ Example: *"I want to say hello to someone who sits near me in class and ask how their day is going."*

3. What Would You Want to Remind Yourself of Before You Try?



 Feeling nervous does not mean you are doing something wrong.

Before starting the conversation, what would you want to remind yourself of?

What might help you feel a little more willing to try, even if the conversation feels awkward or does not go exactly as planned?

 Example: *"One conversation does not define me. Even if it feels awkward, I can still be proud that I tried."*

4. Take the Challenge



 Now it's time to try the conversation you planned.

Remember, the goal is not to be perfectly confident or have the perfect words. The goal is simply to take one small step and say hello.

Before you begin, take a moment to remind yourself:

 *Feeling nervous does not mean you are doing something wrong.*

 *Most conversations start small.*

 *You do not need to impress anyone.*

➤ *One conversation does not define you.*

➤ *Taking the risk to try is already a success.*

✂ What would you like to remind yourself before you begin?

➤ Example: *"I don't need to say the perfect thing. I just need to say hello and see where the conversation leads."*

5. *How Did Reality Compare to What You Expected?*



Think about the worry you wrote down before the conversation and compare it to what actually happened.

What I Was Worried Might Happen	What Actually Happened

-  What surprised you most about the difference between what you expected and what actually happened?

-  Looking back now, do you see the original fear any differently? Why or why not?

6. *What Are You Proud of From This Experience?*



-  Even if the conversation felt awkward, uncomfortable, or did not go exactly how you hoped, what is one thing you can give yourself credit for?

-  What did this experience teach you about your ability to handle nervousness, uncertainty, or new situations?

Reflection:

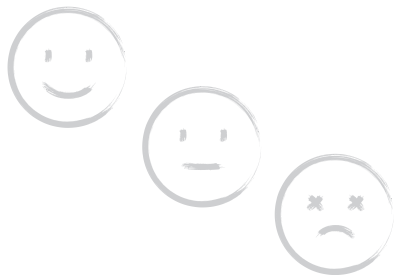
One Word Can Open a Door

One interesting thing about moments like these is that the conversation itself is often the shortest part. Much more time usually gets spent beforehand: imagining how it might go, wondering what the other person will think, planning what to say, changing the plan, and replaying different versions of it. By the time you actually say something, your brain may already feel like it has lived through several outcomes.



Then the moment happens, and sometimes, it feels strangely ordinary. Maybe the person smiled, kept the conversation going, or maybe it felt a little awkward. Whatever happened, you ended up with something more real than the prediction you started with because now you have an experience instead of a guess.

That does not always mean the nervousness disappears right away. People can have a conversation go completely fine and still replay it afterward. Looking back at your answers, you may have noticed that what you expected and what actually happened were not exactly the same. Predictions can sound convincing before a moment happens, but once a real experience replaces imagined versions, even a short interaction can leave you with something your brain did not have before: evidence.



Lesson 6

SAY WHAT YOU THINK (WITHOUT FREAKING OUT)

Your voice matters—even when it feels shaky.

You can be in the middle of a conversation and still feel slightly outside of it. People are talking, reacting, and sharing what they think, and meanwhile, you're holding onto a thought of your own, not because you have nothing to say, but because part of you starts wondering how it will sound once it leaves your head.

That pause can happen quickly. A sentence starts forming, then suddenly turns into a quiet editing process. You switch a word, soften a reaction, or rethink how something might come across. By the time you feel ready, someone else has already jumped in or the conversation has moved somewhere else entirely.

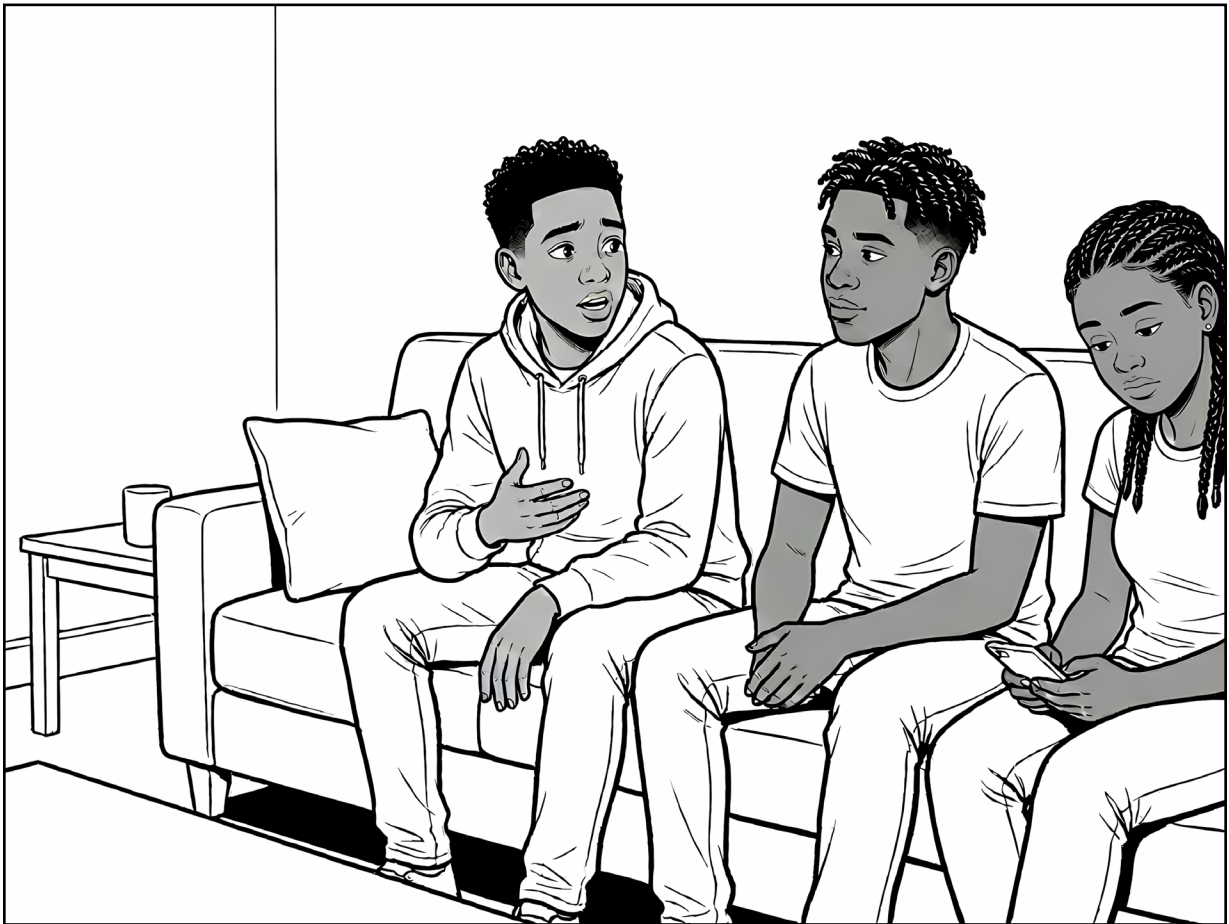
After a while, staying quiet can start to feel like the safer move, even when you had a clear opinion or reaction in the first place.

Speaking up usually does not begin with big, confident moments. More often, it shows up in smaller situations, like disagreeing with something, admitting an unpopular opinion, or saying what you actually thought before changing it three times in your head.

SAY WHAT YOU THINK (WITHOUT FREAKING OUT)

Those smaller moments often matter more than they first seem. The activity that follows pays attention to what happens before you talk yourself out of saying something. It focuses on the kinds of situations where you would normally step back and gives you a chance to notice what happens when you leave a little less room for over-editing.

What stands out afterward is not usually whether the response was perfect or whether everyone agreed. It's realizing that you were part of the moment instead of watching it pass by from the sidelines.





TRY SHARING AN OPINION

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *What Makes It Hard to Share Your Thoughts?*



-  Think about situations where you tend to stay quiet instead of saying what you really think.

What kinds of moments make you most likely to hold back your opinion?
Why do you think you tend to stay quiet in those moments?

-  Example: *"When everyone else seems to agree with each other, I usually keep my opinion to myself because I don't want to be the only person who thinks differently."*

2. *What Opinion Have You Been Keeping to Yourself?*



-  Now think of a situation where you have been holding back an opinion, preference, idea, or perspective.

It does not need to be a big issue. It could be something as simple as your opinion about a movie, a group project idea, a preference, or a different point of view.

What is the opinion you have been keeping to yourself?

Why have you been hesitant to share it?

3. *What Would You Want to Remind Yourself of Before Speaking Up?*



-  Look back at the fear you wrote down earlier.

What's one reminder you can tell yourself that will take pressure off and allow you to speak honestly, even if others do not immediately agree with you?

➡ Example: *"People do not have to agree with me for my opinion to have value."*

4. *What Was It Like to Share Something You Normally Keep to Yourself?*



✎ You chose to express an opinion that you might normally keep to yourself.

How did it feel to say it out loud?

Was the experience easier, harder, or different than you expected?

5. Did Anything Feel Different After You Shared Your Opinion?



- ✂ Sometimes, keeping an opinion to yourself can create pressure, frustration, or tension without you realizing it.

After speaking up, did anything feel different?

Did you notice any changes in how you felt, how you viewed the situation, or how you viewed yourself?

- ➡ Example: *"I felt relieved afterward because I wasn't carrying around everything I wanted to say."*

6. What Did This Experience Show You About Disagreement?



- ✂ Not everyone will share the same opinions, preferences, or perspectives.

Looking back on the experience, what did it show you about people seeing things differently?

Did disagreement feel different than you expected?

➡ Example: *"I still felt nervous, but I also felt relieved because I wasn't pretending to agree with something I didn't actually believe."*

7.

What Did This Experience Teach You About Your Own Voice?



Regardless of whether people agreed or disagreed with you, you allowed your perspective to be heard.

What did this experience teach you about expressing yourself honestly?

How might it influence the way you share your thoughts, ideas, or opinions in the future?

Reflection:

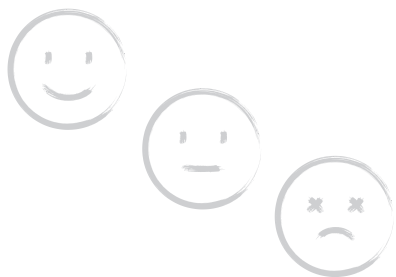
Sharing Your Voice Takes Practice

The interesting part about moments like these is that saying the thing is often not the end of the experience. Sometimes, the conversation keeps moving while your brain stays behind for a second. People are still talking and reacting, while part of your attention turns inward and starts reviewing what just happened.



That is where a lot of strange thoughts can show up. Did that sound awkward? Did I explain it right? Should I have said it differently? Even when a conversation goes completely fine, the mind can react as if something huge just happened. It starts replaying certain words, checking for reactions, or searching for signs that everyone noticed more than they actually did.

Looking back at your answers, you may have noticed that what you expected and what happened were not exactly the same. The buildup beforehand can Sometimes, take up more space than the moment itself because uncertainty fills in details before anything has happened yet. Predictions can sound convincing while they stay in your head, but real moments often add details your worries never included.



Lesson 7

REWRITE THE SCRIPT IN YOUR VOICE

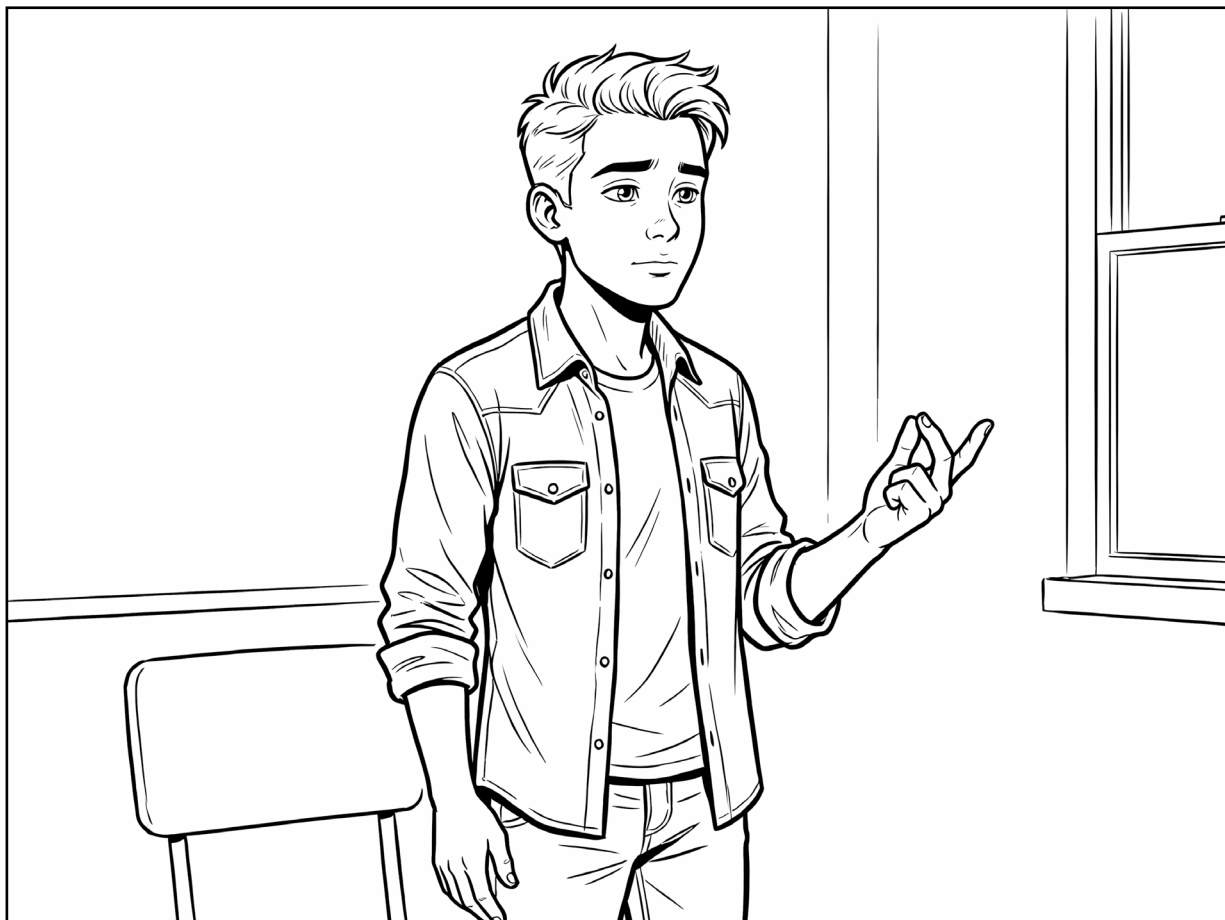
You don't have to sound wise to be kind to yourself.

Some thoughts are just plain rude. You might drop something in public or say the wrong thing, and your brain jumps in with “Nice one. Why are you like this?” It can feel like there’s a heckler in the front row of your mind who never really leaves.

This activity is about giving that voice a rewrite, not with something overly polished or forced, but with a response that actually sounds like you—something that leans a little sarcastic, a bit playful, or simply honest enough to take the edge off.

Those thoughts tend to show up fast and settle in before you really have a chance to question them. One comment turns into a whole mood, and suddenly, everything starts to feel filtered through it.

A small shift in how you respond can change the tone of that moment. It might not feel like much at first, but it can keep the thought from dragging everything else down with it.



When that critical voice starts getting loud, this is one way to take a bit of control back. It doesn't have to be perfect or clever, just something that sounds like you; a little rough around the edges, maybe even a bit funny, but real enough to shift the mood.

ACTIVITY
7

MY THOUGHTS, MY STYLE

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Spot the Thought*



-  Write down a negative thought that has been showing up lately.

Don't overthink it. Write it the way it usually sounds in your head.

2. *How Would You Say It?*



-  Read the thought again.

Imagine you could keep your personality, sense of humor, and way of speaking, while making the thought more balanced, realistic, or helpful.

REWRITE THE SCRIPT IN YOUR VOICE

How would you rewrite the thought in your own voice?

3. *Compare the Two Versions*



 Place the original thought and your rewritten version side by side.

Does one version feel easier to hear, more realistic, more motivating, less harsh, or something else?

4. *What Stayed the Same?*



 Even though you changed the wording, was there anything important that stayed the same?

What message were both versions trying to communicate?

5. *Which Voice Would You Rather Carry With You?*



 Imagine hearing one version of this thought repeatedly over the next week.

Which version would you rather hear? Why?

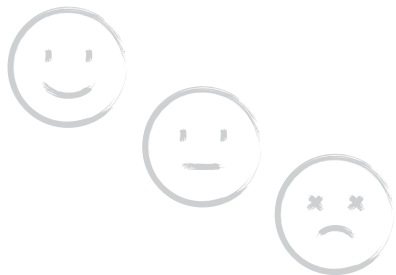
Reflection: Make Your Mind a Friendlier Place

Reading the two versions back-to-back can create a surprisingly weird reaction. You might look at the first thought and think, "Wait... did I really make it sound that dramatic?" Then you read the rewritten version and think, "Okay, that feels a little less intense." Or maybe your reaction was the opposite: "Nope. Absolutely not. I'm not saying that."



That is part of what makes exercises like this interesting. Thoughts usually move through your head fast enough that they do not have to explain themselves. They show up, say what they want to say, and keep moving. Writing them down changes that a little because suddenly the thought is sitting in front of you instead of racing past.

After that, small things can start happening that are easy to miss. A thought that felt convincing a minute ago may suddenly sound harsher or more over-the-top than you remembered. If that happened while comparing the two versions, even for a second, it is worth noticing. Once a thought stops feeling automatic, it becomes easier to question whether it deserved to sound so certain in the first place.



Lesson 8

IT'S OKAY TO ASK

You're not supposed to have it all figured out.

You'd think asking for help would be simple. Just speak up, right? But it rarely feels that easy. Even when you know you need support, there can be a quiet pushback in your head telling you to handle it yourself, wait a little longer, or not make it into a bigger deal than it needs to be. Before long, something that started as a quick question can begin feeling much harder to bring up.

Part of what makes it difficult is that uncertainty fills in the blanks. You start wondering whether your question makes sense, whether you should already know the answer, or whether asking will make you seem less capable. Meanwhile, the problem itself usually stays exactly where it was.

The next activity stays with moments like that. It gives you a chance to look more closely at what makes asking feel difficult and notice what happens when you make a little more room for reaching out.

I once got stuck on a homework assignment and sat there way longer than I needed to, going in circles because I didn't want to admit I was lost. Eventually, I sent a message asking about one question I couldn't figure out. Nothing suddenly became easy, but the feeling changed almost immediately. I was no longer sitting there trying to carry the whole thing by myself.

IT'S OKAY TO ASK

Moments like that tend to be simpler than they feel. Sometimes it's just a short message, a quick check-in, or a small opening that shifts things enough to move forward. Even a brief response can change how heavy something feels when you're not holding it by yourself.





ASKING FOR HELP

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *What Have You Been Carrying on Your Own?*



 Think about something that has been difficult lately.

It could be:

-  *a school assignment,*
-  *a problem with a friend,*
-  *a stressful situation,*
-  *a decision you are trying to make,*
-  *a strong emotion,*
-  *or something else entirely.*



What is something you have been trying to handle by yourself?

2.

What Has Stopped You from Asking for Help?



Many people hesitate to ask for help for different reasons.

What has made it difficult to reach out?

What story have you been telling yourself about asking for help?

3. *What Kind of Help Would Make Things Easier Right Now?*



 Support does not always have to be a big request.

Sometimes help can be:

-  *asking a question,*
-  *getting clarification,*
-  *talking something through,*
-  *receiving advice,*
-  *or simply letting someone know what is going on.*

 What kind of help would make this situation feel easier right now?

Who could you ask?

4. What Would You Want to Remember Before Reaching Out?



 Asking for help does not mean you are weak, incapable, or failing.

Before reaching out, what would you want to remind yourself of?

What might make it easier to take that first step?

➤ Example: *"Everyone needs help sometimes. Asking a question doesn't mean I'm bad at something."*

[illegible]

5. *What Happened After You Asked?*



 Describe what happened after you reached out.

How did the other person respond?

Was the experience different from what you expected?

6. *What Changed Once You Stopped Carrying It Alone?*



 Receiving help does not always solve a problem immediately.

Sometimes, it simply makes the situation feel more manageable.

Did anything feel different after you asked?

Did the problem feel smaller, clearer, lighter, or easier to handle?

7. What Did This Experience Teach You About Asking for Help?



 Looking back on the experience, what did you learn?

Did anything challenge what you believed about asking for help?

What would you want to remember the next time you are tempted to carry everything on your own?

Example: *"I realized that asking for help is usually much harder in my head than it is in real life. Most people want to help when they can."*

[illegible]

Reflection:

You Don't Have to Do it Alone



After asking for help, you may have noticed that your brain did not immediately relax. You might have reread the message, wondered whether you explained things clearly, or started thinking, "Was that awkward?"

Did I say too much?" That reaction is more common than people realize because reaching out does not always bring instant relief.

You may have noticed something else while answering these questions too. The hardest part was probably not the response you received. It may have been the few minutes beforehand, when everything still lived in your head and your mind was filling in possibilities that had not happened yet. Once you asked, even if it still felt uncomfortable, you were no longer stuck imagining ten different outcomes at the same time.

Looking back now, there is a good chance something changed before anyone even answered. A few minutes earlier, you were carrying a question, problem, or worry on your own. Then you sent the message, asked the question, or started the conversation. Even if nothing was solved right away, you had already moved beyond carrying it entirely by yourself.



Lesson 9

DECODE WHAT YOU FEEL

Your emotions are signals, not problems.

You can have a day where nothing is clearly wrong, but everything still feels off. Your energy feels restless, your focus slips more than usual, and even small things start taking more effort than they normally would. A few weeks ago, I caught myself pacing around, tapping through apps, and checking the same things over and over like I was trying to land on something that would finally settle me down.

It took a while to realize I wasn't actually looking for a distraction. I'd been avoiding a decision I didn't want to deal with, and that tension had been sitting there in the background the whole time. I just hadn't connected it to the feeling yet.

Emotions can work like that sometimes. They do not always arrive with a clear explanation attached to them. Instead, they can show up indirectly through restlessness, irritation, or feeling off in ways that are hard to put into words at first. Feelings like these can seem random until you stay with them a little longer. The activity that follows creates room to look underneath them instead of immediately moving past them.



That doesn't mean every feeling has an important message hidden inside it, or that every emotion tells you exactly what to do. Sometimes, a feeling is simply a reaction to a stressful day. Other times, it may be drawing your attention to something you need, something you've been avoiding, or something that deserves a closer look. The first step is noticing what's there before deciding what to do with it.



EMOTION DECODER MAP

Worksheet Instructions:

1. Name What You're Feeling



 Pause for a moment and check in with yourself.

What emotion feels strongest right now?

How do you notice that emotion in your body?

 Example: "Anxious. My chest feels tight and my stomach feels unsettled."

2. *If This Emotion Could Speak, What Would It Want You to Notice?*



 Imagine your emotion had a voice.

What do you think it would want you to pay attention to right now?

Examples:

- Anger: "Something about this situation doesn't feel fair to me."
- Sadness: "Something important to me feels missing, lost, or changed."
- Anxiety: "There's something I'm worried about or trying to prepare for."
- Joy: "This matters to me and I want more of it."

3. *What Do You Think You Need Right Now?*



 The emotion may not have all the answers, but it may be pointing toward a need.

What do you think would be most helpful right now?

➤ Example: *"I need a clearer plan because I'm feeling overwhelmed."*

4. What Is One Small Way You Can Respond to That Need?



✎ Choose one small action that feels realistic and supportive.

It does not need to solve the entire problem.

What is one thing you could do next?

Examples:

➤ *"I feel overwhelmed, so I'm going to break the assignment into smaller pieces and start with the first step."*

➤ *"I feel lonely, so I'm going to text someone I trust and check in."*

➤ *"I feel anxious, so I'm going to write down what's worrying me instead of keeping it all in my head."*

➤ *"I feel frustrated, so I'm going to take a short break and come back when I feel calmer."*

➡ "I feel disappointed, so I'm going to give myself time to feel upset before deciding what to do next."

➡ "I feel excited, so I'm going to make time to keep working toward what matters to me."

5. *What Do You Understand About This Emotion Now?*



✎ After slowing down and listening to the emotion, how do you see it differently?

Did anything become clearer?

Did the emotion make more sense than it did before?

Reflection:

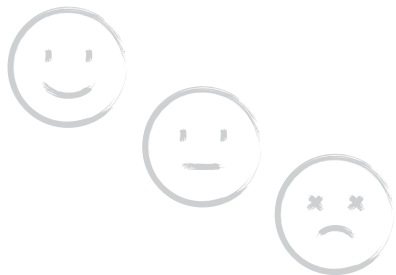
Your Emotions Aren't the Enemy

Feelings can seem simple at first. You tell yourself you are stressed, annoyed, overwhelmed, or just "in a bad mood," and that feels like the whole answer. Then you slow down and ask more questions, and suddenly the feeling has more layers than you expected. What first looked like one emotion can end up connected to pressure, disappointment, worry, exhaustion, or something you had not fully noticed before.



That is part of what makes emotions confusing sometimes. They do not always show up clearly. They can appear in your body, your energy, your focus, or in the same thoughts repeating throughout the day. Looking at a feeling from different angles can reveal things that are easy to miss when everything feels rushed and tangled together.

You also tried something different here. Instead of treating the feeling like a problem to immediately get rid of, you spent time figuring out what it might need. That changes the question from "How do I stop feeling this?" to "What is this feeling reacting to?" Those questions may not lead to perfect answers, but they can leave you understanding yourself a little better than before.



Lesson 10

FIND YOUR CALM IN THE CHAOS

When emotions take over, grounding brings you back.

Some emotions hit like a storm and make it hard to think through anything. You might notice your heart start to race, your thoughts feel harder to follow, or your body tense up before you can really make sense of what's happening. It can seem like everything's slipping out of your control, even when there's no clear reason for it.

Grounding works differently than trying to force yourself to calm down. Instead of pushing the feeling away, it gives your attention somewhere specific to land when everything feels scattered.

I remember sitting on my bed one afternoon feeling tense for no clear reason. I pressed my feet into the floor and started noticing a few details around me. Nothing dramatic changed, but after a minute or two I felt less caught up in the feeling and more aware of where I actually was.

Moments like these can feel like everything is pulling for your attention at once. This activity gives your attention somewhere more steady to land. It gives you a chance to practice bringing your attention back to the present when your thoughts start pulling you in too many directions at once.

FIND YOUR CALM IN THE CHAOS

Feelings do not always disappear right away, and they do not have to. Sometimes, having something steady to return to is enough to help you move through the moment without feeling completely pulled under by it.





THE GROUNDING CHECK-IN

Worksheet Instructions:

1. Name the Emotion



 What emotion are you feeling right now? Don't overthink it—just name it

 Emotion: _____

 Where do you feel it in your body? (e.g. stomach, chest, shoulders)

2. Do a 5-Sense Reset



 Slowly go through each of your five senses. Write down what you notice around you:

 5 Things You Can See:

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

 4 Things You Can Touch:

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

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

 3 Things You Can Hear:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

 2 Things You Can Smell:

1. _____
2. _____

 1 Thing You Can Taste:

1. _____

3. What's Different Now?



✧ Take a breath. After going through the check-in, what changed in your mind or body? Do you feel calmer, more focused, or just a little more grounded?

[illegible]

4. What Helped the Most?



 Looking back on the exercise, which part helped you the most?

Was it noticing what you could see, hear, touch, smell, taste, or something else entirely?

Why do you think that part helped?

 Example: *"Touching different objects helped the most because it gave me something concrete to focus on."*

Reflection:

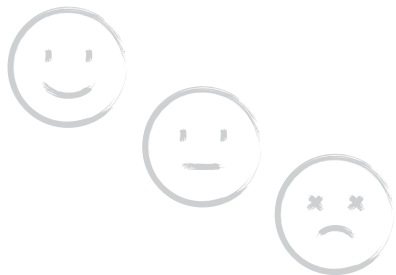
Feel It to Ground It

Grounding does not always create a huge, obvious change right away. You may still be thinking about the same problem, and the feeling that brought you here may still be there too. That can make it easy to miss smaller changes, like your breathing slowing down, your body relaxing a little, or your thoughts feeling less crowded than they did a few minutes earlier.



Sometimes, the difference is easier to notice in your body or attention than in your thoughts. Your shoulders might feel less tense, or you may notice things that barely registered before, like sounds in the room or the feeling of your feet on the floor. You may still be thinking about the same problem, although it can start feeling less like all of your thoughts are piling on top of each other at once.

This activity asked you to compare how things felt before and after, and that comparison can be easy to overlook if you are expecting a huge change. Small shifts can seem unimportant in the moment, but sometimes, you only notice that something changed because you slowed down long enough to look for it.



Lesson 11

NOTICE THE PATTERN, CHANGE THE GAME

Your mood has a rhythm—and you can learn to work with it.

Certain parts of the day can start feeling familiar in ways you do not notice right away. You might find your energy dropping around midafternoon, your motivation fading after getting home, or certain times consistently feeling heavier than others. At first, those shifts can seem random because you are experiencing them one moment at a time instead of seeing them side by side.

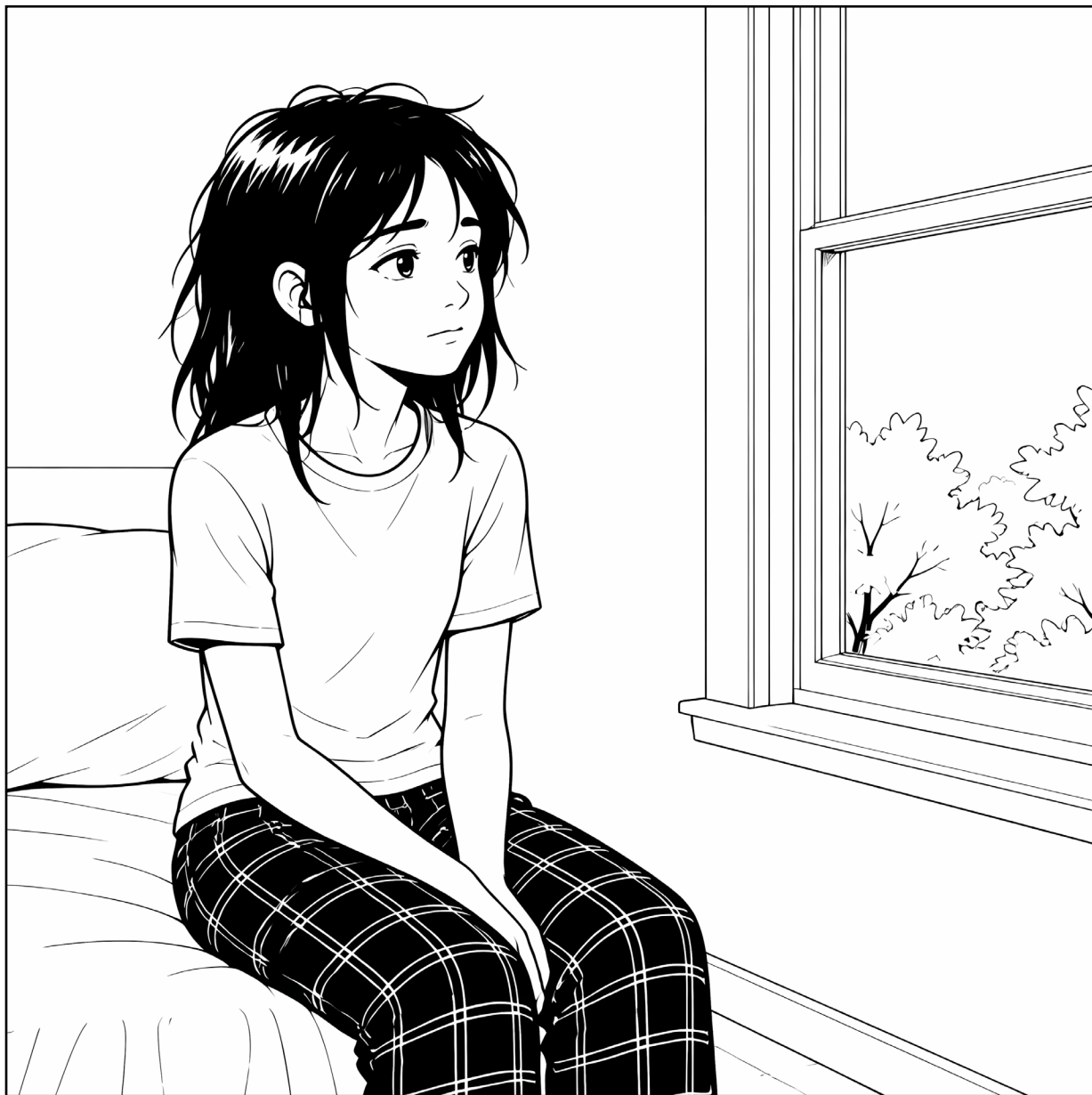
Patterns become easier to notice once you stop looking at each day as a completely separate experience. Things like stress, hunger, social overload, or not having enough time to reset can quietly shape how certain parts of the day feel.

Sometimes, irritation starts showing up around the same time every afternoon. At first, it can seem like a personality thing or just a bad habit. After paying attention for a few days, you may realize it has more to do with skipping meals, pushing through without a break, or running low on energy by that point in the day.

The next activity builds on moments like that. It gives you a chance to step back and notice what tends to show up, not to judge it, but to understand what may be influencing it.

NOTICE THE PATTERN, CHANGE THE GAME

You are not trying to make every day feel exactly the same. The goal is to recognize what helps, what drains you, and what certain moments may be asking for before they start feeling harder to manage.





THE MOOD TRACKER LOOP

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *What Are You Curious About?*



-  Have you noticed any patterns in your mood, energy, or emotions that you do not fully understand yet?

For example:

-  Why do I feel tired after school?
-  Why does my mood seem to change throughout the day?
-  Why do I feel better around some people than others?
-  Why do some days feel easier than others?
-  What have you been wondering about?

 Why does that stand out to you?

 Example: *"I've noticed that I often feel drained in the afternoon. It stands out because I usually start the day feeling fine, and I'm not sure what changes."*

2. Check In Throughout the Day



 Fill this out three times: Morning, Afternoon, and Evening.

Morning

Emotion I felt most (e.g. anxious, excited, frustrated, calm, disappointed, proud, nervous, overwhelmed, lonely, hopeful, angry, content, confused, embarrassed, motivated, stressed, grateful)

Energy level (1–10):

What was going on?

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

What was I doing, thinking about, or experiencing at the time?

Notes & Observations

Did anything stand out about your mood, energy, thoughts, surroundings, or interactions?

Afternoon

Emotion I felt most:

Energy level (1-10):

What was going on?

What was I doing, thinking about, or experiencing at the time?

NOTICE THE PATTERN, CHANGE THE GAME

Notes & Observations

Did anything stand out about your mood, energy, thoughts, surroundings, or interactions?

Evening

Emotion I felt most:

Energy level (1–10):

What was going on?

What was I doing, thinking about, or experiencing at the time?

Notes & Observations

Did anything stand out about your mood, energy, thoughts, surroundings, or interactions?

3. *What Is One Small Change You Could Experiment With?*



 Based on the pattern you noticed, what is one small change you could test tomorrow?

Choose something realistic and specific.

For example:

-  "I'll start my homework before dinner because that's when my energy is highest."
-  "I'll take a short walk after school instead of immediately going on my phone."
-  "I'll listen to music during my afternoon break."
-  "I'll text a friend when I notice myself feeling isolated."

NOTICE THE PATTERN, CHANGE THE GAME



After trying your small change, come back and answer:

What happened?

Did anything feel different?

What did you learn about what affects your mood or energy?



Example: *"Starting my homework earlier helped me feel less stressed in the evening. I learned that my energy is usually highest right after school."*

Reflection: Your Emotions Have Rhythm

Seeing your day written out can create a different reaction than simply living through it. While you are moving from class to class or one part of the day to the next, everything can blend together. Looking back afterward, though, can make certain patterns stand out in ways that were harder to notice while everything was still happening.



Once those patterns become visible, the experience itself can start feeling different. A low-energy afternoon may stop feeling like "something is wrong with me" and start looking more like "this keeps happening around the same time." A stressful part of the day can also feel less random once you notice when it tends to show up.

That is where this activity becomes more than simply writing things down. Once you notice a pattern, it often becomes easier to recognize it the next time it appears. Even if the adjustment you tried felt small, you learned something new about your day, and over time, those observations can make it easier to recognize what helps, what drains you, and what tends to throw things off.



Lesson 12

PROTECT YOUR PEACE

Your energy is valuable—treat it like it matters.

You can spend an entire day around people and still end up feeling completely drained by the end of it. Sometimes, it happens after a difficult conversation or being around someone who leaves you feeling off afterward. Other times, it builds more quietly through constant messages, expectations, or feeling pulled in too many directions at once.

What can make it confusing is that nothing may seem obviously wrong in the moment. You are answering texts, showing up for people, keeping up with responsibilities, and doing things that normally seem manageable. The effect often becomes noticeable later, when everything starts feeling heavier than it should.

Some things take more out of you than you realize while they're happening. This activity looks a little closer at where your energy has actually been going, including the things that quietly take more out of you than you realized.

It's easy to start replying to every message right away, especially when someone needs support. At first, it can feel helpful or responsible. Over time, though, constantly staying available can start creating pressure you never really noticed before. Even seeing your phone light up can begin to feel exhausting.

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

Boundaries do not always have to start with a big decision or explanation. Sometimes, they begin with noticing when something repeatedly leaves you feeling worn down and giving yourself permission to respond differently.





THE ENERGY PROTECTOR PLAN

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Spot the Energy Leak*



- ✎ Think about something that regularly leaves you feeling mentally, emotionally, or physically drained.

It could be:

- a situation,
- a person,
- a habit,
- a responsibility,
- a place,
- or something else entirely.

 What tends to drain your energy

 What makes this especially draining for you?

2. *What Usually Happens Afterward?*



 After this situation happens, I often feel (*check all that apply*):

- ☐ Drained
- ☐ Stressed
- ☐ Irritable
- ☐ Overwhelmed
- ☐ Distracted
- ☐ Tense
- ☐ Unmotivated
- ☐ Emotionally exhausted
- ☐ Something else: _____

 What patterns have you noticed?

How does this situation affect your mood, focus, motivation, stress level, or energy?

 Example: *"Afterward, I usually feel overwhelmed and struggle to focus on what I actually need to do."*

3. *What Are the Early Warning Signs?*



 Most energy drains do not appear all at once.

Looking back, how can you usually tell that your energy is starting to run low?

Area	What Do I Notice?
Thoughts	
Emotions	

Body	
Behavior	

4. What Boundary Might Help Next Time?



 A boundary is simply a limit that protects your time, energy, or well-being.

What is one boundary that might help you respond differently next time?

For example:

-  "I won't answer messages while I'm doing homework."
-  "I'll take a 10-minute break before saying yes to new commitments."
-  "I'll limit how long I scroll on social media before bed."
-  "I'll let someone know when I need quiet time to recharge."

5. What Will Help You Stick to It?



-  Boundaries are easier to keep when you have a reminder or support system in place.

What might help you remember or follow through with your boundary?

For example:

-  *A reminder on my phone*
-  *A sticky note on my desk*
-  *A calendar alert*
-  *Checking in with a friend*

-  My reminder or support plan:

6. What Helps You Recharge?

-  Protecting your energy is not only about reducing drains. It's also about noticing what helps you recover.

When your energy feels low, what usually helps you feel more refreshed, balanced, or recharged?

 For example:

- *"Spending time outside, listening to music, and taking a short break from screens usually helps me reset."*
- *"Talking with a friend helps me feel more connected and less overwhelmed."*
- *"Having quiet time by myself helps recharge after a busy day."*
- *"Going for a walk, exercising, or moving around helps me clear my head."*
- *"Working on a hobby I enjoy helps me feel more energized."*
- *"Getting organized and making a plan helps me feel less stressed and more in control."*

[illegible]

Reflection:

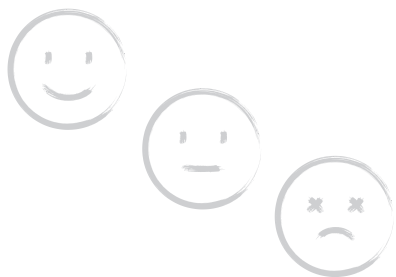
Boundaries Are a Form of Self-Respect

One thing that can stand out after an activity like this is realizing that feeling drained is not always as random as it seems. Sometimes, it starts feeling more connected to certain situations, people, habits, or expectations once you slow down and look more closely. Things that felt like part of a “bad day” can begin looking more like patterns that have been quietly repeating in the background.



That can change the way you think about boundaries too. Boundaries do not always begin with a big moment where you suddenly decide something has to change. Sometimes, they begin earlier, when you start noticing that certain situations regularly leave you feeling tense, overwhelmed, irritated, or exhausted afterward.

You may also come away with a different way of thinking about discomfort. Feeling unsure, awkward, or even a little guilty does not automatically mean a boundary is wrong. Sometimes, those feelings show up because you are trying something unfamiliar. The more clearly you recognize what drains you, the easier it can become to notice when something needs your attention before things start feeling heavier than they need to.



Lesson 13

FEEL IT, THEN CHOOSE IT

Your emotions are powerful—but your response is even more.

Sometimes, an emotional reaction takes over before you've had a chance to catch it, and what started as something ordinary shifts without much warning. Your tone changes, your thoughts pick up speed, and you might say something you didn't plan to say or pull back from the situation without fully deciding to. It can feel like everything moves faster than you expected, and by the time you notice it, you're already in the middle of it.

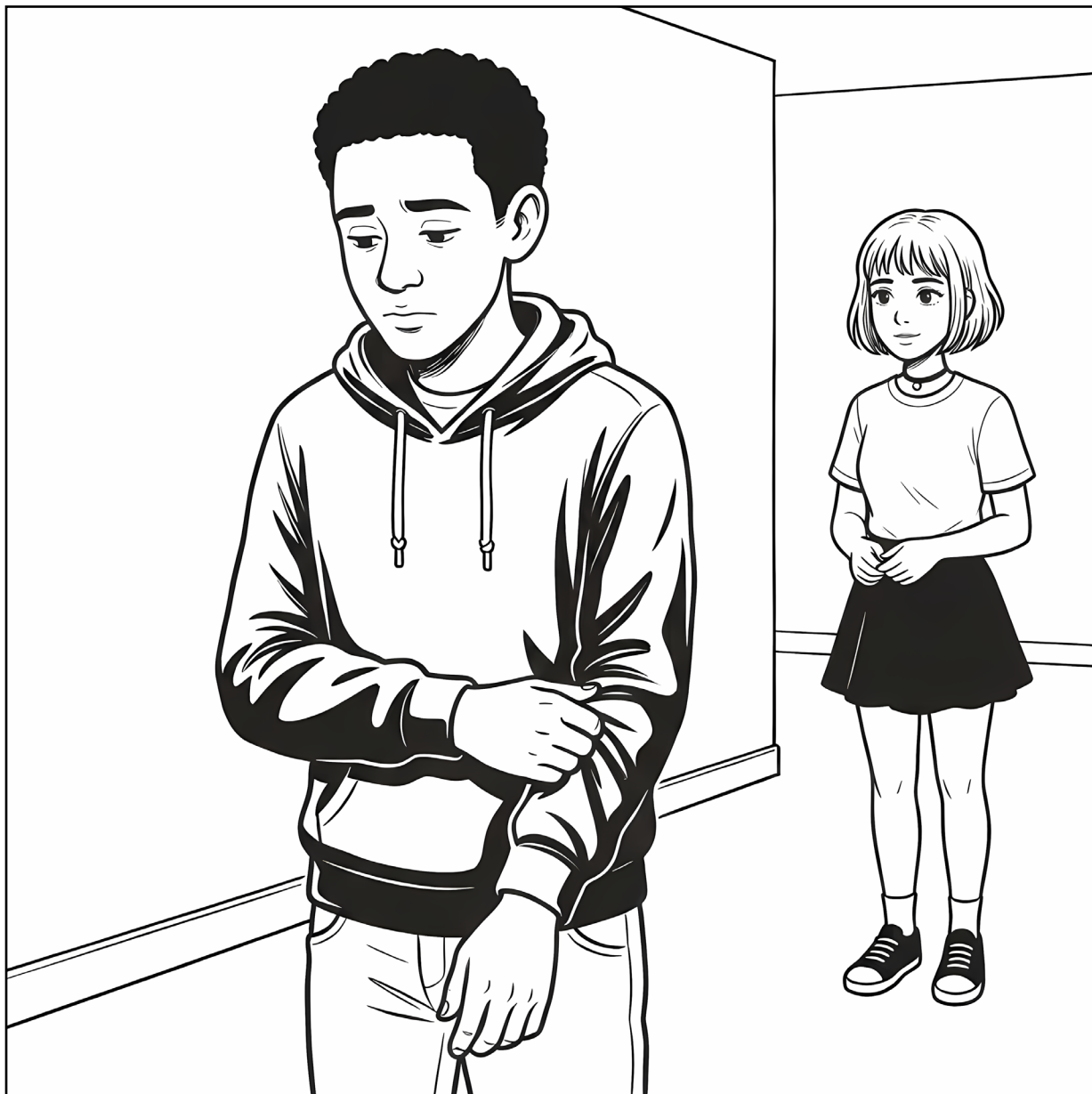
Reactions like that are often tied to patterns your brain has learned over time, shaped by past experiences and habits that kick in quickly. The feeling itself can still matter, and it often points to something in the situation that deserves your attention. What happens next isn't already decided, even if it feels that way in the moment.

Once things start moving quickly, it can be hard to tell what actually set everything off. The activity that follows slows things down enough to take a second look.

As you go through it, notice what comes up. You may feel tension, guilt, or something harder to name. That kind of discomfort often shows up when you begin to notice where your limits are.

FEEL IT, THEN CHOOSE IT

There is not one response that fits every situation. Over time, noticing what consistently throws you off, drains you, or leaves you feeling unsettled can make it easier to understand what works for you and what does not.



ACTIVITY
13

FEEL IT,, THEN CHOOSE IT

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Name the Feeling*



 What's an emotion you've felt strongly this week?

Think about a specific moment when you felt that emotion most strongly.

What happened?

2. *What Does That Feeling Usually Make You Want to Do?*



 Think back to the situation you described in Step 1.

When that emotion showed up, what did you feel pulled to do?

 Why do you think that reaction felt appealing in the moment?

What was it trying to help you do?

 Example: *"When I felt overwhelmed, I wanted to avoid everything because it seemed easier than figuring out where to start."*

3. *What Choice Would Better Support You?*



 Imagine the same feeling shows up again.

Instead of following your usual reaction, what is one action you could take that would better support you in that moment?

For example:

- *"Instead of avoiding it, I could break the task into one small step."*
- *"Instead of arguing immediately, I could take a few minutes to cool down first."*
- *"Instead of isolating myself, I could reach out to someone I trust."*

4. *What Might Change If You Responded Differently?*



✎ Imagine choosing the new response instead of your usual reaction.

What might be different afterward?

What problem could it help you avoid?

What benefit might come from making that choice?

5. *What Does This Teach You About Feelings and Choices?*



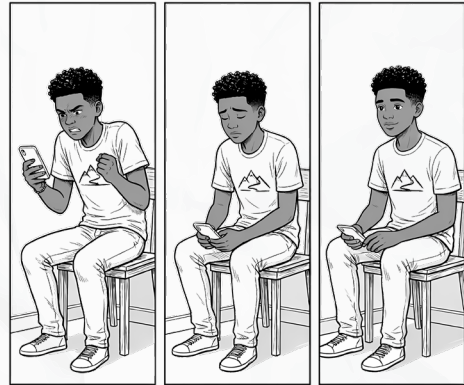
- ✎ Looking back on the activity, what do you notice about the difference between an emotion and a response?

What would you want to remember the next time a strong feeling shows up?

Reflection:

You're in the Driver's Seat

One thing that can stand out after an activity like this is realizing how quickly emotions can point you toward a reaction. Some feelings seem to arrive with a built-in suggestion attached to them. Frustration may push you toward snapping at someone. Embarrassment may make you want to disappear. Anxiety might tell you to avoid something completely. Those urges can feel automatic because they often show up fast.



Something that can be easy to miss is that the feeling itself does not always change right away. You gave yourself enough space to notice what it was pushing you toward and consider another option. That can reveal something important: the first impulse that shows up is not always the only direction available to you.

You may have also noticed that choosing a different response does not always mean choosing a perfect one. Sometimes, it's a smaller shift, like pausing before replying, stepping away for a minute, or saying something differently. The goal was never to erase the feeling. It was to create enough space to make a choice that felt closer to how you wanted to respond.



Lesson 14

WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW?

Your emotions are speaking. Are you listening?

Not every feeling shows up in a dramatic way. Sometimes, it sits in the background as tension, irritability, or a flat kind of numbness that's harder to name. It's easy to move through the day without checking in, especially when you're distracted, busy, or trying to keep everything going.

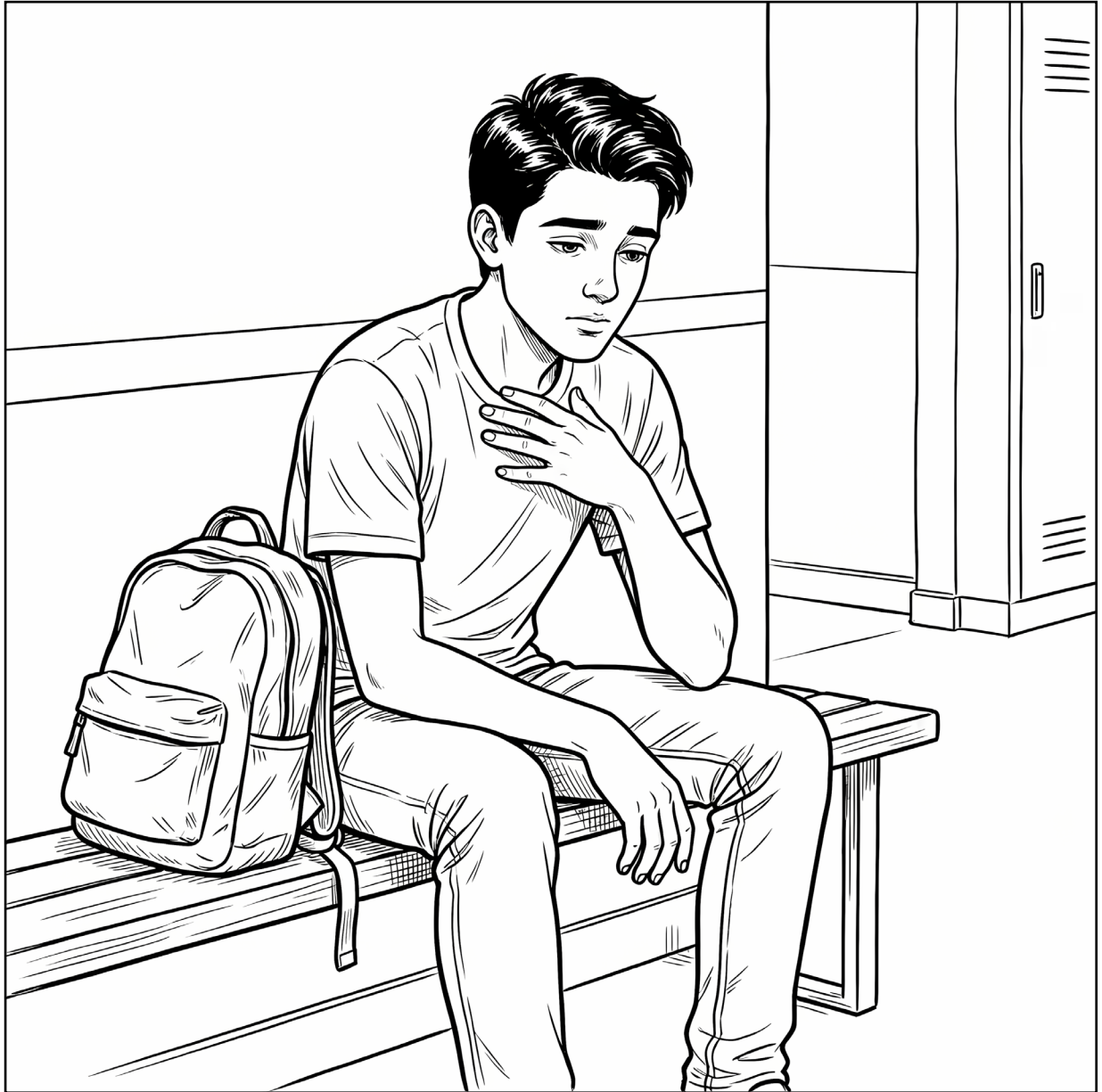
When that check-in doesn't happen, the strain usually doesn't disappear. It tends to stay in your body and build in quieter ways. By the time you notice it, you may already feel worn down, short-tempered, or disconnected without knowing exactly why.

The next activity builds on moments like that. It centers around a simple question: *What do I need right now?* The answer doesn't have to be complicated, but taking a second to notice it can shift how you move through the rest of your day.

You might spend hours around people, smiling, talking, and keeping up with everything expected of you while one part of you quietly wants time alone. It can be easy to push that feeling aside in the moment. Hours later, though, the need you ignored may start showing up differently.

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

Recognizing a need does not always mean you can respond to it right away. Sometimes, the first step is simply noticing that something is there. Paying attention to those quieter signals can make it easier to understand yourself before everything starts feeling heavier than it needs to.





WHAT DO I NEED RIGHT NOW?

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Pick a Strong Emotion You Felt Recently*



 Think about a recent situation that left you feeling upset, frustrated, or disappointed.

What emotion did you feel?

What happened?

 What made that situation feel important to you?

2. *What Felt Missing in That Moment?*



 When you look back on what happened, was there anything you felt was missing, unavailable, or not being met?

Why does that stand out to you?

 Example: *"I think I was missing connection. I was looking forward to spending time with my friend, and I felt let down when it didn't happen."*

3. *What Need Might That Emotion Be Pointing To?*



 Emotions do not always tell us exactly what we need, but they can sometimes provide clues.

Take a look at the examples below. As you read through them, consider whether your emotion might be connected to a need that feels similar.

Emotion	Possible Need
Anger	Respect, fairness, to be heard
Sadness	Comfort, support, connection
Anxiety	Reassurance, safety, control
Embarrassment	Acceptance, understanding
Happiness	Celebration, belonging, freedom

 Looking at the emotion you chose, what need feels most connected to what you experienced?

Why do you think that need mattered in that situation?

 Example: *"I think I needed connection because spending time with my friend felt important to me."*

4. How Can You Meet That Need in a Healthy Way?



- ✂ You may not always be able to get exactly what you want, but you can often take steps toward meeting the need underneath it.

What is one healthy way you could respond to that need?

For example:

- *"If I need connection, I could spend time with someone I trust, reach out to a friend, or join an activity where I can be around other people."*
- *"If I need reassurance, I could talk through my worries with someone, remind myself of what I know to be true, or gather more information before jumping to conclusions."*
- *"If I need respect or to be heard, I could calmly express how I feel, set a boundary, or give myself permission to rest."*
- *"If I need a sense of control, I could focus on one small step, make a plan, or organize what feels overwhelming."*

5. *When Have You Met This Need Before?*



 Think about another time when you felt a similar need.

What helped then?

What does that tell you about ways you can support yourself now?

[illegible]

Reflection:

Behind Every Emotion Is a Need

Some emotions can feel confusing simply because they seem to show up without much explanation. You might notice feeling irritated, overwhelmed, frustrated, or just a little off without immediately knowing why. When a feeling seems disconnected from everything around it, it can be easy to treat it like a mood you just have to push through or wait out. Part of what makes emotions confusing is that the reason behind them is not always obvious right away.



Sometimes, a feeling starts making more sense once it becomes connected to something specific. The answer can even turn out to be smaller than expected. You might realize you were tired, overwhelmed, needed space, wanted support, or simply needed a break. Even small realizations can change how a feeling sits with you because it no longer feels like something that appeared for no reason.

That does not mean everything suddenly feels solved. Understanding a feeling and immediately fixing it are not the same thing. Sometimes, knowing what a feeling may be reacting to can make it feel less confusing and easier to understand than when it first showed up.



Lesson 15

BREAKING YOUR OWN UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

*Because the pressure to be perfect doesn't
always come from other people.*

A lot of pressure can come from the way you talk to yourself. It can show up in thoughts that sound strict, impatient, or impossible to satisfy. You tell yourself that you should have done more, handled something better, or kept everything together without anyone noticing you were struggling.

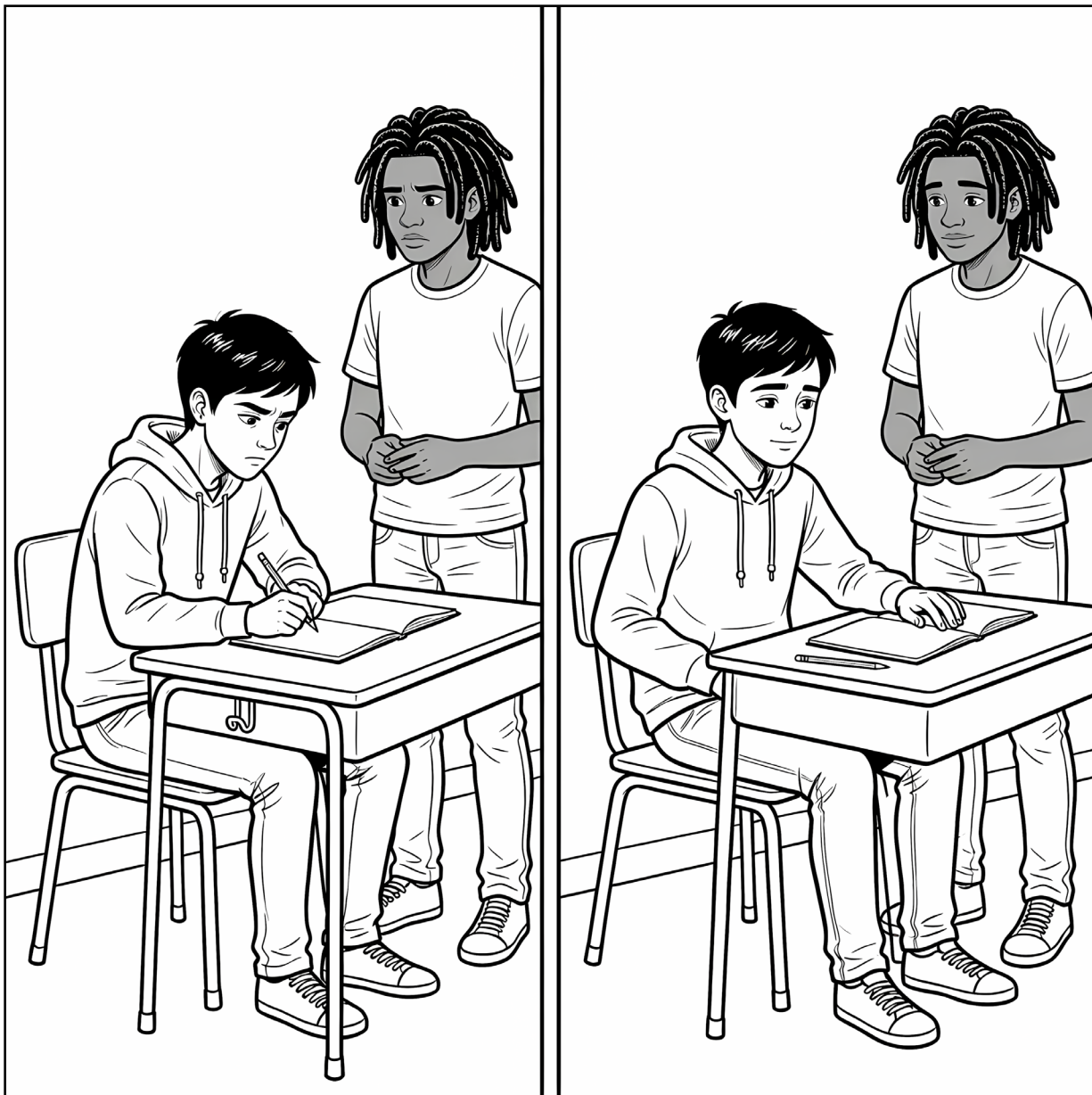
Part of what makes that pressure difficult to catch is that it often disguises itself as something positive. It can sound like responsibility, ambition, or simply wanting to do well, which makes it harder to notice when it starts asking more from you than you can realistically carry.

You might finish something that took real effort and immediately start looking for what could have been improved. Instead of feeling finished, your attention shifts to the next thing that still needs work. Over time, that mindset can make it difficult to recognize progress because the finish line keeps moving.

The activity that follows is designed to help you take a more honest look at the expectations you may be placing on yourself. Sometimes, the pressure we put on

ourselves becomes so familiar that we stop questioning whether those expectations are realistic in the first place.

Goals and high standards do not have to disappear. Sometimes, the bigger question is whether the expectations you are carrying still fit the situation you are in. Giving yourself room to adjust does not mean lowering your worth. It means making space for effort, limits, and being human at the same time.





REDEFINING WHAT'S "ENOUGH"

Worksheet Instructions:

1. *Name the Moment*



 Think of a recent time when you felt pressure to meet a high expectation.

It might have been something you expected of yourself, something someone else expected of you, or a standard that felt difficult to live up to.

What were you expecting from yourself in that situation?



What made that expectation feel important?



How did that expectation affect the way you felt about yourself?



Example: *"I expected myself to stay completely calm during a stressful week because I felt like I should be able to handle everything without getting overwhelmed."*

2. *Trace It Back*



✎ Where do you think this expectation came from?

Was it influenced by:

- something you were taught,
 - something you observed,
 - comparisons with other people,
 - past experiences,
 - social media,
 - or something else?
-
-
-
-

3. *Reset the Standard*



✎ Read the expectation you wrote in Step 1.

If a friend came to you with that same expectation, would it feel realistic, flexible, and fair?

If not, how could you rewrite it in a way that still encourages effort while allowing room for mistakes, setbacks, and difficult days?

➡ Example: *"I can do my best with the time, energy, and resources I have today."*

4. *What Would Feel Like Enough?*



✎ Nobody meets their expectations perfectly all the time.

Imagine a day when things don't go as planned and you fall short of the expectation you originally set for yourself.

How might the new expectation you created in Step 3 change the way you think about yourself or respond to the situation?

✎ What impact do you think that could have on the way you feel afterward?

➡ Example: *"Instead of thinking I failed because I didn't finish everything, I could recognize that I made progress and focused on what mattered most."*

5. Choose a New Anchor



- ✎ Think of a phrase that helps release some of the pressure created by the original expectation.

Write a reminder you would like to carry with you when perfectionism, self-pressure, or unrealistic expectations start showing up.

For example:

- *"Doing my best today is enough for today."*
- *"Progress still counts, even when it's not perfect."*
- *"I can have a difficult day and still be doing my best."*
- *"Effort matters, even when the result isn't exactly what I wanted."*

- ✎ Where could you place this reminder so you'll see it when you need it most?

Reflection:

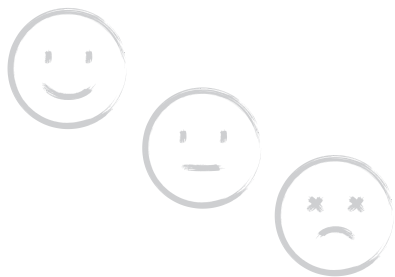
Give Yourself Some Credit

Some ideas about what you should be able to handle can stick around long enough that they stop feeling like expectations at all. Always keeping up, handling things on your own, or constantly doing more can start feeling like the way things are supposed to work rather than something you can question. A lot of these rules begin somewhere. They can come from school, other people, social media, or expectations you started placing on yourself a long time ago.



Seeing an expectation written out can change the way it feels. Something that sounded reasonable in your head can suddenly seem much heavier on paper. You may notice that it leaves little room for difficult days, stress, mistakes, or needing help.

In this activity, you were asked to imagine placing that same expectation on a friend. That comparison can feel different because most people naturally make room for a friend's stress, mistakes, or exhaustion. Sometimes, it can help to consider whether some of that same understanding, flexibility, or patience belongs to the expectations you place on yourself too.



BEFORE YOU GO

If you've worked through these activities, I hope you've discovered something useful along the way.

Many of the questions in this workbook don't have a single right answer, and that's intentional. Life is full of situations that can be viewed from different angles, and the way forward isn't always obvious right away. Sometimes, the most valuable thing we can do is slow down long enough to notice what we're thinking, feeling, and assuming before deciding what comes next.

One thing I hope these pages have shown you is that understanding yourself isn't about having everything figured out. Sometimes, it begins with nothing more than giving a situation a little more attention than you otherwise would have. A thought that seemed obvious, a feeling that was easy to dismiss, or an intense reaction may look different once you spend a little time with it.

As you move forward, you don't need to remember every worksheet or reflection prompt. What matters more is knowing that you can pause when something feels difficult, give yourself space to think things through, and choose your next step with greater awareness. The activities may be finished, but these are skills you can continue using long after you've turned the final page.

BIG FEELINGS, BETTER RESPONSES

Thank you for spending your time with this workbook. I hope it's something you'll return to whenever you need a fresh perspective or a quiet place to think things through.