The Unapologetically Selfish Guide to Building and Living a Life You Actually Love

Me First!

The Workbook

JENNIFER THOMÉ

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EXERCISES TO BUILD AND LIVE A LIFE YOU ACTUALLY LOVE

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WELCOME!

You're here! Finally! Your future self and I have been waiting for you.

If anyone knows what it feels like to live a life that looks amazing from the outside but fits like a shoe three sizes too small, I do. I'm Jennifer Thomé, your guide and your selfish bestie: a former people-pleasing overachiever who nearly drowned in my own goodness, then burned the rulebook and built a life I actually love. I know firsthand the courage, the doubt, and the wobbly-kneed uncertainty it takes to recalibrate your life until it finally becomes yours.

I also know the thrill on the other side: becoming your own best friend, treating your gut like a trusted advisor, and waking up in a life that fits.

So here is my promise. You have been the one who always shows up for others. Reliable, capable, and endlessly available. Together, we are going to take all of that energy, all of that talent, and point it back at you. Not so you become cold or careless, but so you finally give from overflow instead of bleeding out one yes at a time. As I say in the book: you don't create a better world by draining yourself to serve it. You create a better world by filling yourself up so fully that your overflow blesses everyone you touch.

This workbook walks you through the entire *Me First!* Method, one exercise at a time:

First, we wake up. We dismantle every "should" that has kept you small, hidden, and unfulfilled, and we calculate what people pleasing has actually cost you. (Spoiler: my bill came to roughly $200,000 and eight years of my life. We'll find your number too.)

Then, we reclaim your dream. We audit your life, find where you're leaking energy and joy, and get you back in touch with the dreams that light up your soul. Not the ones that look good on paper. The real ones.

After that, we rebuild you from the inside out, in the order that actually works: Body, Mind, Soul.

We recalibrate your body, because you cannot think your way into a new life while your nervous system is stuck in survival mode.

We reprogram your mind, so your inner dialogue cheers you on instead of dragging you down, and the most authentic version of you finally gets unleashed on the world.

And finally, we reignite your soul. We tap into the magic of creation (regardless of your faith!) and use it to infuse every area of your life with wonder, and to support that quantum shift you've been craving.

If you've read *Me First!* The Unapologetically Selfish Guide to Building and Living a Life You Actually Love, this will feel like coming home. If you haven't yet, you can still do every exercise here. The book gives you the science, the stories, and the loving roundhouse kicks of tough love. The workbook is where the transformation actually happens, because transformation doesn't come from reading. It comes from doing.

A few things before we begin:

Go in order if you can. The exercises build on each other, and skipping ahead is a little like trying to run before your legs are steady.

Be honest. Not performatively honest, not the version of honest that still sounds good. The real kind. The kind that makes you sit back and exhale because you finally said the true thing, and sometimes makes you want to cry or throw up. That's the good stuff. That's where the shift lives.

Be patient with yourself. You did not build these patterns overnight, and you will not dismantle them overnight either. But every time you choose yourself a little more clearly, a little more unapologetically, something shifts. The shifts accumulate. One day you look back and realize the distance you have covered.

And write in this thing. Scribble, score, underline, argue with me in the margins. A pristine workbook is a wasted workbook.

So, without further ado, let's go practice some sacred selfishness.

PART ONE
THE WAKE-UP CALL

This is the part where the fog lifts.

Here we take an honest look at what people pleasing has really cost you: your time, your energy, your health, your money, and your dreams. Not to shame you. To wake you up. Because once you see the bill, you will understand why putting yourself first is the most generous thing you can do, for yourself and for everyone around you.

Before we dive in, scribble some notes here. What do you think people pleasing has cost you? What are you afraid might come up in this part? Get it on paper. We'll compare notes at the end.

PEOPLE PLEASING INTAKE ASSESSMENT

People pleasing does not feel like a cost while you're in it. It feels like being helpful, being easy, being the reliable one. But it adds up, quietly and relentlessly. I calculated my own bill at roughly $200,000 and eight years of my life.

This checklist is yours. Answer honestly. No shame, no sugarcoating. Just the truth about what it is actually costing you. Check every box that has ever been true for you.

TIME

- ☐ *I have worked unpaid overtime more times than I can count.*
- ☐ *I juggle multiple projects at once because I said yes to all of them.*
- ☐ *I play priority ping-pong all day, reshuffling my to-do list to fit everyone else's.*
- ☐ *I have stayed late or logged back on just to make someone else's life easier.*
- ☐ *I spend more time on other people's problems than I do on my own.*
- ☐ *I have lost entire weekends to work that was never technically mine.*
- ☐ *I say yes before I even check whether I have the time to say yes.*
- ☐ *If I added up the hours I have given away this year, it would scare me.*

ENERGY AND PEACE OF MIND

- ☐ *I feel behind even when I am doing everything right.*
- ☐ *I wake up exhausted even after a full night's sleep.*
- ☐ *My mind is never fully off, even on my days off.*
- ☐ *I seek approval before I trust my own judgment.*
- ☐ *I say yes to things that quietly breed resentment underneath.*
- ☐ *My evenings and weekends get stolen by work that follows me home.*
- ☐ *I have stayed too long in a draining job or relationship out of loyalty or duty.*
- ☐ *My mental bandwidth is spent on everyone but me.*

HEALTH

☐ I can feel the stress in my body: tight chest, clenched jaw, racing thoughts.
☐ My sleep has taken a hit and I have just accepted it as normal.
☐ I run on chronic low-grade stress that never fully switches off.
☐ I have ignored physical symptoms because I did not have time to deal with them.
☐ I have used caffeine, food, or something else just to get through the day.
☐ I know my cortisol is probably high, and I have not done anything about it.
☐ I have gotten sick and kept working anyway.
☐ I feel wired and tired at the same time, more days than not.

MONEY

☐ I have gone years without asking for a raise I clearly earned.
☐ I am the nice one who never says no, and it has not translated into pay.
☐ I over-deliver and over-prepare but rarely ask for fair compensation.
☐ I have watched less-qualified people negotiate harder and get paid more.
☐ I feel financial stress that traces back to money I never asked for.
☐ I have done the extra work, but let someone else take the credit and the bonus.
☐ I have underpriced myself just to keep the peace or keep the client.
☐ If I calculated what people pleasing has cost me in dollars, I would be shocked.

CAREER GROWTH

☐ I have stayed quiet in meetings when I actually had something worth saying.
☐ I shrink myself so I do not take up too much space.
☐ I have self-silenced instead of pushing back on something unfair.
☐ I have watched a promotion I wanted go to someone who asked for it.
☐ My career growth has been delayed because I was too busy dealing with everyone else's stuff.
☐ I have handed off or shared a career-defining opportunity because I did not want to seem selfish.
☐ My ambition has dimmed because it felt safer to stay small.
☐ I have given away credit, visibility, or advancement without even being asked to.

RELATIONSHIPS

☐ I smooth over conflict so others stay comfortable, even when it is unfair to me.
☐ I say yes to keep the relationship easy, not because I actually want to.
☐ I have stayed in a relationship longer than I should have out of loyalty or guilt.
☐ I avoid speaking up because I do not want to be seen as difficult.
☐ I have noticed people take my agreeableness for granted.
☐ I keep the peace even when it costs me my own honesty.
☐ I feel more responsible for other people's comfort than my own.
☐ I have let resentment build quietly instead of naming what I actually need.

EMOTIONAL LABOR

☐ I am the unofficial therapist for people at work or in my life.
☐ People treat me like a crisis hotline, always on call for their problems.
☐ I act like a sponge, absorbing their stress so they do not have to carry it.
☐ I carry burdens that were never mine to carry in the first place.
☐ I am the one everyone unloads on, but I have no one to unload on myself.
☐ I manage other people's emotions before I even check in on my own.
☐ I feel drained after conversations where I did all the giving.
☐ I have talked someone else through a crisis while quietly having one of my own.

THE EXHAUSTION SPIRAL

☐ One yes seems to multiply into three more problems I now have to solve.
☐ I have noticed saying yes to one thing makes it harder to say no to the next.
☐ My sleep suffers because my brain is running through everyone else's needs.
☐ I have failed to advocate for myself because I was too depleted to fight.
☐ I feel like I am circling the same exhaustion, over and over, without a way out.
☐ The more I give, the less I seem to have left for the things that matter to me.
☐ I have noticed my exhaustion feeding my people pleasing, and my people pleasing feeding my exhaustion.
☐ I can see the spiral, but I have not figured out how to step off it. Yet.

Now count your checks and write the number down. Sit with it. Let it land.

My number: _____

That number is not a grade, and it is not a verdict. It is a snapshot of the patterns you walked in with, nothing more. Honestly? My goal is that by the time you finish this workbook, that number is zero. Not because you got harder or colder, but because you finally know in your bones that you deserve so much better, and you went and built that version of your life.

Notice the "Yet" on that last checkbox. That's where we're headed.

THE PRICE OF PEOPLE PLEASING

People pleasing costs you in every area of your life: your time, your energy, your health, your relationships, and your money. Research says women who don't negotiate their salaries leave half a million to a million dollars on the table over a career. Chronic stress quietly bills your body too. And that's before we count the hours.

This is not about blame. It is about awareness. You cannot negotiate with a cost you refuse to look at, and the clearer you are on the price, the better the choices you can make from here.

So let's look. Numbers on paper. Ready?

The Exercise

If you don't know it yet, let's figure out your hourly rate.

Take your annual salary and divide it by your working hours per year (for most full-time jobs, it's about 2,000).

My Hourly Rate:

Now, brainstorm the people-pleasing behaviors that show up in a typical week, and estimate how many hours each one costs you.

For instance:

- Over-explaining, over-apologizing, ruminating (3)
- Doing or re-doing work others should have done (1.5)
- Being the unpaid therapist for the office (2)

Now create your list. Be petty. Be angry. Be selfish. We're not here to please people. We're here to get back your freedom and happiness.

When you are done, read it back. Add up the hours, multiply by your hourly rate, and then, if you're feeling brave, multiply by fifty-two.

My weekly bill: _____

My yearly bill: _____

Let your emotions come up. Sit with them. A knot in your stomach, a slow burn of anger, even tears. All of it is welcome here, and all of it is fuel.

This is your starting point. And remember: this bill compounds every year you keep paying it. The good news? So do the returns, the moment you stop.

NO REGRETS, ONLY LEVERAGE

That list may have left you with a knot in your stomach or a quiet fury. Good! That energy can work for you now.

Here's the thing about regret: it is a prison, and you do not have to serve time for being human. Every so-called bad decision taught you something, and that lesson is leverage. Leverage to be brave. Leverage to spot a bad deal and walk. Leverage to trust your gut without asking permission.

Regret says, "You should have known better." Growth says, "How could you have? You'd never lived this before."

The Exercise

For each choice you have been carrying as a regret, write a sentence that begins with the words "Thank you."

For example:

- Thank you, draining job, for teaching me I will never again trade my health for a paycheck.
- Thank you, hard relationship, for showing me how much more I deserve.
- Thank you, financial disaster, for teaching me how to rebuild.
- Thank you, past version of me, for doing the best you could with what you knew.

Write as many as you need. Keep going until the heaviest one is on the page.

Gratitude burns regret to ash, and like a phoenix, you rise from those ashes.

KINDNESS OR PEOPLE PLEASING?

Let's clear something up right now, because I can already hear it: "But I like being a nice person!"

You get to stay kind. You get to stay generous and warm. You just get to do it from a full cup instead of an empty one. The difference between kindness and people pleasing is not in the action. It is in the energy underneath.

- Kind: you give from overflow, and it energizes you. You can say no without guilt.
- People pleasing: you give from depletion, and it drains you. No feels impossible.

The Exercise

Think of three or four things you regularly do for other people. For each one:

1. Write down what it is, and how doing it actually makes you feel. Not how it's supposed to make you feel. How it does.
2. Mark it: "fuels me" or "drains me."
3. For anything that drains you, run it through the two sacred selfishness questions from the book:
   - Am I acting from fullness or from fear?
   - Does this fill my well, or just move water around?
4. Then ask: what would it look like to give less here, or to give from a different place?

You're not canceling your generosity. You're funding it properly.

YOUR PEOPLE-PLEASING TYPE

Your people-pleasing type is simply your greatest gift pointed in the wrong direction.

The Martyr was never weak. She was strong enough to carry impossible things. The Peacekeeper can read a room like sheet music. The Expert can out-research anyone alive. The problem was never the gift. The problem is that it's been aimed at everyone but you. When you turn that gift back toward your own life, the very same quality becomes your superpower.

This is the exercise that ruins people pleasing for you forever. You're welcome!

The Exercise

Read through the eight types and notice which ones feel like looking in a mirror. Most people see themselves in more than one.

- **The Martyr:** you run yourself ragged for others and wear exhaustion like a badge.
- **The Peacekeeper:** you swallow your truth and keep the peace at your own expense.
- **The Safe Space:** you absorb everyone's pain and end up a dumping ground.
- **The Savior:** you rush in to fix and rescue, often before anyone asks.
- **The Saint:** you erase your own needs to make room for everyone else's.
- **The Diplomat:** you edit yourself to fit every room and avoid making waves.
- **The Loyalist:** you stay in draining situations because leaving feels like betrayal.
- **The Expert:** you protect yourself with knowledge and refuse to let anything be imperfect.

1. Pick the one or two types that fit you most.
2. For each type, write down how the old version shows up in your daily life.
3. Then answer these three prompts for each type:
    - At work: How does this type shape my workload, my calendar, my pay, and the way I speak up or stay silent?
    - In relationships: How does this type shape the roles I keep playing?
    - In my body: What does this pattern feel like in my nervous system?
4. Now write a few lines describing the real you: the same gift aimed at your own goals and wellbeing. The Martyr's strength building her own dream. The Loyalist's devotion pointed at people who choose her back.
5. Start with: "When I aim this gift at my own life, I…"
6. Put a star next to the one sentence that feels like your new script.

Remember: people pleasing was never your personality. It was your protection. And the door was never locked.

ME FIRST! IN ACTION

Here's the plot twist nobody expects: you can still say yes. Yes to helping, yes to giving, yes to showing up. On one condition. You check whether it serves you first, because you are now your own north star.

The Exercise

Pick one decision or request that is currently on your plate. Run it through the *Me First!* questions and write your honest answers:

- What's in this for me?
- Does this meet my needs emotionally, mentally, or financially?
- Will this help me grow, learn, or thrive?
- How will this benefit me in the short term and the long term?
- Does this make me happy?
- Is this a sustainable solution or just a quick fix?
- Does this bring me closer to my goals?
- If the cost is high and the benefit is unclear, it is a no.

Then add one more layer:

What would change if I answered these as the future version of me instead of the exhausted current one?

START BEFORE YOU FEEL READY

You might be thinking, "I am not ready!"

Perfect! That means you understand the size of what you are about to do. Readiness is not a feeling you wait for. It is something action creates. My own "*Me First!*" sticky note sat on my whiteboard for four years before I acted on it. Four years! Don't be like me. The you who lives your dream life does not exist yet, and every small step is how you become them.

Staying stuck takes effort too, by the way. It's a slow leak that never stops. Change is intense but temporary. Choose your hard.

The Exercise

1. Name one thing your future self would do that scares you a little.
2. Shrink it down to the smallest possible first step: a quick search, a single phone call, one sentence written.
3. Do that step today, not because you feel ready, but because action creates readiness.
4. Afterward, thank yourself out loud for showing up.
5. Rinse and repeat. Get into the habit of being the you you want to be!

MEET THE ONE WHO ALREADY MADE IT

Before we leave this part, there is someone you need to meet.

They have your eyes and your laugh, and they carry your history without carrying its weight. They said the no you're still rehearsing, took the leap you're still measuring, and built the life you're holding in your hands right now as a wish. They are your future self. And they have been waiting, patiently and without a shred of worry, for you to find your way to them.

This is not a fantasy. This is a relationship, and you can visit any time.

The Exercise

1. Find a quiet spot. Close your eyes or soften your gaze.
2. Picture a warm room, golden light through the windows. Two cups of tea are already made, already the right temperature. One is yours.
3. Your future self is sitting there, completely at ease. Take them in. How do they sit? How do they breathe? What is different about the way they take up space?
4. Tell them what you're afraid of. Then be quiet and listen. Let them answer in their own words. They might say something like: "You didn't break. You broke open. There's a difference."
5. Before you leave, ask them one question about the road between you and them. Write down exactly what they say.
6. Come back whenever doubt creeps in. Find the couch. Make the tea. Sit with them.

From here on out, they are your advisor. Before a hard conversation, ask: "What would you do?" After a backslide, come back anyway. There's no falling behind here. So let's go become them.

INTEGRATION - THE WAKE-UP CALL

Look at you. Eyes open, bill calculated, type identified, future self on speed dial. Before we move on to your dreams, let's lock in what you found:

- What has people pleasing cost me most heavily so far: money, energy, health, or self-respect?
- Which people-pleasing type runs my life most often?
- What is one boundary or decision I am now ready to make differently?
- What does "putting myself first" mean in practical terms this week?

PART TWO
RECLAIM YOUR DREAM

When did you stop dreaming of your dream life?

Maybe the fog rolled in slowly. Maybe someone ripped the dream out of your hands with one careless sentence. Or maybe it was hundreds of tiny moments that taught you to shrink. However it happened, here is the truth: the universe planted those desires in you for a reason, and when you deny them, an innate part of you withers.

So in this part, you remember what you actually want, design the life that lights you up, figure out what has been standing in your way, and start becoming the person who lives it.

Feel free to doodle and scribble some big, audacious wishes below to get the juices flowing. Nobody is grading this page. Go big.

YOUR LIFE AUDIT

Time for an honest snapshot. This is your moment of clarity, the universe poking you in the ribs to remind you that you are meant for more.

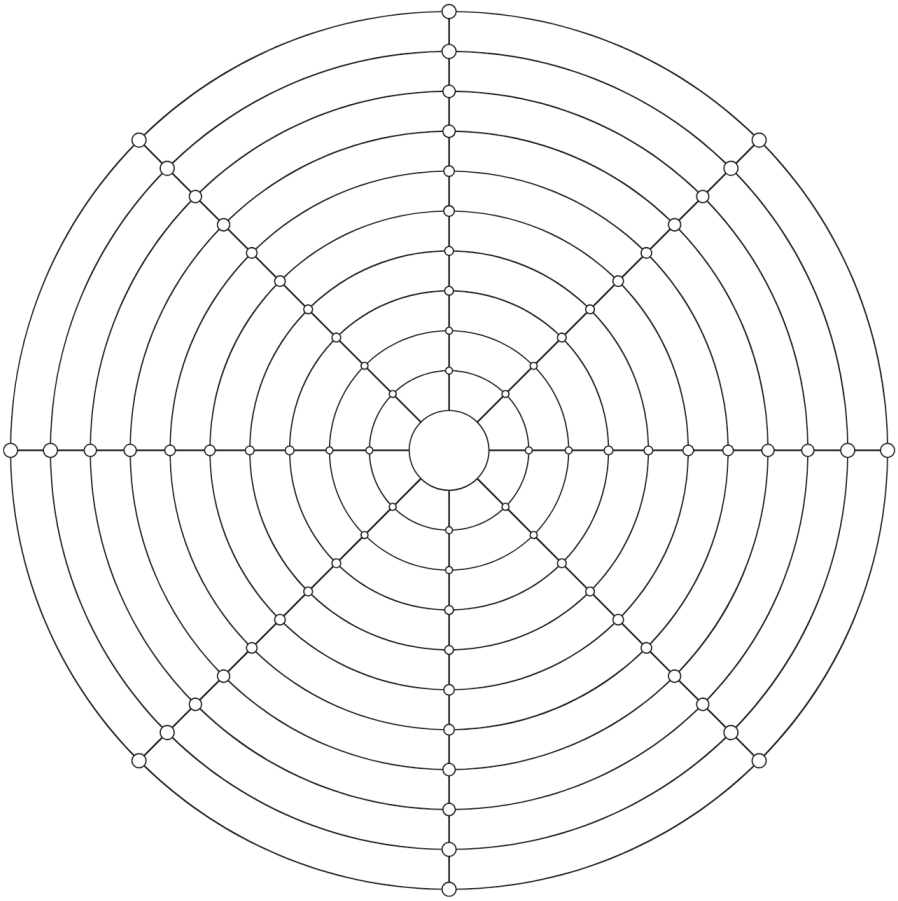
Think of your life as a grand, ongoing research project in which you are the subject, the creator, and the observer all at once. Today we gather the data. Awareness is the first act of rebellion against unconscious, uninspired living, so be honest, and let whatever feelings come up fuel the changes ahead. Emotion is data too.

The Exercise

1. Rate how thrilled you are with each area of the chart, from 1 (unhappy, needs immediate attention) to 10 (thriving). Add any areas that are missing, and skip any that are not a priority right now.
2. For each area that scored low, reflect in writing using the prompts below. These low scores are not failures. They are leverage points, the places where small shifts create massive returns in happiness.
3. Then write a few "I am" statements for each low area, describing the person you are becoming.

	Take Action				Refine			Keep Going		
Areas	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Health										
Career										
Family										
Friendships										
Relationship										
Finances										
Self-Love										
Spirituality										
Environment										

Alternatively, you can choose the eight areas you want to work on and map your scores on the wheel of life below. The more evenly the wheel fills out, the smoother the ride. A lopsided wheel shows you exactly where the bumps are coming from.



Reflection prompts:

- What is the first feeling that comes up when I think about this part of my life?
- What is going well here?
- What could be better?
- What would this area look and feel like at an eight, nine, or ten?
- What is stopping me, and how does that make me feel?
- What is one regular action that would move me closer? What would the me who has already reached this level of happiness be doing?

For your "I am" statements, use "I am," not "I will." Brain scans show that "I am" statements light up the reward and identity centers of your brain. "I will" files your dream under someday. "I am" hands your brain a new identity to grow into.

Instead of "I will start exercising," write "I am someone who moves my body daily." Instead of "I will be more confident," write "I am confident in my decisions."

YOUR HAPPINESS TIMELINE

Before you design your future, it helps to understand your past.

This exercise has a way of upcycling your baggage into blessings. It shows you just how resilient and resourceful you have always been, and how many helpers and small miracles have crossed your path. It also reveals the patterns that keep dragging your line down, so you can stop repeating them.

The Exercise

1. Turn a sheet of paper sideways and draw a horizontal line across the middle.
2. Add a tick mark for every year you have been alive.
3. Mark the most significant events of your life along the line.
4. Positive events go above the line: the higher the dot, the better it felt.
5. Difficult events go below: the lower the dot, the harder it was.
6. Connect the dots to see your happiness trajectory.

Then, reflect in writing using the questions below.

- Which events created happiness?
- Which created pain?
- What were the turning points, up or down?
- Do any themes repeat: such as abandonment, freedom, or helpful people?
- Did something feel worse when it happened than it does now?
- What did I do that moved the line up?
- What did I ignore that moved it down?

YOUR DANGEROUS QUESTIONS

"They tried to bury us. Little did they know we were seeds."

To start dreaming again, you have to get comfortable with the questions that do not have tidy answers. They aren't meant to. Their job is to rattle the cage and wake things up inside you, the wants you buried so deep you almost forgot they were yours.

The Exercise

Find a quiet moment and answer these in writing.

Do not censor, and do not make your answers pretty.

- What would I do if I had never been hurt?
- What would I want if I did not care what anyone thought?
- What would I do if money, time, and energy were not obstacles?
- What do I secretly envy in others?
- What version of me exists only in my imagination?
- Who do I become when no one is watching?
- Who am I around the people who light me up?

If any answer made your chest tighten or your eyes sting, star it. That reaction is not a problem. That is a seed, cracking open.

MAKE PEACE WITH YOURSELF

Looking back can stir up grief for the dreams and chances you let pass. Before you build something new, you want to clear that space.

Pain is the shadow of love. If something still aches, it means it mattered. And here is what I need you to know: not following your dreams wasn't stupid. It was a detour, taken by a version of you who was busy surviving. Here we honor the lost dream, so we can release the pain and build from a fresh slate.

The Exercise

1. Name your lost dream: the book you never wrote, the city you never moved to, the love you gave up on, the business you never launched, the version of you that you thought would have made it by now.
2. Let yourself feel it. Journal it, cry for it, rage about it, or tear up the page if you need to.
3. Now place one hand on your heart. Breathe slowly, letting the exhale run longer than the inhale. Picture the earlier you the way you'd picture someone you love, and say softly: "I see you. I know you were doing the best you could with what you had."
4. Write a short letter of forgiveness to the version of you who did not realize the dream. Remind them that they were scared, and they were surviving, and that was enough. Thank them for getting you here.
5. Close with this: "I forgive you. I love you. And now we get to choose again."

Forgiveness usually isn't a single event. It's a door you walk through more than once. Walk through it as many times as you need.

DREAM SELFISHLY

Forget being practical. We're done with that! In this space, you are at the center of your own dreams, so dream wildly. Do not ask if it's fair. Do not ask if it's realistic. Ask if it lights you up!

The Exercise

Set a timer for five minutes and write a no-holds-barred list of everything you want. Everything.

Do not censor, do not qualify, do not edit, and do not worry about anyone's feelings. The beach house and the book deal. The quiet Sunday mornings and the standing ovation. Write through the tingle of excitement, the hot tears, or the cold chills, until the vision lights you up.

Remember, this is not about how. It is about what. You cannot chase what you cannot name, so today you don't just name it. You claim it.

And when doubt nags, put a hand on your heart and remind it: "Relax! We're just dreaming here."

CHOOSE WHAT MATTERS FIRST

Look at that beautiful, messy list. Somewhere in you, a quiet, cruel voice is already whispering that if you can't do all of it, maybe you should do none of it.

That voice is lying.

Attention is soil. Scatter it across forty seeds and none of them break the surface. Being *Me First!* means choosing, on purpose, what comes first. The rest aren't canceled. They're queued.

The Exercise

Take about fifteen minutes with your Dream Selfishly list and run the *Me First!* filter:

- Circle the ones your body reacts to. Watch for the physical yes: the chest lift, the stomach flip, the eyes that sting. Cross out anything that was really someone else's dream wearing your handwriting. You'll know those by the flatness.
- Find the keystone. Which dream, if it came true, would make most of the others easier or unnecessary? Mark the two or three with the widest reach.
- Cross-check with your Life Audit. A keystone dream that touches your lowest-scored areas is pure leverage: it lights you up and stops a leak at the same time.
- Choose your anchor. One dream. The one you will design a path toward first. Write it at the top of a fresh page, with your runners-up beneath it.

My anchor dream:

Choosing one is not a betrayal of the others. It's a sequence.

BRING YOUR DREAM TO LIFE

Your dream matters, but the feeling underneath it matters even more. That feeling is what energizes you, and what draws your dream closer.

Most of us get stuck fixating on the exact shape of a dream, when what we really want is the way it will feel to live it. So we start there.

The Exercise

1. Take your anchor dream, the one that feels most electric.
2. Close your eyes and step into it.
3. Ask: what does this feel like in my body? My heart? How good can this feel?
4. Let that feeling fill you up and spill over.
5. Hold the feeling and gently release the exact picture, trusting that this or something better is already unfolding.
6. Name your next aligned action. Not the whole staircase, just the next step: a search, a phone call, a decision. Commit to taking it.
7. Create a small sacred container for this dream: a daily block of time, a private folder, a notebook that only holds things that feel like magic.
8. Tell someone who believes in you. Not someone practical. Someone who sees you.

Take a moment to reflect on the exercise. What did you notice? What felt true?

FROM DREAM TO BLUEPRINT

Dreams don't come true because you wrote them in a journal once. They come true because you start living like they're inevitable, and because you engineer them.

Architects work backward from the finished house to the first shovel of dirt. Trail designers stand at the summit in their imagination first, then trace the path back down. That's what you're about to do with your anchor dream, and the best part is: you only ever have to see the next step, not the whole climb.

THE EXERCISE

Move One: Stand at the finish and describe it. Write about an ordinary Tuesday inside your realized dream, in present tense. Not the highlight reel. The regular day. What time do you wake up? What does your calendar look like? Where are your shoulders?

Move Two: Mark the milestones backward. From the finish line back to today, name three to six landmarks you would have to pass. Work in reverse until you arrive at something you could start this month.

Move Three: Name the next aligned action. Make it so small it's almost embarrassing. Its job is not to impress anyone. Its job is to prove to your nervous system that motion is safe. Tiny. Real. Undeniable.

Move Four: Build a light container. A folder, a notebook, a note on your phone. Give the dream a home where it can grow.

Move Five: Name the fear, and name your person. State your fear about this dream in one plain sentence. Then tell one believing witness what you're building. A dream spoken to a believing witness is far harder to abandon quietly.

That's not wishful thinking. That's engineering, in the direction of everything you want.

BUT WHAT IF I FAIL?

Take one "failure" you're carrying, or one you're afraid of, and run the Failure Reframe:

- State what actually happened (or what you fear will happen). Facts only, no story. "The launch made three sales instead of thirty."
- Separate the event from your identity. "I failed at this" is a report. "I am a failure" is a lie.
- Collect the tuition. Write down one thing it cost you and one thing it taught you. That's the receipt.
- Find the redirect. What did it make possible? What did it protect you from?
- Choose the next aligned action. Failure's favorite trick is to freeze you. One stair. Today.

And remember: your worst-case scenario is usually going back to where you are now. You've already survived that, haven't you?

BORROW THEIR STRENGTHS

You do not get the life you want by chasing a dream. You get it by becoming the person who lives it.

Sometimes that shift starts by borrowing someone else's strength, because your nervous system cannot tell the difference between vivid imagination and reality. This is the same mental rehearsal elite athletes use before they ever touch the field. In one famous study, people gained real, measurable strength just by imagining their workouts. Let's put that superpower to work.

The Exercise

- Choose your model: someone who already has the strength, calm, or confidence you want, or your own future self from the tea room.
- Close your eyes and picture them standing in front of you, smiling, ready to share.
- Scan them from head to toe. Notice how they think, stand, breathe, and carry themselves.
- They give you a nod. You may now step in. Let your bodies merge and face the same direction.
- From inside their skin, ask: What am I thinking, and how do I feel about myself? What does this version of me know that I don't quite dare to believe yet? What am I finally done with? What do I do when doubt whispers in my ear?
- Ask how they would approach the exact goal or fear you're facing right now.
- Stay in that energy for a while. Soak in it.
- Then step back out, thank them, and watch them fade as you keep the feeling.
- Open your eyes and write down your next steps as that version of you.

Use it daily: pause, breathe, borrow, and ask, "What would they do?" You don't have the answers. You are the answer.

INTEGRATION - RECLAIM YOUR DREAM

Your dream is out of storage, dusted off, and wired for power. Before we start rebuilding your reality, put these on paper:

- What do I actually want, beyond what looks good or sounds responsible?
- What is my anchor dream, and what is one dream I am willing to protect starting now?
- What identity shift matters most in this season?
- What would my future self thank me for doing this month?

PART THREE
RECALIBRATE YOUR BODY

Like most people pleasers, you have probably spent most of your life living from the neck up.

Meanwhile, your body has been talking to you the whole time: the knot in your stomach, the tight shoulders, the exhaustion that sleep doesn't fix. Those aren't malfunctions. That's an intelligent ally speaking in whispers, and when we ignore the whispers long enough, the body starts to shout.

In this phase you drop back into your body, calm your nervous system, and learn to trust the signals that have been guiding you all along. This is the ground floor of your transformation. Everything else gets built on top of it.

NAME YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM STATE

When everything feels hard, you are not weak or broken.

You may simply be dysregulated — which means your body is confused about how safe you actually are.

The first step to changing that is recognizing which survival mode you tend to drop into.

The Exercise

Read the four stress responses and notice which ones feel familiar.

Most people have a go-to:

Fight: you snap, control, or defend when you feel cornered.
Flight: you stay busy, rush to fix, or avoid stillness and hard conversations.
Freeze: you go numb, zone out, or feel stuck in a fog.
Fawn: you say yes when you mean no, and shrink to keep everyone else comfortable.

1. Note which response shows up most for you, and in which situations.
2. Write down what it feels like in your body when it happens.
3. Remind yourself, in writing: this is my body trying to keep me safe.
4. It is not a flaw, and it can be retrained.
5. Add one workplace example if work is one of your main stress arenas.

MAKE FRIENDS WITH YOUR WORST FEELINGS

You were taught to tame your difficult emotions: smile when you want to scream, stay calm instead of anxious, be grateful instead of jealous.

But those so-called negative feelings are not proof you are broken. They are proof you are alive, and each one is a tool carrying precise information. Anger sets your boundaries. Fear shows you the way. Jealousy lights up your hidden dreams. Sadness heals you. Disgust protects your soul. You don't need to silence them. You need to learn to wield them.

The Exercise

Choose one strong emotion you are feeling right now or have felt lately: anger, fear, anxiety, jealousy, sadness, or disgust. Then work through the five moves:

1. **Name it.** One precise word, out loud.
2. **Feel it.** Let it exist in your body without rushing to fix it.
3. **Move it.** Shake, dance, walk, wring a towel, or let yourself cry, so the energy can move through you.
4. **Decode it.** Ask it: what are you here to show me? What boundary was crossed? What do I want? What needs to change? Write down the truth it points to.
5. **Act on it.** Take one aligned action based on that truth: set a boundary, have a conversation, make a decision. Not the whole staircase. The first stair, today, before anyone talks you out of it.

If you are carrying heavy emotions or significant trauma, this work goes best alongside support from a trusted person or a professional. Asking for help is a *Me First!* move, not a failure.

Take a moment to reflect on the exercise. What did you notice? What felt true?

NAME IT, RELEASE IT

Something happens, and a wave rises in your chest before you can think clearly.

Most of us were taught to manage it, push through it, or explain it away in long, circling sentences. But there is a faster way home, and it takes only a word or two. Brain imaging shows that precisely naming a feeling quiets the alarm center of your brain and brings your thinking brain back online, measurably, within seconds. The words you have available to you are the medicine available to you.

The Exercise

1. Bring to mind a feeling that has been circling in you lately, the kind you keep describing in long sentences that never quite resolve.
2. Set the story aside. Do not name the situation or the person.
3. Name only the feeling, in two words or fewer.
4. Reach for the most precise word you can find. Not “sad” if you mean “grief.” Not “upset” if you mean “humiliated.”
5. When the right word lands, notice the small loosening in your body. That is the release.
6. Sit with it for a moment.

Words that often carry the most relief: ashamed, humiliated, grief, resentful, overwhelmed, lonely, helpless, and relieved.

The more precise the word, the more completely the feeling settles.

Take a moment to reflect on the exercise. What were you able to release, and how do you feel now?

BREATHE LIKE YOUR LIFE DEPENDS ON IT

Here's something that changed my life, literally: when we are anxious, we are barely breathing. I learned this the hard way, when a health crisis turned out to be largely my body gasping for the oxygen my anxiety kept rationing.

Deep, slow breathing tells your nervous system that you are safe. The longer the exhale, the stronger the calm signal you send your brain. Just five minutes can steady you.

The Exercise

1. Sit or lie somewhere comfortable and let your body feel supported.
2. Breathe in slowly through your nose for a count of four.
3. Hold gently for a count of four.
4. Breathe out slowly for a count of eight, letting the exhale be longer than the inhale.
5. Repeat for about five minutes, or until you feel calmer.

If you want to go deeper, add a long, loud sigh on each exhale and imagine sighing away what no longer serves you.

A note of care: if you are pregnant, have cardiovascular issues, or have a history of fainting, keep it gentle. Lightheadedness is a signal to ease off, not a milestone to chase.

Did anything that came up surprise you?

TALK TO AND LISTEN TO YOUR BODY

Your body is not a machine to manage. It is not a vessel that carries your brain around.

It is an intelligent ally that has been speaking to you in whispers: a knot in your stomach, tight shoulders, a wave of fatigue. Fun fact: most of the nerve traffic between your body and brain flows upward, body to brain. Your body has been sending reports all along. Healing begins when you stop overriding those signals and start listening with curiosity instead of judgment.

The Exercise

1. Get still. Place a hand on your heart and take a few slow breaths.
2. Tell yourself, out loud if you can: "It's all right. We are safe."
3. Notice where in your body you are holding tension or feeling something. Just notice it, without trying to fix it.
4. Get curious. Ask your body, gently: "What are you trying to tell me?"
5. Then wait, and let the answer surface in its own time.
6. Whatever comes up, breathe into it and remind yourself that you are safe.
7. Before you finish, thank your body for carrying you and for speaking up.
8. Bonus move: your body loves being talked to kindly. Try a "Wow! We are doing great today!" and watch what happens.

Was there anything your body was trying to tell you that you missed before? How do you feel after opening up communications with your body?

WRITE IT DOWN, LET IT GO

Journaling by hand has a quiet power.

It helps you process what you have been carrying, untangle your thoughts, and loosen the grip of old experiences. Researchers have found that this simple practice can soften the emotional charge of a painful memory in just three short sessions. Think of it as boxing up the things you don't love but can't throw away, and moving them into storage. Out of the living room. Off your chest.

The Exercise

Find a quiet place and about twenty minutes.

Write freely about one difficult experience, knowing no one else will ever read this. Write like no one is watching, because no one is.

Answer these three questions:

- What happened?
- How did it make me feel at the time?
- How has it affected my life since then?

Do this three times, either on three days in a row or a few days apart.

For significant trauma, it is wise to do this work with a professional at your side.

THE EXERCISE: FIRST DAY

Answer these three questions:

- What happened?
- How did it make me feel at the time?
- How has it affected my life since then?

THE EXERCISE: SECOND DAY

Answer these three questions:

- What happened?
- How did it make me feel at the time?
- How has it affected my life since then?

THE EXERCISE: THIRD DAY

Answer these three questions:

- What happened?
- How did it make me feel at the time?
- How has it affected my life since then?

WRITE IT DOWN, LET IT GO REFLECTION

Now that you've completed the exercise three times, reflect on the following questions:

- How did your perception of the event change?
- Did the emotions become easier to process? How were they different?
- How do I feel now that I've put this in the past?

TIE UP LOOSE ENDS

Your brain treats unfinished things differently than finished ones. It keeps them open, humming in the background, like a browser with forty tabs eating up your processing power.

Every unresolved conversation, unspoken goodbye, and apology never given stays quietly open, drawing a little of your energy. Closing those loops is not about fixing the past. It is about witnessing what happened, so the energy can come home to you. Closure is an internal event, not an external negotiation. The other person never even needs to know.

The Exercise

1. Inventory. On a piece of paper, list every emotionally unfinished thing you can think of, big and small. Do not filter for importance.
2. Identify what each one needs to feel complete: an apology you give (or stop waiting to receive), a goodbye, a witnessing, or simply a decision about how you will hold it from now on.
3. Do the completion. Write the unsent letter, say the goodbye out loud (even to an empty chair), or speak the apology to yourself in the mirror. Sincerity matters more than the method.
4. Release it. For each one, say out loud: "This is complete. I release the energy I have been spending to keep it open."
5. Then slowly cross it off the list. Physically. That little pen stroke is a message to your whole system: filed, no longer active, resources returned.
6. Notice what comes into the space.
7. Start with just one loop today. Just one string, cut.

Take a moment to reflect on the exercise. Were you able to tie up a loose end?

How did that make you feel?

DANCE YOUR WAY BACK

Long before we had language, we moved. Dance was prayer, communication, and medicine, and your body still remembers.

Dance is one of the fastest ways back into your body, a way to shake loose the stuck energy of fight, flight, and freeze. It bypasses the analyzing mind entirely and lets feelings surface, move, and dissolve. I have cried in more than one dance class, and I count every tear as a win.

The Exercise

1. Choose one or two songs that move something in you. A song that makes you feel a little silly works wonders.
2. Put it on, alone or with people you trust, and let your body move however it wants. No steps, no choreography, no getting it right.
3. Let whatever rises come up.
4. If tears or laughter arrive, let them, and keep moving through it.
5. When the music ends, place a hand on your heart and notice how you feel.
6. Consider building a short reset playlist you can return to whenever you feel frenzied or stuck.

To dance is to remember what it feels like to be fully alive.

What came up while you were dancing? Were there some songs that moved you more than others?

INTEGRATION - RECALIBRATE YOUR BODY

Well, look at you: breathing on purpose, feeling your feelings all the way through, closing old loops, and dancing in your kitchen. Your body has been whispering to you all along. The difference is that now you are listening. Before we head upstairs to your mind, let your body have the last word:

What is my go-to survival mode, and what brings me back to safety fastest?

Which body signal am I done ignoring, and what is it usually trying to tell me?

Which practice steadied me most (breathwork, naming my feelings, releasing old loops, or dancing it out), and where does it live in my week now?

What is one way I will treat rest as fuel this month, instead of a reward I have to earn?

PART FOUR
REPROGRAM YOUR MIND

With your body feeling safe, you are ready for the fun part: debugging the old code that has been running your life on autopilot.

Beliefs like "I'm not good enough" and "other people's needs come first" are not truths. They are programs, lines of code written into your mental operating system when you were too young to question them. And trust me, some of that code is absolute garbage.

Here's the good news: code can be rewritten. Your brain doesn't care what content it wires. It only cares about repetition. And because your nervous system is now regulated, this work will actually stick.

PICK YOURSELF FIRST

Remember the playground? That quiet hope of "pick me, pick me!" while you waited to be chosen?

Somewhere in there you learned to wait, to let someone else decide whether you were worth it. But here's what nobody told you: the game keeps going, and the people out on the field are simply the ones who stopped waiting and picked themselves.

You are the MVP of your own life. It's time to act like it.

The Exercise

1. Think of one area of your life where you have been waiting to be chosen: a promotion, a relationship, a creative risk.
2. Write down what it would look like to pick yourself there instead, before anyone else gives you permission.
3. Choose one act of loyalty to yourself you can do this week: ask for the thing, start before you feel ready, or stay on your own team when something goes wrong.
4. Each time the old pattern returns, place a hand on your chest and say: "I am still here. I still choose you. Let's keep going."

Ready is a myth your fear invented to keep you waiting. Tag yourself into the game, and go! Write what you're going to do below.

YOUR INTUITION INITIATION

You were born with an inner compass, a knowing that lives in your body. This is not woo: your gut alone holds over one hundred million neurons. You have a second brain down there, and it has opinions.

Most of us were taught to ignore it, to call our discomfort an overreaction, until we stopped trusting the one thing that always told the truth. Honesty is the soil where intuition grows back. So we start with the truth, out loud.

The Exercise

1. Find a private space. Open a voice memo on your phone (you can delete it after) and speak honestly about how you really feel about a situation. No fixing, no plan, just the truth, out loud.
2. Notice where the feeling lives in your body. Is the fear in your stomach? The frustration in your shoulders?
3. Now try a simple body check. Close your eyes and say "yes," silently and then aloud, and notice what your body does. Many people feel a lift, an opening, cells leaning forward.
4. Then try "no." Notice the contraction, the pulling back.
5. Then try "I don't know yet." (For me, my eyes roll upward. Every time!)
6. Practice on low-stakes choices first: what to eat, what to wear, which route to take. Build trust in the signal before you bet big on it.

This is how you relearn your body's language, one honest signal at a time. Write down what you learned about your body's signals below:

START AN INTUITION JOURNAL

You have probably known things long before your mind could explain them. The call you knew you shouldn't take. The person you trusted instantly, correctly. The bad feeling you talked yourself out of, and paid for.

This practice gathers the receipts, the evidence that your intuition is real and reliable. Because once you have proof in your own handwriting, you stop second-guessing the whisper.

The Exercise

1. Write down every time you can remember knowing something before it happened.
2. Write down every time you ignored your gut and paid for it.
3. Write down every time you felt something good coming, and it did.
4. Look for the patterns. How does your intuition speak to you? A body sensation, a sudden certainty, a dream, a nudge?
5. Keep the journal going. Each new entry is another receipt.
6. End each session by writing: "Thank you, intuition, for always looking out for me."

DO AN INTUITION DETOX

It is hard to hear your own truth through everyone else's noise.

We become experts at outsourcing decisions: asking friends, polling the group chat, searching for the right answer online, asking an app. Every outsourced decision teaches your intuition that it isn't needed. For the next three days, we reverse that. You become your own north star.

The Exercise

1. For the next seventy-two hours, commit to no outside advice. No polling friends, no searching for the answer, no asking an app, no group chat.
2. Each time a decision comes up, big or small, pause and ask: what does my intuition say?
3. Write the answer down before you do anything else.
4. Expect some discomfort. Remind yourself: discomfort is not danger, it is growth.
5. At the end, review your notes and look for patterns.
6. Notice where your gut is clear, and where you have been betraying it to keep the peace.

What did you discover about yourself during this process?

CALL A BOARD MEETING

Sometimes you are at odds with yourself.

There is the part that dreams, the part that wants to fit in, the part still trying to keep you safe. They all talk at once, they all want the wheel, and the loudest one usually wins. Rather than letting them fight it out in the dark, you can call the meeting to order and give each one a seat at the table.

The Exercise

1. On paper or in your mind, gather the different parts of yourself at a table.
2. Invite them by role (the dreamer, the protector, the people pleaser) or by age (you at seven, at seventeen, at your current age).
3. Let each part speak in turn. Ask what it is afraid of, what it wants, and what it has been trying to protect. Ask it what it is proud of and happy about.
4. Thank each one for the role it has played. Even the annoying ones have been working overtime on your behalf.
5. As the one at the head of the table, write down what you have decided, honoring the wisdom of each part without letting any single one run the show.

You can create a drawing or a mind map of your board meeting below:

USE SYMBOLS AND SYNCHRONICITIES

Your brain has a built-in filter that highlights whatever you tell it matters. It's your own personal algorithm, and right now it may be tuned to problems.

Decide to look for difficulty, and you will find it everywhere. Decide to look for magic, and the same thing happens. Whether you call the results synchronicity or neuroscience, believing in signs works. This is a simple way to point that power toward a more supported, more joyful life.

The Exercise

1. Choose one or two signs you would like to start noticing: repeating numbers, feathers, a certain animal, a color, a song.
2. Tell your brain (or the universe, or both) what you want to see.
3. Attach a meaning to each one. For example: a feather means I am protected and watched over.
4. Keep a running note of when your signs show up, and let each one remind you that you are supported.

Use the space below to create a drawing of your sign and what you want it to symbolize.

REWRITE YOUR INNER CODE

The beliefs running quietly in the background were mostly written by other people: parents, teachers, society, that one coach in seventh grade.

Some of that code is garbage. And here is the beautiful, slightly unfair truth: your brain does not care what content it wires. It only cares about repetition. Repeat a thought often enough and it becomes a highway: smooth, fast, automatic. So let's find the old code and pave some new roads.

The Exercise

1. Identify the bad code. Name a belief that no longer serves you, for example, "I am terrible with money."
2. Interrogate it: where did it come from, what purpose did it serve, and what would I do differently without it?
3. Write new code that is believable enough that your brain will not reject it. For example: "I used to mismanage money, but now I am learning to take full responsibility, and I know I will get there." You can upgrade the code as you grow into it.
4. Guard your operating system. Curate what you watch, read, and listen to, and limit the voices that drag you back. Garbage in creates garbage out.
5. Test and debug. When you catch the old thought, run the three-beat move: Catch it. Name it ("that's my old scarcity code"). Choose again.
6. Reinforce it with action. Take one real step that matches your new belief. Otherwise your brain will call BS.

CONTROL YOUR ANT PROBLEM

That constant commentary in your head, always narrating what you did wrong or what could go wrong, runs on ANTs: automatic negative thoughts. Small, persistent, and everywhere once you spot the first one.

As long as you believe every thought is you, you will follow its advice. The moment you treat ANTs as uninvited guests with bad opinions, you take your power back.

The Exercise

1. Notice a recurring negative thought, and give the voice behind it a name and a personality.
2. The one that says "don't even try" might be Negative Nancy. The one that turns everything into a crisis might be Calamity Carl. The one grading your every move? Judgy Judy.
3. When the thought shows up, call it out, even playfully: "Really, Nancy? That's how you're going to talk to me? How rude!"
4. Invite a supportive voice to answer back, one grounded in possibility. Positive Polly might say: "You have handled harder things. You will figure this out."
5. Notice how naming and answering the thought creates just enough distance for you to choose your response.

Name your automatic negative thoughts, and write down what responses you will use when you encounter them.

THE NEGATIVE THOUGHT CONVERTER

Cognitive distortions are the funhouse mirrors of the mind. You are looking at real life, but the reflection is bent, stretched, and exaggerated.

Catastrophizing writes the horror-movie ending before the opening credits are finished. All-or-nothing thinking deletes every option between perfect and disaster. Mind reading tells you exactly what everyone thinks of you, with zero evidence. Once you learn to spot the distortion, you can bend your perception back toward the truth, and toward your dreams.

The Exercise

Take one painful thought and run it through the converter, writing your answers:

- What is the thought? Write it in plain words.
- How true do you believe it to be right now, as a percentage? (Example: "This relationship might be over." 60%.)
- What distortion might be at work? All-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, mind reading, discounting the positive, should statements?
- What is a kinder, equally plausible explanation?
- How true does that new explanation feel, as a percentage?
- Now, how true does your original thought feel? Watch the number drop.
- Repeat as needed.

You are aiming for clarity, not a perfect score. And if the number refuses to budge, that is information too: it may be time for a real conversation instead of a thought exercise.

Let's try this exercise together here!

COMMON COGNITIVE DISTORTIONS

- **All-or-Nothing Thinking:** Seeing things in black and white categories with no middle ground.
- **Overgeneralization:** Viewing a single negative event as a never-ending pattern of defeat.
- **Mental Filter:** Dwelling on one negative detail while filtering out all the positives.
- **Discounting the Positive:** Rejecting positive experiences by insisting they “don't count.”
- **Jumping to Conclusions:** Making negative interpretations without actual evidence.
- **Mind Reading:** Assuming you know what others are thinking about you, usually negatively.
- **Fortune Telling:** Predicting that things will turn out badly as if it were established fact.
- **Magnification (Catastrophizing):** Blowing problems or flaws way out of proportion.
- **Minimization:** Shrinking the importance of your positive qualities or achievements.
- **Emotional Reasoning:** Believing something must be true because it feels true.
- **Should Statements:** Criticizing yourself or others with rigid “shoulds,” “musts,” and “oughts.”
- **Labeling:** Attaching a global negative label to yourself instead of describing the behavior (“I'm a failure” vs. “I made a mistake”).
- **Personalization:** Blaming yourself for events that weren't entirely within your control.
- **Blame:** Holding others entirely responsible for your pain while overlooking your own role.

NEGATIVE THOUGHT CONVERTER

What is the thought? Write it in plain words.

How true do you believe it to be right now, as a percentage? (Example: "This relationship might be over." 60%.)

What distortion might be at work? All-or-nothing thinking, catastrophizing, mind reading, discounting the positive, should statements?

What is a kinder, equally plausible explanation?

How true does that new explanation feel, as a percentage?

Now, how true does your original thought feel? What did you notice most about the shift?

CHANGE YOUR STORY

We are storytelling creatures. If you do not consciously shape your story, your story will shape you.

The same events can be told as defeat or as becoming, and you are the author. Every hero's journey begins with struggle. Nobody buys a ticket to watch someone have a pleasant, uneventful time. The struggle is the raw material of the transformation, which means you are sitting on a goldmine.

The Exercise

1. Write down a chapter of your life you have been telling as a story of defeat or damage.
2. Reread it and highlight the moments of struggle.
3. Rewrite the same events as the training ground that made you who you are.
4. Move from "I was abandoned" to "I learned how to create belonging." From "I was silenced" to "I found my voice." From "I was broken" to "I became whole in my own way."
5. Read your new version out loud.
6. Notice that you are not lying. You are choosing the meaning, and making yourself the hero. Some people get to be villains in your story, some get demoted to minor characters. You assign the roles now.

CHANGE YOUR STORY: YOUR OLD NARRATIVE

Write down the old story you've been telling yourself:

CHANGE YOUR STORY: YOUR NEW STORY

Write down the new story that reflects the most powerful version of your life.

THE THREE CHOICES

Modern life hands us thousands of decisions a day, and the overwhelm can leave us frozen.

There is a simpler way. At the heart of any situation, you really have only three choices: peace, joy, or inspiration. All three are high-vibration moves. None of them is wrong. The only wrong move is staying stuck in the churn, choosing nothing, and calling it "thinking it over."

The Exercise

Choose one lingering situation that has been weighing on you. Then ask what each of the three choices would look like here:

- **Peace:** I can choose to accept how it is and let it go.
- **Joy:** I can choose to relish the present moment and stop carrying the past or the future.
- **Inspiration:** I can choose to invest in the future, even if it takes effort now, so I can grow.

Find the one that feels most true for you, then start living as though the decision is made. Because it is. Write what comes up below.

BUILD UNSHAKABLE SELF-TRUST

Confidence is not a gift handed to the lucky few. It is built, brick by brick, promise by promise.

Every time you say you will do something and then do not, a part of you stops trusting your own word. You would never keep breaking promises to a friend and expect the friendship to thrive, yet we do it to ourselves daily. The repair is beautifully simple: small, consistent proof that you mean what you say. Self-trust is the root. Self-love is the flower. Self-esteem is the fragrance that follows.

The Exercise

1. Make one small promise to yourself for today, something so doable you cannot talk yourself out of it: a glass of water on waking, a five-minute walk, one page written.
2. Keep the promise.
3. When you do, notice it. Say out loud: "I said I would, and I did."
4. Frame your promises around self-honor, not self-punishment. Instead of "I will never skip the gym again," try "I will move my body today in a way that feels like love."
5. When you slip, skip the shame. Own it, forgive yourself, and make the next small promise.
6. Celebrate the evidence as it stacks up. That's not vanity. That's you becoming your own guardian.

What promises do you want to keep towards yourself? How will you feel when you actually do so?

BE YOUR OWN BIGGEST FAN

Forget everything you were told about not being too proud. It is called self-esteem for a reason: it is yours to decide.

Seeing yourself as capable and worthy is not vanity. It changes your brain chemistry, your health, and the energy you carry into every room. People with healthy self-esteem also keep the doubters at bay automatically, which saves a remarkable amount of energy for the fun stuff.

The Exercise

1. Make a list of all the reasons you are amazing. Aim to fill a page, or write one undeniable reason for every year you have been alive.
2. If a negative thought shows up, flip it. A painful setback can become proof of how resourceful and resilient you are. (My divorce cost me six figures. It also motivated me to write a book about being selfish. Worth it? You betcha.)
3. Create your own magazine cover. Pick three to five moments you are proud of, choose a theme that ties them together (courage, creativity, resilience, joy), and design a cover with your name in the headline: "The Woman Who Built a Life She Loves." "From Self-Doubt to Unstoppable." "Why Rest Became Her Superpower."
4. Display it somewhere you will see it daily: the mirror, the fridge, your laptop.
5. It is not vanity. It is training your brain to believe: this is who I am.

Start brainstorming all of the things you'll add to your magazine cover below:

DRAFT YOUR VISION

Use this space to draft what your magazine cover will look like, or paste the finished product here.

BECOME LUCKY ON PURPOSE

Luck is not fairy dust sprinkled on a chosen few. Luck is attention plus action. That's it. And you can train both.

Researchers have literally planted money on the sidewalk in front of self-described unlucky people, and they walked right past it, too tense and tunnel-visioned to see it. When you are calm and curious, your field of perception widens, and you start spotting the opportunities that anxious people miss. Calm equals vision. Vision equals options. Options equal luck.

The Exercise

For the next week, try on these lucky behaviors:

- **Widen your gaze.** When you enter a room, pause, soften your eyes, and notice three things you would normally miss.
- **Start small conversations.** Have one tiny exchange a day with someone new. Every conversation is a lottery ticket.
- **Leave white space.** Schedule some unstructured time, and take the long way once in a while. Magic happens in the margins.
- **Trust your hunches.** Follow the small pulls: a different route, a workshop that catches your eye.
- **Reframe rejection.** When something falls through, try saying: "Plot twist! This is clearing space for something better."

Walk into every room assuming there is something there for you: a lesson, a contact, a laugh, a clue. Then, come back and report on the magic that happened here:

BECOME BIG IN A WORLD THAT WANTS YOU SMALL

Putting yourself out there can feel like standing under the brightest lights, every flaw magnified.

That reaction is ancient wiring, not weakness. For most of human history, standing out from the tribe was genuinely dangerous, so your nervous system still runs the old code. But visibility today is not a threat. It is a doorway, and every time you let yourself be seen, you teach your body that the spotlight is safe. The world profits when you stay small. You get crumbs. We're done with crumbs.

The Exercise

Practice taking up a little more space:

Micro-visibility moments. Choose one small act of visibility each day: ask a question in a meeting, share a thought online without over-editing, introduce yourself to one person.

Dress for expansion. Wear something that feels like you, turned up to eleven.

Power poses. Before a big moment, stand tall for two minutes: feet grounded, shoulders back, breath steady.

Rehearse in your mind. Picture yourself showing up, voice steady, the moment landing well.

Redefine success. At day's end, note one moment you chose to show up. Measure whether you followed through, not how it was received.

Which of these made you feel the most powerful?

PHRASES THAT WILL SET YOU FREE

So much of becoming your most authentic self is learning new ways to say what is true for you.

These are not scripts or affirmations. They are short, honest phrases that will make you squirm at first, because truth comes before comfort when you are building a real life. Here's what swallowing your truth actually costs: every time you stay silent, your bar sinks in real time, and your nervous system learns that your truth is negotiable. It isn't. Not anymore.

The Exercise

Read these out loud, slowly, then read them again. Notice what your body does.

- I don't like this.
- I need more than this.
- This doesn't work for me.
- I'm not available for that.
- This isn't enough for me.
- I'm not okay with this.

You will likely tense up before you feel the spark of empowerment. That's the old wiring meeting the new you.

Choose one phrase, and look for a small, real situation this week where you can say it. The people around you will either rise to the occasion or fall away. Both outcomes serve you.

What did you notice in your body and mind when you practiced these phrases?

HAVE REAL, AUTHENTIC CONVERSATIONS

Here's a secret: you already know how to have hard conversations. You have been having them for years, on everyone else's behalf. Advocating, translating, smoothing, negotiating. It is time to use that considerable skill for your own life.

The goal is not to win. The goal is to make sure your inner truth matches your outer words.

The Exercise

Choose one conversation you have been avoiding, and prepare for it:

- **Regulate your body first.** Take three slow breaths, ground your feet, and remind yourself: "I can survive this conversation." A calmer you helps the other person stay calm too.
- **Frame the purpose with care:** "I want to bring this up because our connection matters to me."
- **Lead with your feelings, not their faults.** Compare "I am mad at you for being disrespectful" with "I felt upset when that happened, and I would like to find a way forward together."
- **Be clear and concrete about what you need.**
- **Listen, and reflect back what you hear:** "It sounds like you felt pressured when I asked for that."
- **Then release the fantasy that it must end in agreement.** Sometimes the gift is simply that the truth was spoken.

Well, how did it go? Was it easier or harder than you imagined?

THE PING PONG METHOD

As a former people pleaser, you have been trained to absorb whatever lands on you: a rude comment, a heavy silence, someone else's bad mood. You catch it, turn it over, and make it yours.

Those days are over. The Ping Pong Method (taught to me by a friend who already ruled her own queendom) is how you stop being the place where other people's stuff lives.

The Exercise

The next time something lands on you that is not yours, run these three moves:

- **Notice.** Feel the impact and simply recognize: something just came my way. Do not analyze it yet.
- **Don't absorb.** Pause and ask: is this actually mine? Nine times out of ten, it is not.
- **Deflect.** Send it back or let it fly past, with a breath, a shake of your shoulders, or a calm line like "That's interesting. What made you say that?"

It can help to physically mime the paddle swing. A small flick of the wrist, a quiet "pew" under your breath. It feels silly, and it works anyway.

You are not a sponge. You are a player. THE player.

Practice this method on a few past conversations. How did it go, and how do you perceive your capacity for power afterward?

BOUNDARIES LIKE A BOSS

As you start to flourish, not everyone will cheer. Some people are used to you being endlessly available, and they may try to reel you back in. That's not a sign you're doing it wrong. That's a sign it's working.

Boundaries are not about controlling what others do. They are about deciding what you will accept, and then holding yourself to it. Every boundary you set delivers a quiet message to yourself: I matter. My needs are valid. My energy is precious. My time is invaluable.

The Exercise

1. **Get clear on how you feel.** Notice the situations that leave you drained or anxious.
2. **Get clear on what you want.** The more certain and unapologetic you can be, the easier it is for others to understand you.
3. **State your boundary simply, without explaining your entire life story.** For example: "I am not going to be the go-between. Please talk to each other directly."
4. **Hold yourself to your word.**
5. **If someone pushes back, Teflon it:** let it slide off you like water off a non-stick pan, then calmly return to the boundary, minus the drama.
6. **Remember: This will get easier every time you practice it.** For now, just remember to fill your own cup first, protect it, and let only the overflow pour into others.

Rehearse the conversation. What is one area where you'd like to set a boundary? Write out a script and read it back to yourself a few times before having the conversation. Be sure to pay attention to how you feel the more you read it.

BE A LIGHTHOUSE

With your new energy and resources, your old urge to rescue people may come knocking. This is the moment to remember the difference between a lifeboat and a lighthouse.

A lifeboat charges into every storm, gets battered and waterlogged, and eventually sinks under the weight of everyone else's emergencies. A lighthouse stands tall and steady, shining, guiding others to safety while each captain still steers their own ship. A guide, not a rescuer. A light, not a lifeline.

The Exercise

1. Think of someone you keep rescuing.
2. Notice what you usually do to fix it for them.
3. Ask instead: how can I help them learn to fix it themselves?
4. Rather than helping out, point them toward other resources.
5. Rather than absorbing the same vent every week, offer one real resource.
6. Choose one relationship where you will shift from rescuer to guide this week.

Here's the beautiful secret: rescuing keeps people weak. Guiding makes them strong. The lighthouse is the more loving choice, for both of you.

Describe how you'll put this item into action:

INTEGRATION - REPROGRAM YOUR MIND

Your code is cleaner, your ANTs have names, and your boundaries have a spine. Before we add the magic, capture what shifted:

- Which belief or thought pattern most needs rewriting right now?
- Where am I still waiting to be chosen?
- What is one boundary, conversation, or work shift I am ready to make real?
- What does self-trust look like in my actual daily life now?

PART FIVE
REIGNITE YOUR SOUL

Your body is regulated. Your mind is clear. Now you're ready for the magic.

This is the final layer, the one that turns effort into flow. Call it the universe, source, God, nature, or the divine. The name does not matter. What matters is that you are not doing this alone, and you never were.

And if you are not spiritual? No problem. Read this whole section as a relationship with your deeper self: intuition, wonder, and meaning. The practices still work. That's the beauty of doing this in the right order: you're not spiritual bypassing your way around the hard stuff. You did the hard stuff. When your body feels safe and your mind is clear, your soul can finally speak.

RECONNECTING TO MAGIC

Pause for a moment and notice how far you have come.

You have calculated the bill, reclaimed the dream, calmed the body, and rewritten the code. You have done the work, and now you are ready to receive the magic. This is the state we want to live in: wrapped in a warm sweater, soft light through the curtains, remembering what a wild gift it is simply to be alive.

The Exercise

1. Take a deep breath, place a hand on your heart, and say out loud: "WOW! I am so lucky to be alive. I am so lucky to be me!"
2. Feel the words move through you like a warm drink, sinking into every cell.
3. Look around and find one ordinary thing that feels a little magical right now: the light, your breath, the quiet.
4. Let yourself stay in that feeling a little longer than feels natural.
5. This is the frequency where magic becomes easy to notice.

How did this feel in your body, mind, and soul?

FIND YOUR SOMETHING GREATER

There is a kind of peace that comes from realizing you are not floating alone in a cold, indifferent universe.

Your something greater can be God, the universe, nature, love, or simply awe. It can be the wonder you feel under the stars, remembering how unlikely and precious your existence is.

Remember: The odds of you existing at all are so absurd that mathematicians need a number with millions of zeros to describe them. You are, statistically speaking, a miracle.

The Exercise

Reflect in writing:

- Recall a time you felt deeply at peace, as if the world had wrapped you in a warm blanket.
- Remember a time you felt deeply loved.
- Recall a moment of pure awe: at nature, art, music, or an act of kindness.
- Ask yourself: what did I feel connected to in those moments?

Give it a name, so you can call on it easily, and lock into the feeling it gives you.

CREATE RITUALS OF CONNECTION

Rituals are simply habits we have infused with our own sense of magic.

They keep you in a receptive, high-energy state, and they double as a reset button on the mornings you wake up cranky and tired. (Yes, those mornings still happen. I'm a coach, not a fairy godmother.) The magic was never missing. You just need to tune back in to notice it.

The Exercise

Choose one or two daily rituals to keep, and commit to them this week:

- Indulge in a small pleasure: a favorite cup for your morning drink, a moment of quiet before the day begins. Savor it like a tiny ceremony.
- Share three gratitudes with a friend each day.
- Ask for a sign from your something greater, then watch for it.
- Start a wow practice: set a timer a few times a day and look for one thing that makes you say wow.
- Ask your future self one precise question, write the answer in exact words, and act on it within twenty-four hours.

What rituals did you settle on? Describe them below, and why they mean something to you.

PRACTICE POSITIVE GRATITUDE

Gratitude is not just a nice sentiment. Done with real feeling, it rewires your brain, lowers stress, and tunes you toward more of what you want.

The key phrase is "real feeling." This is not a polite thank-you note dashed off before bed. There are two rules: actually feel it, don't just list it. And be specific.

The Exercise

- Each night, write down three specific things you are grateful for, and why.
- Be precise. Instead of "I am grateful for my family," try "I am grateful for the way my kid laughed so hard at dinner that he snorted."
- Truly feel each one. Let the warmth settle into your body.
- Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and imagine your gratitude radiating through you and out into the world.

What are the things you're most grateful for? You can list them out here:

DANCING WITH THE DIVINE

Living in connection is not handing your life over to fate. The universe is not a next-day delivery service, and thank goodness, because its taste is usually better than our orders.

It is more like a dance. You take a step, your something greater responds with a nudge or an idea, and then it is your turn to act again. The secret is to lead with feeling and to surrender the exact shape of the outcome. Trust is allowing the dip. Surrender is relaxing into it.

The Exercise

1. Choose something you want to call in.
2. Instead of fixating on the exact form it must take, close your eyes and feel what it would feel like to already have it.
3. Let that feeling fill your body.
4. Now surrender the how. Release the picture of exactly how it must arrive.
5. Watch for the next nudge: an idea, a chance encounter, a pull toward an old dream. Take the step it offers.
6. Trust that each step leads you closer, even the ones that look like detours.

If you're inclined, describe what you felt during this exercise. What will you take away from it?

SHARE YOUR BURDEN WITH THE DIVINE

You were never meant to carry everything alone.

When you look back, you can usually find a teacher, a stranger, or a twist of fate that showed up right when you needed it. Trusting in support is like sharing a backpack with a giant. You still carry the essentials. The giant takes the boulders.

The Exercise

1. Each morning, ask: what is mine to carry today? And what can I hand over?
2. Make two lists. One is your to-do list for the tangible, real-world things: the phone call, the research, the boundary.
3. The other is a to-do list for your something greater: the timing, the outcome, the parts that feel impossible.
4. Close your eyes and imagine placing the impossible things into large, loving hands. Hear them say: "Don't worry. I'll take care of this."
5. Exhale, and feel the relief.
6. At day's end, write down any moment that worked out better than you planned, or any unexpected help that arrived. Divine punctuality is real, and it loves a written record.

What are the big things you want to work on?

What are you going to hand over to the divine?

FILL THE WORLD WITH LOVE

Every action you take sends out ripples that travel farther than you will ever know. A kind word at the right moment. A boundary that models self-respect. A door held, a truth told.

And on a very real level, you are connected to everything around you, all the way down to the stardust carbon in your bones. This is a practice for meeting people, and hard situations, with love.

The Exercise

1. Before you walk into a room or a conversation, imagine filling your heart with love and beaming it out to the people there. You might think: "You deserve happiness. You deserve love."
2. For a person or situation that is challenging you, try the Hawaiian practice of Ho'oponopono.
3. Picture them, and repeat the four phrases: "I'm sorry. Please forgive me. Thank you. I love you."
4. Notice that this is for you. It releases the poison of held resentment and puts your healing fully in your own hands. No participation from the other person required. (The petty part of me loves that I can do it all on my own!)
5. Practice it each night on whatever is weighing on you, and watch the charge slowly soften.
6. For Bonus Points, try tuning in to other people's positive energy and accepting it.

What did you notice while practicing these exercises?

CONNECT TO THE DIVINE

If you want to connect to something greater, the first thing to learn is not crystals or prayer.

It is silence. We live in a world that treats quiet as empty space to be filled, yet stillness is exactly where the subtle messages can finally be heard. And a warning about the beginning: at first, the quiet will be loud. That's normal. It's not the message. It's the static clearing, your soul clearing its throat.

The Exercise

1. Find a couple of minutes of quiet: before you reach for your phone in the morning, or before you get out of the car.
2. Sit with your eyes closed.
3. At first you will mostly hear your own busy mind.
4. That is normal. It is the static clearing, not the message.
5. Try sound fading: listen to all the noises around you, then notice the pockets of quiet between them, and let those expand.
6. Stay a little longer than feels comfortable.
7. Over time, insights will begin to drop in, fully formed, as though they were delivered. Because they were.
8. Start small and build the muscle.

Share what you noticed in the silence.

BLOW YOUR POSSIBILITIES WIDE OPEN

You have already trained your inner filter to notice the good. Now you can open it wider still, from a keyhole to a panoramic view.

In a way, this is giving your something greater permission to use all of your senses to show you where the magic is. You are learning to see life as a living conversation rather than a series of random events.

The Exercise

1. Each day, prompt your higher self or the universe with an open invitation.
2. Try: “Show me something magical today,” or “Connect me to new opportunities,” or “Why is everything working together for my good?”
3. Then move through the day with your eyes, and your attention, wide open.
4. Follow the pulls: the conversation you feel drawn to start, the book you suddenly want to pick up, the name that comes to mind for no reason.
5. Note what shows up.
6. You are learning to see life as a living conversation rather than a series of random events.

Make a list of prompts you want to start putting out into the universe to call in the things you want to receive:

MANIFEST ANYTHING YOU DESIRE

Manifestation is not wishing and waiting. It is aligning the frequency of your energy and your actions with what you desire. Less magic spell, more coherence: your beliefs, your feelings, and your actions finally pointing in the same direction.

This is why you started by leaving survival mode. You cannot manifest from fear. A body in survival mode is like a radio wrapped in tin foil: the signal cannot get in or out. But from a regulated body and a clear mind, the mechanics finally work.

The Exercise

1. Get clear on what you want. You have already done much of this work.
2. Feel it. Close your eyes and ask: what does it feel like to already have this? Find the sensation in your body and amplify it until it fills you.
3. Hold the vibration, and release the need to control how it arrives. Wanting deeply while letting go of grasping is the paradox that clears the signal.
4. Place small reminders through your day (a note, a bracelet, a perfume) to return you to that feeling.
5. When something does not arrive right away, treat it as feedback, not failure. Get curious about where you are still holding fear, and keep returning to gratitude and joy.

Describe one thing you want to start receiving using all of your senses and emotions:

READY, SET, QUANTUM JUMP

A quantum jump is that moment when life shifts quickly and dramatically for the better, often in a way you could not have predicted. (I'm borrowing the word "quantum" the way the whole internet does. The physicists can keep their equations. We're after the leap.)

It happens when your energy, focus, faith, and action are so aligned and amplified that your reality cannot help but move. After everything you have done in this workbook, you are ready for it.

The Exercise

Start living your *Me First!* life now, using the four steps:

1. **Believe.** Decide that a dramatic shift is genuinely possible. This alone opens you up.
2. **Feel.** Step into the feeling of already living your dream life: happy, confident, free.
3. **Take inspired action.** Make a move toward your vision, then respond to what comes back, like a game of chess with the universe. Neither you nor the universe knows how it will play out until you make a move.
4. **Surrender.** Trust that something wonderful is unfolding, even if it does not look exactly like what you pictured. It is often so much better, because your starting self could not yet imagine how good it could get.

What is the one thing you're ready to take a quantum jump into?

RELEASE THE PARKING BRAKE

Have you ever driven with the parking brake on? The car moves, but every acceleration is a struggle, and you can smell the strain.

We often approach a new life this way: baby steps, doubts, back-up plans stacked on back-up plans. But you are not that person anymore. You have every tool you need now. The only thing left is to take the brake off.

If you give life a maybe, life will give you a maybe. But give it a full-bodied yes, and life and the universe will flash their biggest smile and meet you with YES! energy in return.

The Exercise

1. Notice where you are still giving life a "maybe." Where are you hesitating, hedging, or holding back?
2. Name the one area where you are most ready to shift from maybe to yes.
3. Take one full, unhedged action there: the kind your future self would take.
4. When hesitation returns, read the reminder below out loud, and let it shift you back into yes.

I put myself first. Always. Not because I do not care about you, but because I care about me.
I do not set myself on fire to keep anyone warm. I do not wear exhaustion as a badge of honor.
I take rest without guilt, pleasure without apology, success without permission.

What's your next move? Write it down! Now double, triple or 10x! Trust me, you are ready for it!

INTEGRATION - REIGNITE YOUR SOUL

1. What helps me feel connected, supported, and open?
2. Which ritual or practice do I want to keep daily?
3. Where am I ready to trust more and grip less?
4. What does my next yes look like?

ME FIRST! FINAL INTEGRATION

Look at what you just did.

You calculated the cost of people pleasing and refused to keep paying it. You reclaimed your dream from storage. You made peace with your body, rewired your mind, and reopened the line to your soul. That is not a workbook. That is a homecoming.

You do not need to have done every exercise perfectly for this to change you. You just need to keep choosing yourself, again and again, in ways that are honest enough to shift your life.

Before you close this workbook for today, answer these final questions:

What are the three biggest truths I discovered about myself?

What patterns am I no longer willing to call kindness?

What does *Me First!* look like in my body, my work, my relationships, and my future?

What is one promise I am ready to make to myself now?

What is the first visible sign that my life is changing?

BEFORE YOU GO

You made it! Not just to the end of a workbook, but to the beginning of a life with you back in the center, the spotlight, and the driver's seat. It feels good, right?

I want you to know something: I am *so* proud of you. Most people never look at the bill. You looked, you felt it, and then you got to work. Every line you wrote in these pages was a vote for the version of you who has been sitting in that warm room this whole time, tea ready, saving you a seat.

So what now? Now you live it. Imperfectly, unapologetically, one small *Me First!* choice at a time. And when you wobble (you will, we all do), come back to these pages and reread your own words. They will remind you who you are faster than I ever could.

And if you want company on the road, here is how to find me:

Work with me. If you are ready to go deeper than a workbook can take you, this is what I do: I help recovering people pleasers build lives they actually love, using the same science-meets-spirituality approach you just experienced. Visit www.JenniferThome.com to see current programs and ways to work together.

Take the 30-Day *Me First!* Challenge. DM the word **Challenge** to me on Instagram at www.instagram.com/jenniferthome and I will send you thirty days of small, doable dares to keep this momentum alive.

Get more free tools. DM the word **Connect** to me on Instagram and I will send you an invite to my channel, where I share regular updates.

One last thing: if this workbook shifted something in you, a quick review wherever you found it helps the next exhausted, endlessly reliable woman find her way home. Consider it your first act of overflow.

Now go! Go have fun! Go make big moves! Go live your best life ever!

With respect and a loving roundhouse kick to send you off,

Jennifer