

REWRITING YOUR HOME'S EMOTIONAL STORY

A Workbook for Creating a Healing Space

BY LOLADE AJAI



FOREWORD

Hello, my friend.

Thank you for coming with me on this journey.

You have something very special in your hands. I wish I had understood this years ago, when my own home felt heavy with unspoken stories. This was particularly true when I started experiencing major life changes that came from moving countries, navigating a health crisis, and stepping into perimenopause, all while reinventing myself.

For years, I carried the unaddressed weight of my childhood, watching it subtly dictate my adult behaviours and imprint itself into every space I created for myself, often without my realising it. It is something I know many of you carry too, shaping how we move through the world without quite understanding why.

This guide is born from that recognition. It steps gently into the space where neuropsychology meets the homes we live in, exploring how our environments became part of our story and how they can become a profound part of our healing. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for any reinvention journey you are currently on, or that you feel calling to your soul.

Because where else does the most authentic personal work happen?
Where else do we build awareness of self, courageously train our minds to align with the calling of our souls, if not within the intimate space of home?

Our environment is not separate from this sacred journey. It is fundamental to its unfolding, and its alignment is absolutely crucial.

Our homes are far more than places we leave and return to. They transcend the function of shelters or spaces we decorate. They are, in a profound and scientifically measurable way, intertwined with our emotional history.

Every room you inhabit, every object you touch, every subtle shift in light or sound carries a resonance.

I am not writing this from a metaphorical perspective, although I have a penchant for waxing poetic and esoteric now and again, for I am, after all, a spiritual being.

Our home environments carry the residue of lived experience. That residue is recorded and held not just in our memories, but within the very fabric of our spaces, mirroring the pathways in our brains.

Through these pages, guided by the insights of neuropsychology and the wisdom of intentional design, we will explore why your home impacts you so deeply, identify the emotional imprints held within your walls, and most importantly, begin the gentle, powerful work of rewriting that story.

I created this workbook as your invitation, and mine, to transform your space into an active partner in your healing and becoming.

Let us begin this intimate conversation with your home.

MODULE 1: THE BRAIN REMEMBERS A DEEP DIVE INTO NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

Welcome to the core science behind Rewriting Your Home's Emotional Story.

Every room holds the residue of lived experience; not metaphorically, but neurologically.

Through the lens of neuropsychology, we begin to understand that what you feel in a space is not simply a matter of taste or style. It is the product of your brain's survival system, quietly doing its job, linking past experiences to your present environment.

“OUR HOMES ARE MORE THAN BACKDROPS. THEY ARE MEMORY KEEPERS.”

This module lays the essential groundwork, explaining why your home has such a profound impact on your mental and emotional state.

To truly understand why a room can feel heavy, or why stepping into a specific space brings a rush of unexpected emotion, we need to look beneath the surface.

We need to understand the incredible machinery of your own brain, the master storyteller and memory keeper that is constantly interacting with your environment.

We will explore key concepts from neuroscience and environmental psychology that reveal the constant, often unconscious, conversation happening between your brain and your surroundings.

KEY CONCEPT 1

THE BRAIN AS A SPATIAL PROCESSOR: BEYOND THE 5 SENSES

Your brain is fundamentally a prediction machine, constantly taking in information to understand your position in the world and predict what might happen next.

This goes far beyond consciously processing the five senses. Your brain is simultaneously processing several other channels.

PROPRIOCEPTION:

Think of proprioception as your body's internal GPS system, or its **sixth sense** beyond sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell.

It is the unconscious sense that tells you where your body parts are in space, without you having to look at them.

VESTIBULAR SENSE:

Think of your vestibular sense as your body's built-in **balance system and motion detector**.

Essentially, the vestibular sense is your body's inner gyroscope or level, constantly telling your brain about your orientation, movement, and balance in space.

It is vital for coordination, stable vision, and preventing you from falling over.

INTEROCEPTION:

Think of interoception as your brain listening inside your body. It is your awareness of internal signals like your heart beating, your breath, muscle tension, or feeling too hot or too cold internally.

The way your home looks and sounds directly impacts your body.

Lighting affects your hormones.

Temperature affects your tension.

Sound impacts your heart rate.

A stressful space makes your body feel tense or agitated internally. Your interoception picks that up and tells your brain you feel uneasy.

A calming space helps your body relax internally. Your interoception picks that up and tells your brain you feel safe and peaceful.

All of this information from your environment is integrated by your brain to create your subjective experience of a space.

KEY CONCEPT 2

AMYGDALA, HIPPOCAMPUS, AND SPATIAL-EMOTIONAL MEMORY

Your home is more than just a building. It is etched into the very fabric of your memory and emotions.

At the heart of this is a powerful duo: the **amygdala**, your brain's rapid emotional sentinel that tags experience with feeling, and the **hippocampus**, which diligently maps the where and the when.

Their tireless collaboration forges spatial-emotional links, seamlessly binding the texture of an emotion to the physical blueprint of a place. This is what makes your home a living repository of feeling.

THE AMYGDALA: THE EMOTIONAL SENTINEL.

This is your brain's rapid emotional detector. It is highly sensitive to experiences with strong emotional content, whether joy, fear, grief, comfort, or threat.

It quickly tags these experiences with an emotional intensity.

THE HIPPOCAMPUS: THE MEMORY ARCHIVIST WITH A SPATIAL GPS

This region is crucial for forming new memories, especially **episodic memories** (the memories of events) and **spatial memories** (the maps of your environment).

THE BINDING: EMOTION WIRED TO PLACE

These two powerful areas are deeply interconnected.

When you experience a significant emotional event in a specific location, the amygdala and hippocampus work together in a remarkable process called **contextual memory formation**.

Strong emotions experienced in a particular space strengthen the neural connection between the feeling and the place. Re-entering that space later can trigger the retrieval of the emotional memory via this established neural pathway.

The amygdala tags the emotion.

The hippocampus records the spatial details of where it happened.

Your brain creates a strong neural link, binding the emotion directly to the physical space.

This is why walking into a room where something painful occurred can flood you with that same emotion, even years later. It is not irrational. It is a primal survival adaptation.

Your brain is retrieving the emotional tag associated with that spatial memory, essentially reminding you that this is the place where something emotionally significant happened.

Conversely, this is also why some rooms feel instantly comforting. If moments of safety, joy, rest, or deep connection were repeatedly experienced and strongly encoded in that space, your brain recalls those positive sensations, sometimes even before you consciously remember the specific events.

KEY CONCEPT 3

NEUROPLASTICITY: REWIRING YOUR RESPONSE TO SPACE

This is one of the most hopeful concepts in this guide.

Your brain is not fixed. It is capable of changing and rewiring its connections based on new experiences.

- **How it applies to your home:** When you intentionally change your environment and your interactions within it, you can provide your brain with new sensory and spatial information.
- **Rewriting Neural Pathways:** Repeated positive experiences in a previously triggering space, or the introduction of novel, comforting stimuli, can help form new neural pathways that compete with or modify the old, painful ones. This does not erase the original memory, but it can change the emotional response tied to it.
- **Why this matters:** This is the scientific basis for why intentional design can support healing. You are actively participating in your brain's rewiring process through your environment.

KEY CONCEPT 4

THE NERVOUS SYSTEM'S DIALOGUE WITH THE ENVIRONMENT

Your **central nervous system** is constantly communicating with your environment through your senses.

- **Sympathetic Nervous System (Fight or Flight):** Activated by environmental stressors such as clutter, harsh noise, and jarring visuals, this system increases heart rate, releases cortisol (the stress hormone), and triggers hypervigilance.
- **Parasympathetic Nervous System (Rest and Digest):** Activated by calming environmental cues such as soft lighting, soothing sounds, and comforting textures, this system promotes relaxation, reduces stress hormones, and supports recovery.

Why this matters: Your home's design directly influences which part of your nervous system is activated. A brain-friendly home is designed to minimise sympathetic activation and promote parasympathetic states, supporting long-term well-being and resilience by reducing what is known as allostatic load.

Differentiating Neuropsychology from Pop Psychology

While popular trends might talk about vibes or energy in isolation, neuropsychology grounds these concepts in the biological realities of the brain and nervous system.

We focus on measurable impacts: how specific environmental stimuli affect brain waves, hormone levels, physiological stress markers, and documented cognitive performance.

This approach provides a deeper understanding of why certain design choices work, empowering you to make intentional decisions based on scientific principles rather than aesthetic trends or intuition alone.

CONNECTING THE DOTS: FROM BRAIN SCIENCE TO LIVED EXPERIENCE

This understanding is absolutely fundamental.

Your home environment is a constant stream of sensory input. Your brain uses this information, via structures like the amygdala and hippocampus, to create and reinforce emotional memories and to regulate your nervous system.

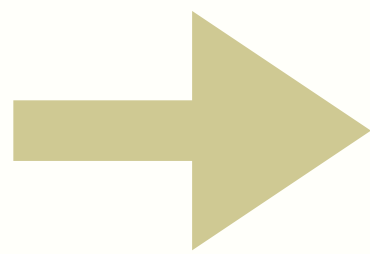
You must understand this fundamental connection if you want to consciously influence your neurological state.

You will learn to see your home in a new and important way. You will understand the biological reasons why a certain chair feels safer, or why clutter triggers anxiety and increases cognitive load. You will see why a certain room can hold a sense of sadness. And then, you will never again feel irrational for feeling a strong emotional reaction to a room.

You will feel empowered to reimagine it. You will move from passively experiencing your space to actively partnering with it, and you will use this knowledge to design for healing and well-being.

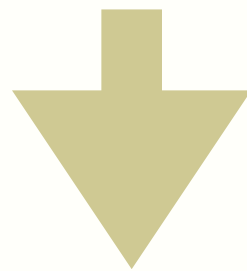
HOW YOUR BRAIN CONNECTS FEELING & PLACE

EMOTIONAL
EVENT

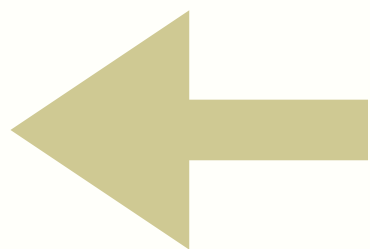


Amygdala
Activation

Emotional Tagging

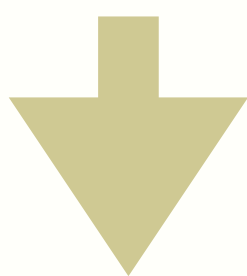


Neural
Binding



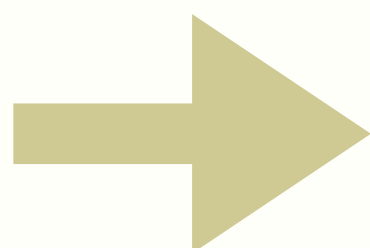
Hippocampus
Activation

Spatial Context
Recorded



Emotion Wired to Place

The Space



Retrieval/
Trigger

Entering Space
Retrieves Emotional
Memory

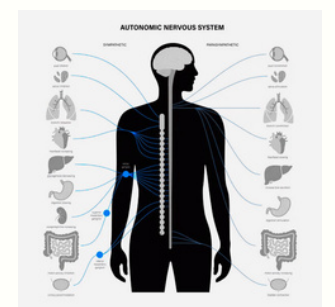
Physical Environment

Sensory Input:



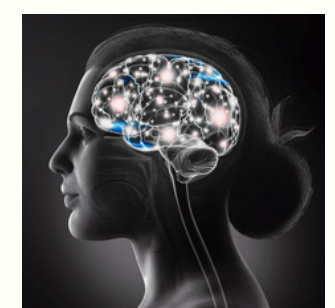
Sensory details are the
language of the space

Nervous System:



Environment affects
stress response

Neuroplasticity:



The brain can rewire its
responses

QUICK CHECK: HOW DOES YOUR BRAIN FEEL ABOUT YOUR HOME?

Instructions:

Read each statement and note your immediate, honest feeling.

There are no right or wrong answers.

1 When I walk into a specific room, I often feel a subtle sense of tension or unease.

(Yes / No / Sometimes)

2 There is a specific object in my home that instantly triggers a strong memory or feeling when I see it.

(Yes / No)

3 Certain sounds in my home (like appliances or external noise) make me feel subtly irritable or anxious.

(Yes / No / Sometimes)

4 I have a space in my home where the lighting just feels off – either too harsh or too dim – and it affects my mood.

(Yes / No)

5 Thinking about [Specific Event or Person] makes certain areas in my home feel heavier.

(Yes / No)

6 I have a spot in my home where I can sit and feel my body relax and my mind settle down.

(Yes / No)

7 I believe my physical surroundings can significantly impact how I feel emotionally.

(Yes / No)

8 Some textures in my home (like a blanket or rug) bring me a sense of comfort when I touch them.

(Yes / No)

9 There's a scent in my home that either calms me or makes me feel agitated.

(Yes / No)

10 I find myself avoiding certain areas in my home without fully understanding why.

(Yes / No / Sometimes)

Your responses offer valuable insights.

If you answered yes to many of these, it is a strong indication that your brain is actively processing and responding to the emotional and sensory cues in your home.

You are not alone, and this guide is designed to help you understand and intentionally work with this powerful connection.

REFLECTIVE PROMPT: SPACE + EMOTION TONE MAP

- This is your first step in becoming the compassionate detective of your space.
- Grab a notebook or use the worksheet on the following pages. Print out as many copies as you need, or use a voice recorder.
- Dedicate focused time, around fifteen to thirty minutes per room or zone. Engage all your senses consciously.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Walk slowly through your home, room by room or distinct zone by zone.
- For each space, pause, take a deep breath, and simply observe your immediate, intuitive feeling. Do not overthink it.
- Use the Sensory Audit Checklist from Module 3, or just your senses for now, to help you identify what in the space might be contributing to that feeling.
- Write without judgement. This is the foundation of your healing design work.

SENSORY CATEGORIES. A DETAILED EXPLORATION:

Light

Natural light sources, artificial light types (overhead, task, accent), colour temperature (warm versus cool), intensity, shadows, glare, and light layering.

How does the light in this space make my eyes, my energy, and my mood feel?

Sound

Ambient noise sources (traffic, appliances, neighbours), acoustics (echoey, muffled), pleasant sounds (nature, music), and distracting sounds.

Is the soundscape here noisy, jarring, or peaceful?

Touch and Texture

Textures of surfaces (walls, floor, furniture), textiles (blankets, pillows, rugs), and the feel of objects you frequently touch.

Does this space invite touch and feel comforting, or does it feel cold or abrasive?

Smell

Lingering odours (cooking, cleaning products, dampness), intentional scents (candles, diffusers, plants), and natural scents.

What is the dominant scent? Does it evoke a feeling, positive or negative?

Visual Clutter and Stimulation

Number of objects, level of organisation, visual complexity (patterns, colours), and the balance between open space and filled space.

Does my gaze feel rested here, or is it overwhelmed?

Temperature and Air Quality

Temperature (too hot, too cold, drafty), air circulation, freshness, and humidity.

Does this space feel physically comfortable and easy to breathe in?

RECORDING YOUR OBSERVATIONS:

For each sensory category, note your immediate emotional and physical response in that space.

Be specific. For example: "The buzzing sound from the old fridge makes my jaw clench," or "The soft rug by the window makes me feel instantly relaxed."

MAPPING EMOTIONAL HOTSPOTS

Review your sensory audit notes.

- Identify spaces or specific areas within spaces that consistently triggered a strong negative emotional or physical response, such as tension, anxiety, sadness, irritability, or fatigue.

These are your potential Emotional Hotspots, or Triggering Spaces.

- Identify spaces or areas that consistently triggered a strong positive emotional or physical response, such as calm, joy, energy, or focus.

These are your Sanctuary Zones, or Regulating Spaces.

Why this matters

Understanding these hotspots is crucial because these are the areas where your brain has the strongest existing spatial-emotional links, and those links may be helping or hindering your well-being.

REFLECTIVE PROMPT: SPACE AND EMOTION TONE MAP

(Print as many copies of this template as you need.)

Room

First emotion felt

Physical sensation

Memories it triggers

MODULE 2: DESIGN FOR HEALING STRATEGIES FOR SPECIFIC EMOTIONAL IMPRINTS

Now that we understand how the brain ties emotion and memory to place, and you have begun mapping your own home's emotional landscape, we can explore how specific life experiences often imprint themselves into our homes.

Most importantly, we can discover how to respond with conscious, brain-informed design.

This section will help you to recognise the common emotional themes that can reside in our spaces, and it will provide you with the necessary strategies to meet those specific needs.

Our goal is to heal and to establish supportive environments.

GRIEF & LOSS: HOLDING MEMORY WITH COMPASSION

THE IMPRINT

Rooms where we sat with loss, where shared lives unfolded, or where a loved one spent their final moments often remain emotionally charged. They can feel frozen in time, or imbued with a profound sense of absence. Objects belonging to the loved one can carry intense emotional weight.

THE WHY (NEUROSCIENCE)

These spaces are strongly linked to the trauma or intense sadness of loss in the brain's spatial-emotional mapping (the amygdala-hippocampus binding).

Encountering them triggers the pain of absence. The goal is to process this grief and to create new, gentler associations while honouring the memory.

DESIGN REFRAME

You are not erasing memory. You are creating space for the memory to feel gentler, integrating the past into your present life story.

WHAT TO TRY

- **Replace harsh or stagnant shadows with soft, indirect, layered light.**

Neuro Rationale: *Harsh lighting can trigger the sympathetic nervous system. Soft, warm light promotes feelings of calm and safety, regulating the nervous system in a space previously associated with distress.*

- **Introduce one intentional, gentle, sensory object with new, comforting emotional significance.**

Neuro Rationale: *As with the blanket example, an intentionally chosen texture, colour, or object provides a new sensory anchor processed by the somatosensory cortex, layering positive input onto the space.*

- **Add nature: even a small plant or natural element.**

Neuro Rationale: *Biophilic design principles show that connecting with nature reduces stress hormones such as cortisol and promotes feelings of calm and restoration.*

- **Create an Evolving Remembrance Space.**

Neuro Rationale: *This provides a contained context for memory retrieval (hippocampus), preventing diffuse triggering (amygdala). Allowing this space to evolve supports processing and integration through neuroplasticity.*

- **Layer new, positive experiences into the space.**

Neuro Rationale: *This supports memory reconsolidation, helping the brain form new, gentler associations with the existing spatial memory.*

DIVORCE OR SEPARATION: RECLAIMING YOUR NARRATIVE

THE IMPRINT:

A shared space can quickly become unfamiliar and even alienating.

The home you helped build now echoes shared routines, conflicts, and the pain of separation. You may feel lost or unsure of your place within the very walls you inhabit.

THE WHY (NEUROSCIENCE):

The brain's spatial map is inextricably linked to shared identity and relationships. The space is the relationship context in the brain's encoding.

Separating from someone involves separating from their spatial identity. This can cause dissonance and trigger feelings associated with the relationship's end.

DESIGN REFRAME:

This is about ownership. It is about making your home an expression of your current identity and activating your brain's capacity for forging new paths.

WHAT TO TRY

- **Reorient your furniture to create a new spatial perspective**

Neuro Rationale: *Altering the spatial map and visual cues your brain is accustomed to subtly signals change and disrupts old associations. It physically shifts your perspective within the space.*

- **Mindfully remove or store symbolic couple-related items that trigger pain.**

Neuro Rationale: *This reduces the frequency of encountering visual cues linked to painful memories, reducing amygdala activation.*

- **Actively reclaim the bedroom as yours:** introduce new linens, textures, colours, and lighting that authentically reflect you now, not the shared past

Neuro Rationale: *This highly personal sensory input creates strong new positive associations processed by the brain, reinforcing your individual identity within the space and leveraging neuroplasticity to build new spatial-emotional links.*

- **Repurpose a previously shared space for your individual needs or passions.**

Neuro Rationale: *This changes the function of the space, providing entirely new contextual cues to the brain and disrupting old memory-retrieval patterns.*

ILLNESS OR INJURY RECOVERY: DESIGNING FOR RESILIENCE

THE IMPRINT:

Chronic pain, injury, or significant recovery changes how we move, feel, and use our bodies. Your home then becomes associated with physical limitations, frustration, or vulnerability.

THE WHY (NEUROSCIENCE):

The brain encodes the physical experience of pain and limitation within the spatial context. Areas where pain was significant, or where movement was difficult, become linked to negative physical and emotional states.

Supporting recovery requires creating an environment that minimises stressors and actively promotes physical and mental ease.

DESIGN REFRAME:

Healing is not just internal. It is spatial.

Design becomes part of your wellness toolkit, supporting your body's capacity for repair and adaptation.

.

WHAT TO TRY

- **Clear paths for easier and safer movement.**

Neuro Rationale: *This reduces the cognitive load associated with navigating obstacles and minimises the brain's alert system (amygdala) response to potential physical threats such as falls or bumps.*

- **Create visually calming and physically accessible resting nooks or zones**

Neuro Rationale: *This provides a safe, comfortable space that activates the parasympathetic nervous system, supporting rest and reducing the physiological stress response associated with pain or fatigue.*

- **Use warm, grounding tones and soft, inviting tactile fabrics.**

Neuro Rationale: *Calming colours reduce visual stress, while soft textures provide comforting sensory input processed by the somatosensory cortex, promoting relaxation and reducing the brain's perception of threat.*

- **Optimise lighting for comfort and function.**

Neuro Rationale: *This reduces visual fatigue and eye strain, minimising a common stressor that can exacerbate feelings of unwellness. Proper lighting for tasks related to recovery, such as reading instructions, supports cognitive function.*

- **Introduce a nature view**

Neuro Rationale: *Viewing nature, or incorporating natural elements, directly regulates the nervous system, reducing stress hormones such as cortisol and shifting the brain towards a state of calm (parasympathetic activation).*

This reduces physiological stress, freeing up resources to support the body's natural healing processes and improve mood.

LIFE TRANSITIONS: RELOCATION, EMPTY NEST, AND NEW BEGINNINGS

THE IMPRINT:

Moving to a new place leaves behind the familiar spatial-emotional map of a previous home. The empty nest leaves familiar rooms feeling hollow.

Any significant new beginning shifts your daily routines and your sense of self within your space, often leaving emotional echoes of what was.

THE WHY (NEUROSCIENCE):

The brain relies on familiar spatial cues for a sense of safety and predictability. New spaces require building new spatial maps and emotional associations.

The absence of familiar elements or people triggers the brain's response to change and potential loss.

DESIGN REFRAME:

Your space can evolve with you, supporting your brain in building new maps and emotional anchors for the next chapter, rather than defining you solely by the past.

WHAT TO TRY

- **Start fresh with one area:** a desk, a reading corner, a dining table, making it distinctly yours in the new phase

Neuro Rationale: *This provides a manageable focus for building a new spatial-emotional anchor (hippocampus and amygdala) that reflects your current identity and purpose.*

- **Introduce scent as a gentle memory reset or new anchor**

Neuro Rationale: *The olfactory system's direct link to the amygdala and hippocampus makes scent a powerful tool for creating new emotional associations, or for gently shifting old ones in a new context. Try lavender, citrus, cedar, or a favourite new scent.*

- **Frame a photo or note that symbolises what is ahead, not behind, and place it prominently**

Neuro Rationale: *This creates a visual anchor that focuses the brain's attention on future possibilities and aspirations, supporting motivation and forward-looking neural pathways.*

- **Intentionally incorporate objects or colours that represent your new identity or goals**

Neuro Rationale: *This reinforces your evolving sense of self within the space, supporting the brain's adaptation to the new life phase.*

INTERVENTION CHEAT SHEET

QUICK GUIDE: DESIGN INTERVENTIONS BY EMOTIONAL NEED

Use this as a quick reference to connect emotional states and needs to supportive design strategies.

If the room or feeling is primarily...	The design goal is...	Neuropsychology principle to leverage	Actionable design interventions (examples)
Heavy, sad, grieving	To integrate memory gently	Memory reconsolidation, amygdala regulation	Remembrance nook, layer new comforts, gentle repurposing
Tense, anxious, unsafe	To foster safety and control	Amygdala regulation, nervous system regulation	Clear sightlines, secure entry points, sensory grounding
Overwhelming, chaotic	To promote calm and clarity	Reduce cognitive load, parasympathetic activation	Decluttering, defined zones, visual rest
Stagnant, lacking energy	To encourage novelty and flow	Dopamine release, neuroplasticity	Rearranging, new focal point, clear pathways
Feeling lost or uncertain (identity)	To reflect your current self	Identity formation, agency	Personalisation, displaying passions, creating "me" space
Fatigued, drained	To support restoration	Parasympathetic activation, reduce allostatic load	Comforting textures, warm lighting, quiet zones

MOODBOARD TEMPLATE

PRINTABLE AND CUSTOMISABLE FOR EACH EMOTION/NEED

Print as many copies of this template for each emotion and need to use in your work.

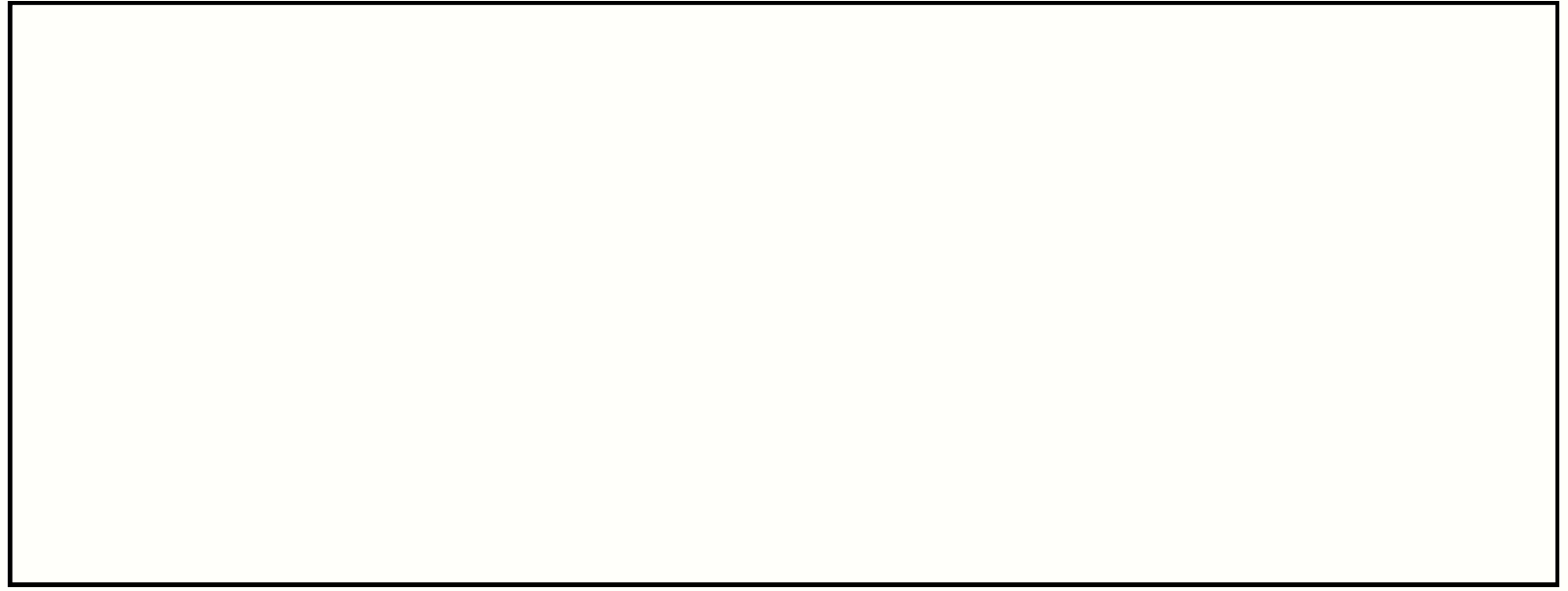
DESIGNING MY _____ SANCTUARY

Emotion/Goal:

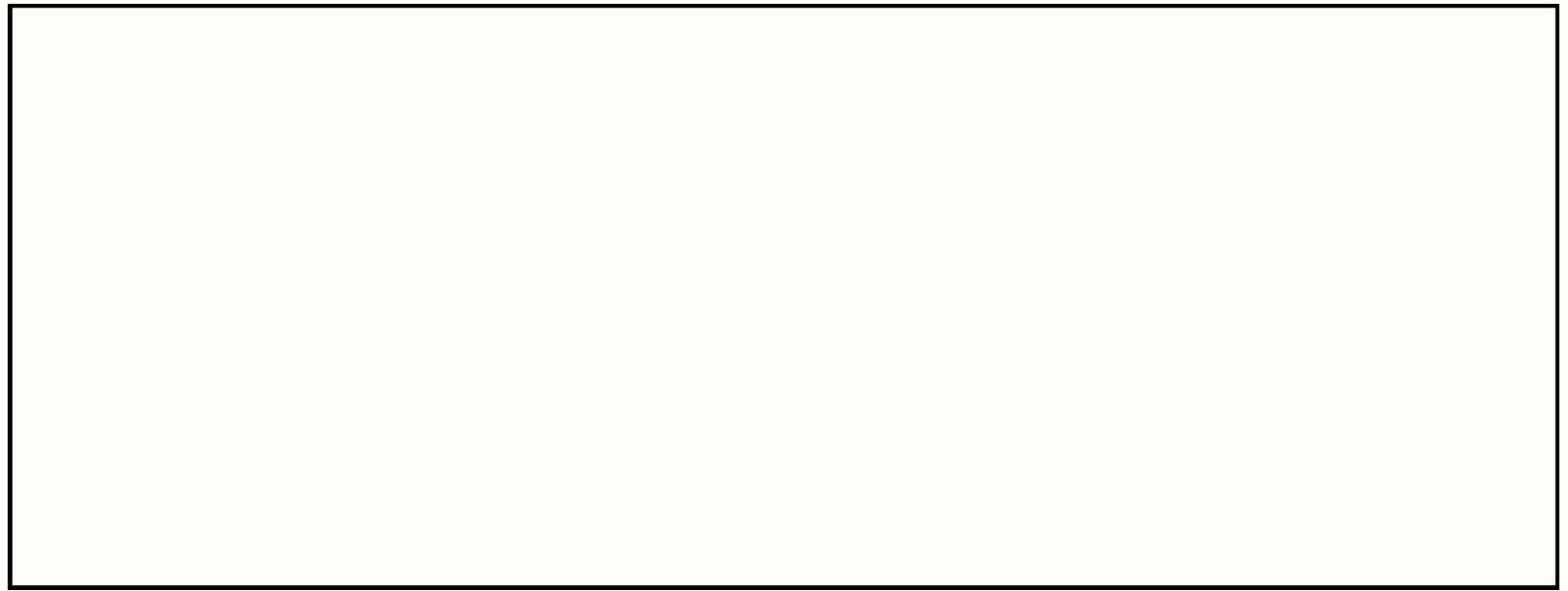
Feeling I Want to Create

Colour Palette

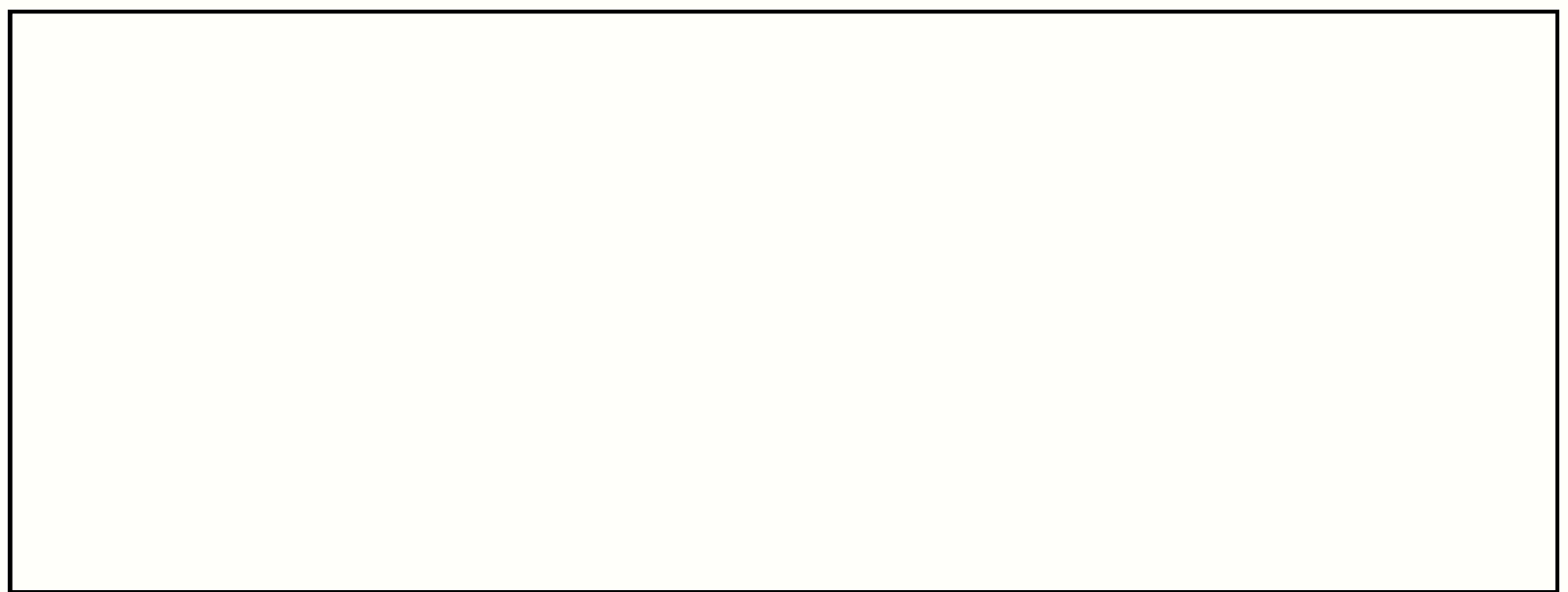
Key Textures



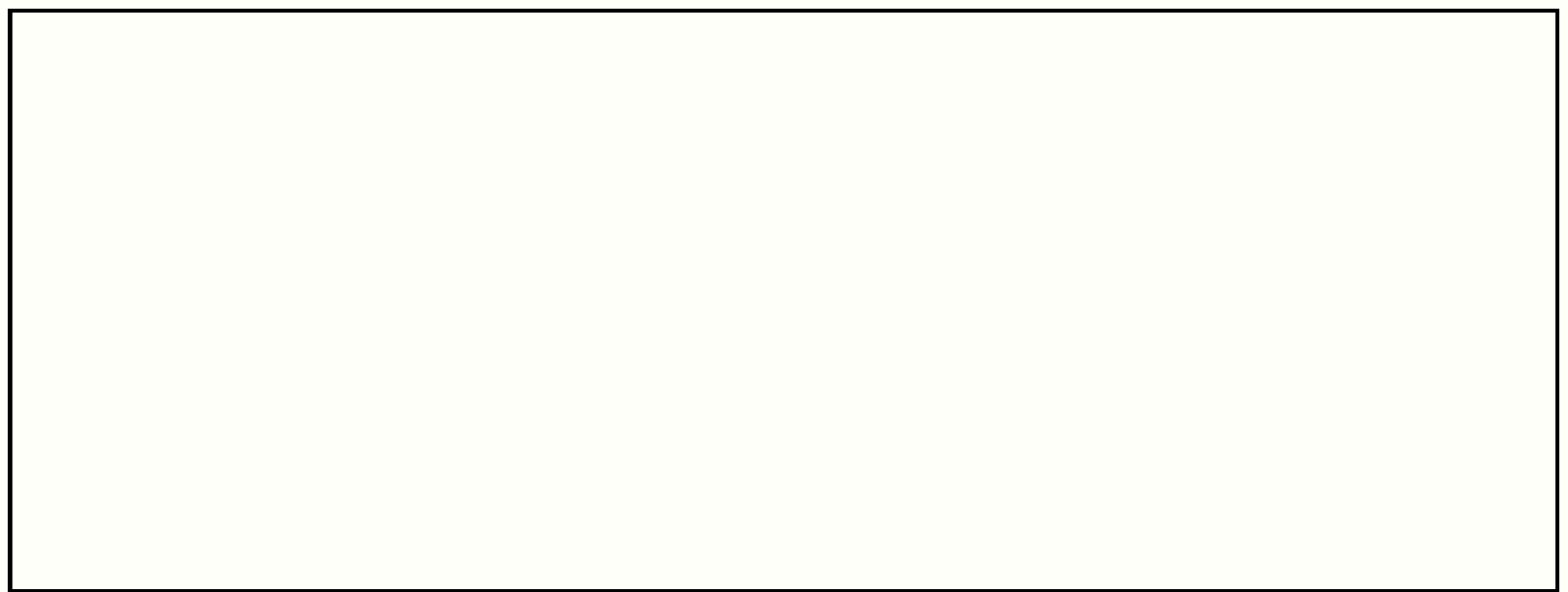
Lighting Inspiration



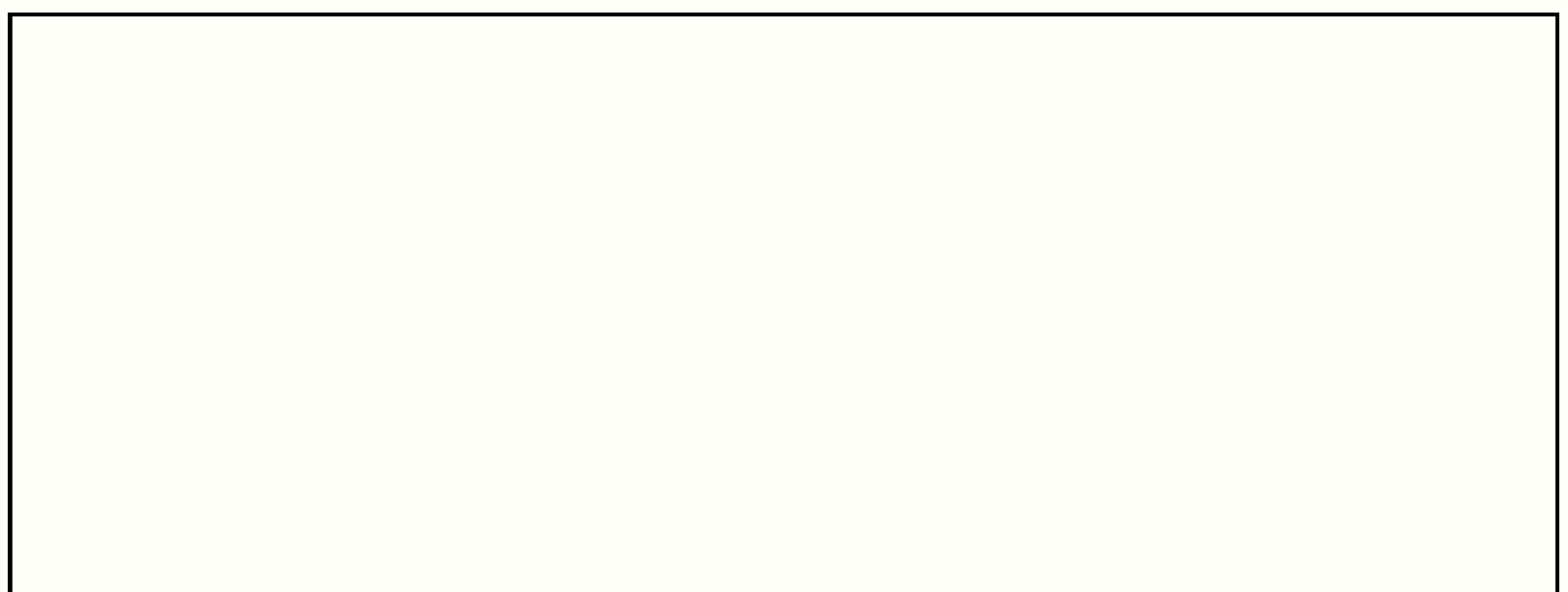
Furniture Styles



Accessory Ideas



Overall Mood/Vibe



This map is a living document.

Be gentle with the process, especially if difficult emotions arise.

This awareness is powerful, and it is the essential first step in deciding how you want to rewrite your home's emotional story.

You have now seen how specific life experiences imprint themselves into our spaces, and how design can be used to meet those imprints with care rather than avoidance. Module 3 brings this together into a practical, repeatable framework you can apply room by room, beginning with whichever space most needs your attention.

MODULE 3: STEP-BY-STEP HEALING THROUGH DESIGN

You have now understood the science, mapped your home's emotional landscape, and explored tailored strategies.

Go back, re-read, and re-work the previous sections as often as you need to. This will help you to fully understand the material and make your responses more automatic. I strongly recommend it.

Now, let us bring it all together into a practical framework. This module provides you with a step-by-step process to move from emotional awareness to implementing powerful, brain-friendly design shifts in your own space.

Remember, this is a process of layering and intention, not a complete overhaul.

STEP 1: SENSORY AUDIT

LISTENING TO YOUR HOME'S LANGUAGE

STEP 1: SENSORY AUDIT

LISTENING TO YOUR HOME'S LANGUAGE

PURPOSE:

To objectively and subjectively assess the sensory environment of a space and identify the cues your brain is processing.

METHOD:

Spend focused time, even just five to ten minutes, in the space you wish to work on. Engage all your senses without judgement. Use the detailed checklist below to guide your observations.

ACTION:

Note specifics for each sensory category. How does the space feel to your senses?

PRINTABLE CHECKLIST: SENSORY AUDIT WALKTHROUGH

Printable Checklist: Sensory Audit Walkthrough

• Lighting

Dominant light source:

- Natural
- Artificial
- Mixed

Artificial light types:

- Overhead
- Task
- Accent

Colour temperature:

- Warm
- Cool

Light feeling:

- Harsh
- Soft
- Too bright
- Too dim

How does the light make you feel here?

- Energy
- Fatigue
- Irritation
- Calm

Specific light triggers:

- Buzzing
- Glare
- Flickering

• Sound

Dominant sounds:

- Traffic
- People
- Appliances
- Silence

Acoustics:

- Echoey
- Muffled
- Clear

How does the sound make you feel here?

- Stressed
- Calm
- Distracted
- Peaceful

Specific sound triggers

• **Touch and Texture**

Dominant textures:

- Soft
- Hard
- Smooth
- Rough
- Cold
- Warm

Comforting textures present:

- Yes
- No

If yes, list

Jarring textures present:

- Yes
- No

If yes, list

How does the texture make you feel here?

- Comforted
- Anxious
- Relaxed
- Irritated

• Smell

Dominant scents:

- Cooking
- Cleaning
- Natural
- Artificial
- Stale
- Damp

Pleasant scents:

- Yes
- No

If yes, list

Unpleasant scents:

- Yes
- No

If yes, list

How does the smell make you feel here?

- Calm
- Agitated
- Nostalgic
- Uneasy

Specific scent triggers:

- Perfume
- Chemical cleaner
- Other

• **Visual Clutter and Stimulation**

Overall visual feeling:

- Chaotic
- Busy
- Orderly
- Minimal

Amount of visible items:

- Many
- Moderate
- Few

Are surfaces clear?

- Mostly
- Partially
- Not at all

Are there areas that feel overwhelming to look at?

- Yes
- No

If yes, list

How does the visual stimulation make you feel here?

- Overwhelmed
- Focused
- Restless
- Calm

• **Temperature and Air Quality**

Temperature:

- Too cold
- Too hot
- Just right
- Drafty

Air quality:

- Fresh
- Stale

Specific temperature or air issues (e.g., cold draft by window)

How does the temperature or air make you feel here?

- Comfortable
- Irritated
- Lethargic

Overall emotional tone: what is the single most dominant feeling you have in this space?

STEP 2: IDENTIFY EMOTIONAL TRIGGERS AND ANCHORS MAKING THE BRAIN-SPACE LINK CONSCIOUS

PURPOSE

To connect your objective sensory observations from Step 1 with the subjective emotional responses you mapped in Section 1.

METHOD

Review your Sensory Audit results and your Emotional Tone Map for the space.

ACTION

- **Identify your triggers.** Based on your audit, which specific sensory cues, such as the harsh overhead light, the cluttered corner, or the echoing sound, in this space seem to be linked to the negative feelings you noted? These are your key environmental triggers.
- **Identify your anchors.** Which specific sensory cues or objects in this space are linked to any positive feelings you noted? These are your environmental anchors of comfort or joy.
- **Identify the disconnects.** Where does the sensory environment seem mismatched with the feeling you want to have there?

STEP 3: MOOD MAPPING + PLANNING SETTING YOUR BRAIN FRIENDLY GOAL

PURPOSE

To define the desired emotional tone and function of the space, informed by your audit and awareness.

METHOD:

Use the simple planning tool on the next page, or a piece of paper, to articulate your goals for this space.

ACTION:

- **Define the desired feeling.** Based on your needs, such as healing grief, seeking calm after work, or fostering focus, what specific emotional tone do you want this space to evoke? Consider words such as peace, safety, energy, comfort, or clarity.
- **Define the desired function.** How do you want to use this space to support your well-being? For example: reading, resting, working, connecting, or reflecting.
- **Brainstorm design interventions.** Based on your desired feeling and function, and the strategies from Modules 2 and 3, brainstorm design ideas that will help you achieve this.

Consider which triggers you need to address and which anchors you can enhance.

MOOD MAPPING + PLANNING TEMPLATE

Choose one room or distinct zone in your home to focus on. Spend a few quiet minutes in that space, observing how it feels. Then fill out the sections below.

Print several copies of this template, or use a dedicated journal, to document your plan.

SECTION 1: THE SPACE NOW

Which Room or Zone am I focusing on?

What are the main feelings I currently have in this space? (e.g., stressed, calm, tired, focused, anxious, peaceful, overwhelmed)

What in this space seems to contribute to these feelings?

(Think about specific sensory things: the lighting, sounds, textures, smells, how cluttered it is, and the layout)

Light _____

Sound _____

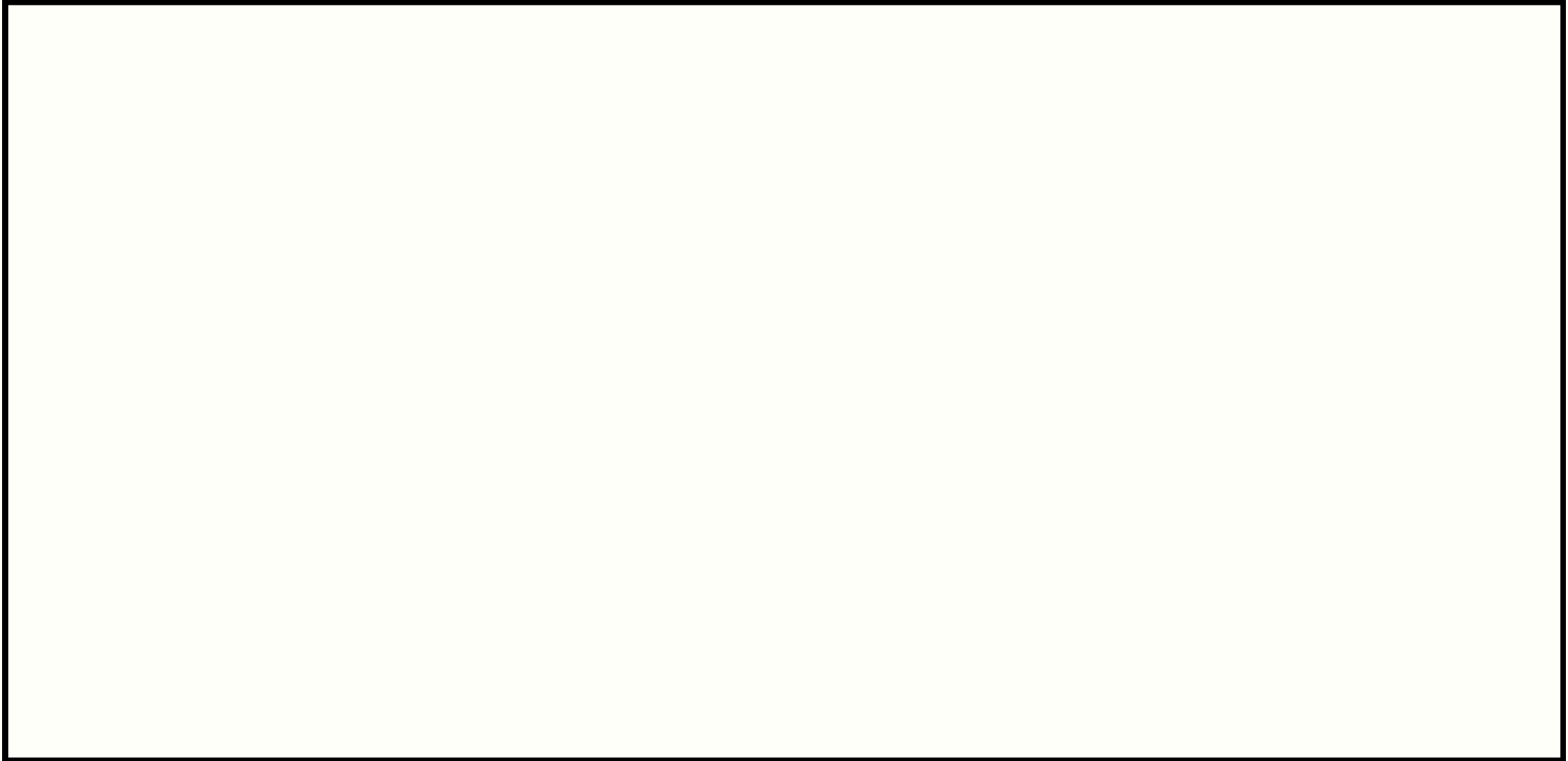
Touch/Texture _____

Smells _____

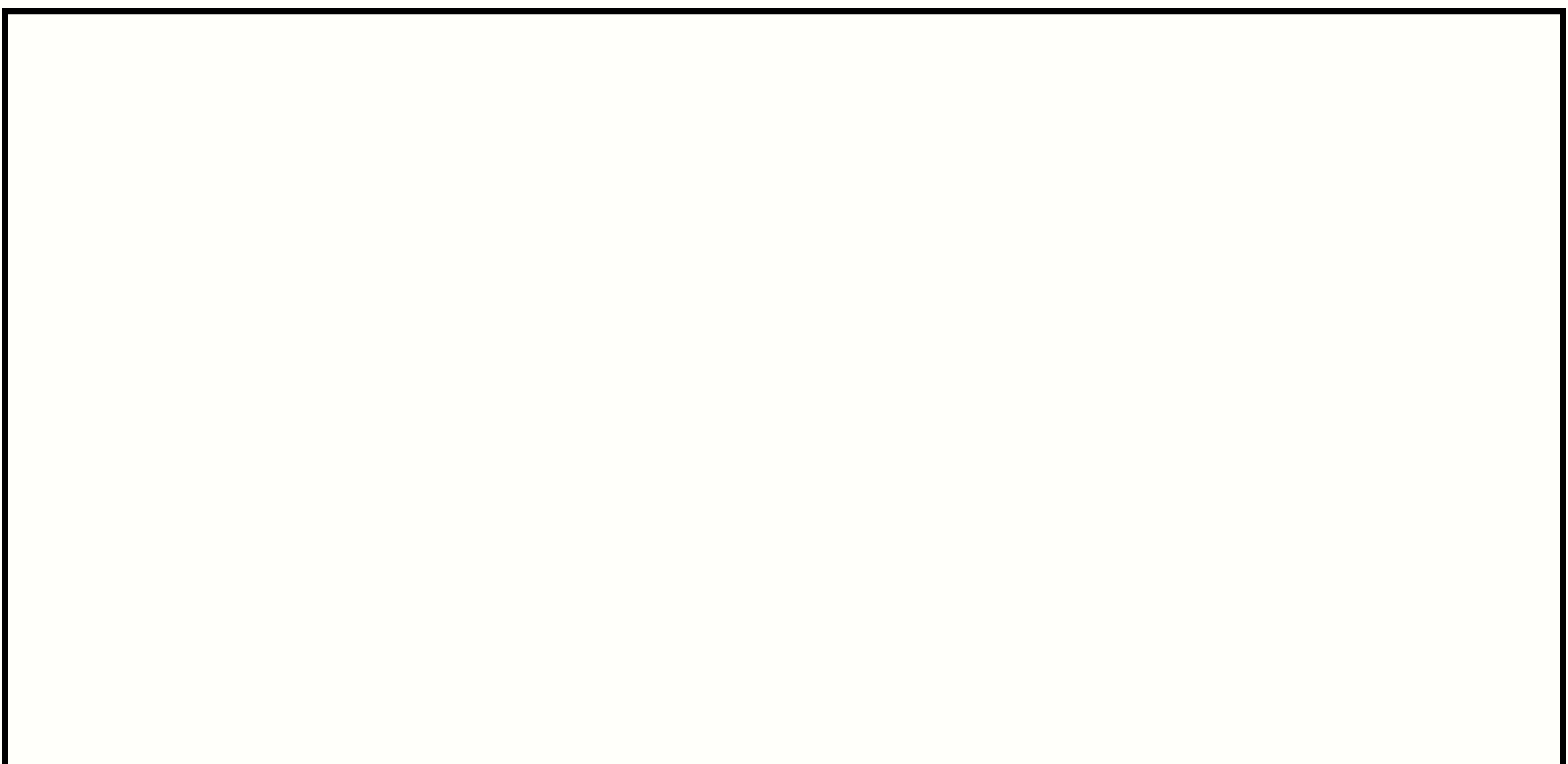
Visuals _____

SECTION 2: MY VISION FOR THIS SPACE

What feelings would I like this space to create? (e.g., peaceful, energetic, calm, focused, cosy, safe)



What well-being goal or habit could this desired feeling support? (e.g., better sleep, more focus, daily reading, feeling more relaxed, reducing stress)



SECTION 3: SIMPLE STEPS TO BRIDGE THE GAP

Based on Section 1 and Section 2, what are one to three small, actionable things you can change in this space to move towards your desired feeling?

Action 1: What specific sensory or layout change can I make?

Why this might help (e.g., "softer light calms the nervous system")

Action 2: What specific sensory or layout change can I make?

Why this might help

Action 3: What specific sensory or layout change can I make?

Why this might help

Reflection (optional): how do I feel about making these small changes?

STEP 4: IMPLEMENT WITH INTENTION MAKING THE CHANGE, REWRITING THE STORY

PURPOSE

To make intentional design changes, starting small, observing the impact, and reinforcing the brain's capacity for adaptation.

METHOD:

Choose one to three manageable design interventions based on your plan. Start simple.

ACTION:

- **Start small.** This is a process of layering new, positive experiences, not necessarily a complete overhaul.
- **Focus on sensory impact.** Use natural materials such as wood, linen, and wool, which often provide grounding textures and calming visuals.
- **Adjust lighting.** Swap harsh overhead lighting for lamps with warm bulbs to create softer pools of light, especially in areas for relaxation.
- **Introduce intentional texture.** Add a soft throw, a comforting rug, or plush pillows in areas where you seek comfort.
- **Address visual clutter.** Clear one surface and keep it clear, observing how that visual simplicity impacts your mind.
- **Hang or frame objects with new, healing associations.** Introduce artwork or photos that represent hope, peace, or your future self.
- **Make changes mindfully.** As you implement a change, pause and notice the feeling in the space. Acknowledge the shift.

Remember, every change is a new memory being written.

You are actively providing your brain with new sensory and spatial information to build a new relationship with this space.

SECTION 4: HONOURING VS. RELEASING NAVIGATING MEMORY IN DESIGN

As you engage with your space, you will encounter objects and areas that hold significant emotional weight.

Some of these are anchors of cherished memories, woven into the beautiful tapestry of your life. Others may be subtle, or not so subtle, triggers linked to painful experiences.

This section is about navigating this nuanced landscape, understanding what you are carrying in your space, and making conscious choices about what to honour, what to integrate differently, and what to gently release in order to create space for your healing and your becoming.

Focus:

- Develop a mindful approach to assessing sentimental and emotionally charged objects.
- Make intentional choices about what to keep, how to display it, and what to release.
- Understand the emotional and neurological impact of these choices.

Some things we keep because they carry meaning. Others we keep because we have not asked what they carry, or why we are still carrying them.

Let's ask now.

MY MEMORY & MEANING WORKBOOK

INSTRUCTIONS:

Use these prompts to reflect on objects or areas in your home that hold significant emotional weight. Be honest and gentle with yourself.

PART 1: IDENTIFYING EMOTIONALLY CHARGED ITEMS

- Go through your home, looking for items that immediately evoke a strong feeling (positive or negative). List them.
- Choose one item to focus on now. Describe the item.
- What is the immediate feeling this item brings up? For example: joy, sadness, guilt, peace, anxiety.
- What specific memory or person is most strongly linked to this item?

PART 2: UNDERSTANDING THE ITEM'S STORY

- What does this item represent to you or your history? For example: a relationship, a specific time, a part of your identity.
- What energy does this item bring into your space today? For example: nurturing, heavy, inspiring, stagnant.
- Does this item represent who you are now and who you are becoming? (Yes/No/Partially)

WHAT ARE YOU CARRYING IN YOUR SPACE?

INSTRUCTIONS:

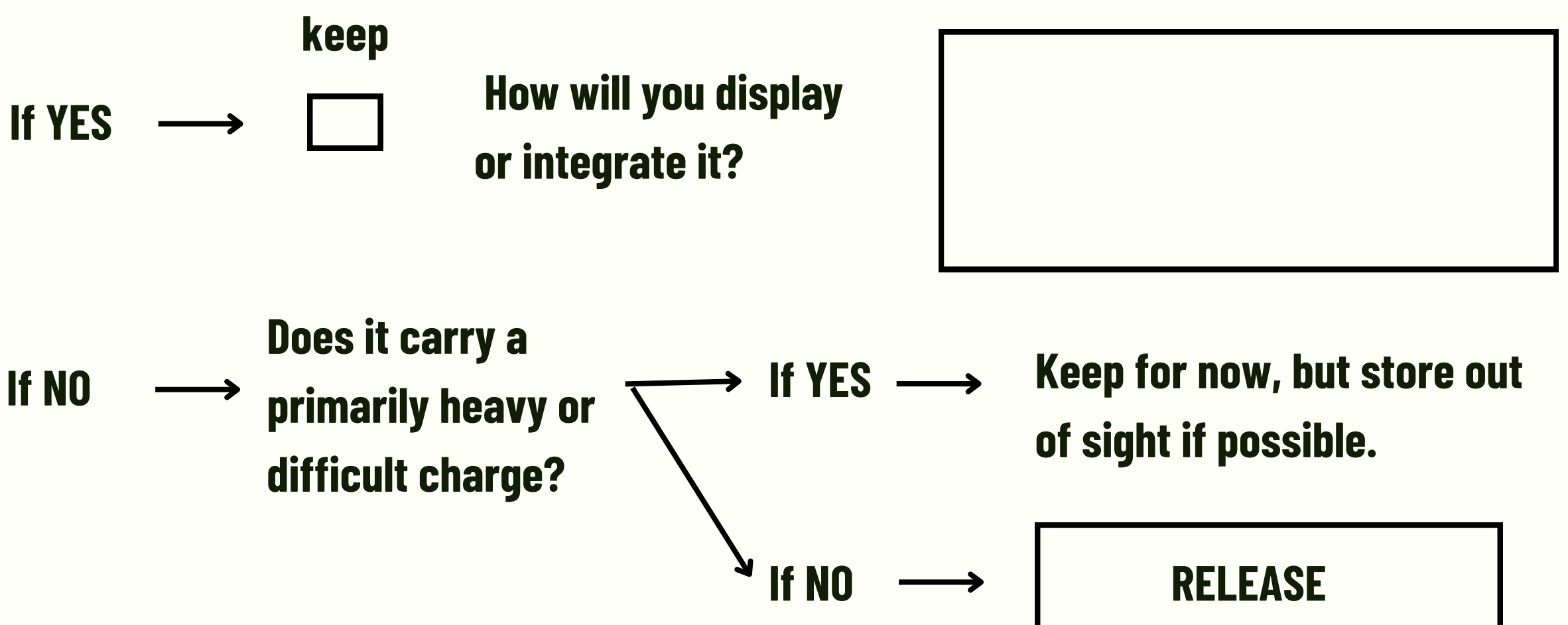
Use these prompts to reflect on items or areas that came up during your audit and mapping, or others that you feel hold significant emotional weight.

INHERITED OBJECTS

Objects inherited but never connected to. Do they serve as reminders of obligation, or of connection?

- **What does this item represent? What charge does it carry?**

- **Does this item carry a positive charge and reflect who you are today?**



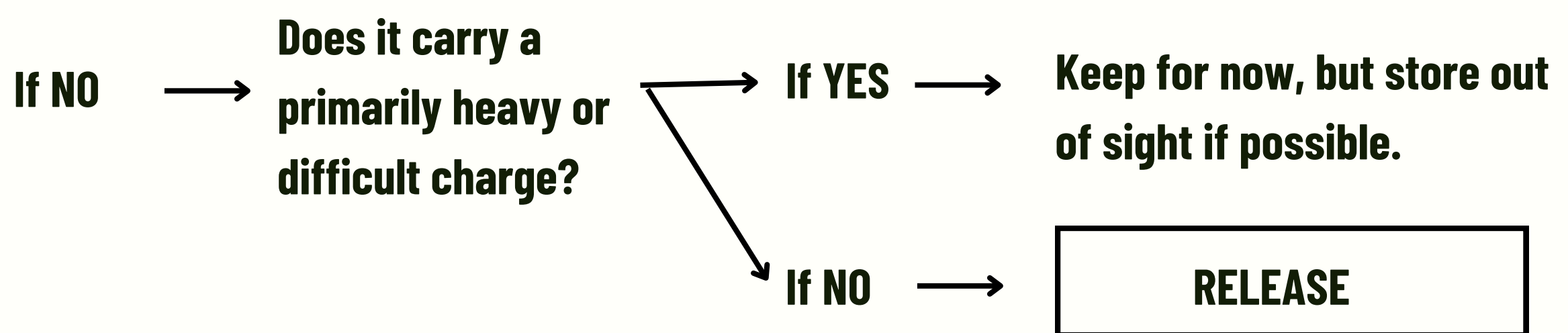
- **How to release? Offer to someone. Donate. Discard Mindfully.**

GIFTS THAT CARRY WEIGHT

Gifts that carry emotional weight. Was the giving or receiving tied to difficult feelings?

- **What does this item represent? What charge does it carry?**

- **Does this item carry a positive charge and reflect who you are today?**



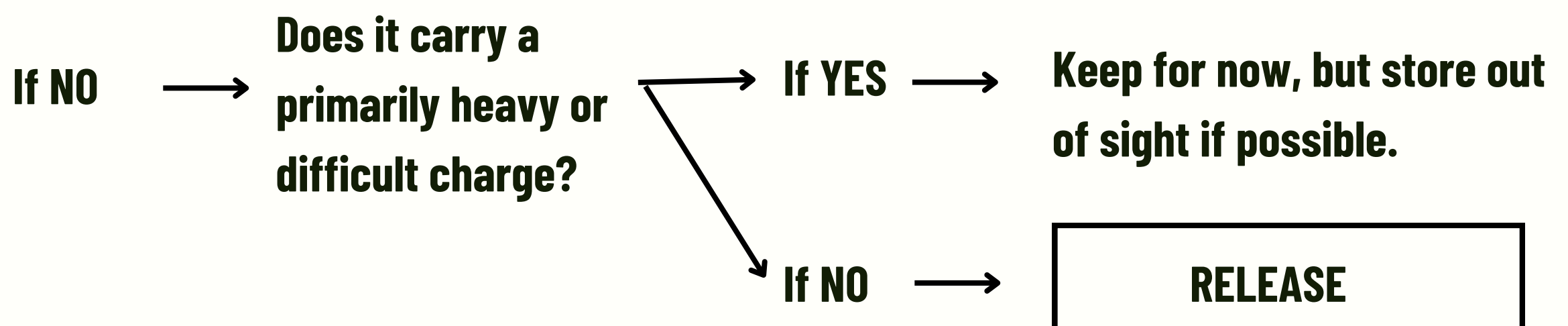
- **How to release? Offer to someone. Donate. Discard Mindfully.**

UNINTENDED ALTARS

Corners that have become unintended altars. Are they holding onto grief rather than celebrating life?

- **What does this item represent? What charge does it carry?**

- **Does this item carry a positive charge and reflect who you are today?**



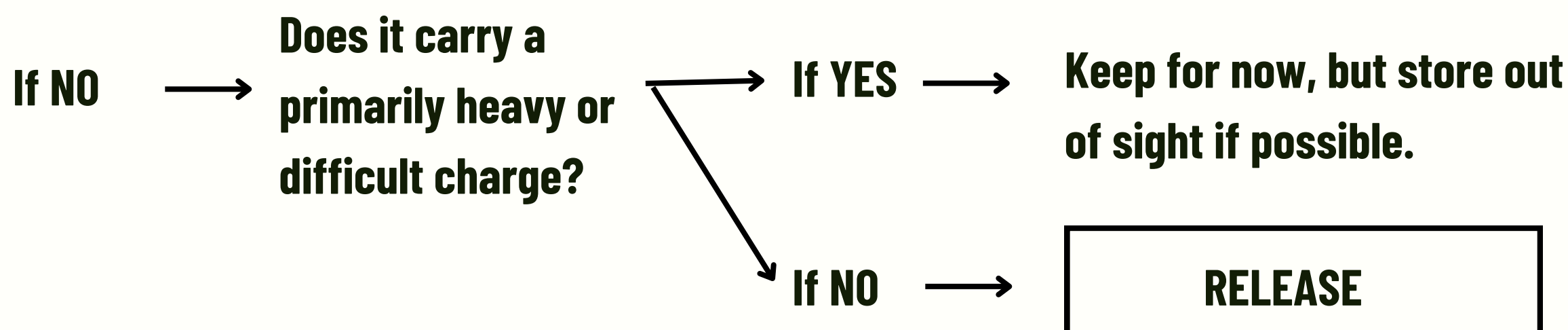
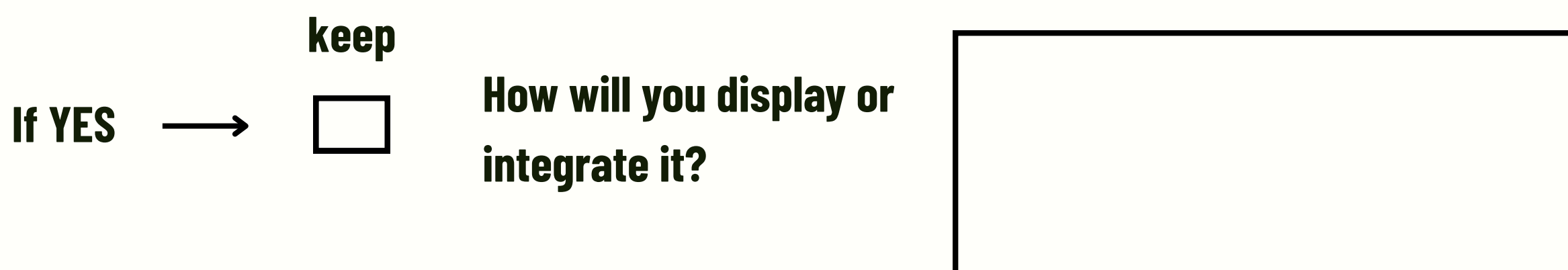
- **How to release? Offer to someone. Donate. Discard Mindfully.**

ITEMS ASSOCIATED WITH PAST CONFLICT

Items associated with past conflict or pain. Do they trigger a stress response when seen?

- **What does this item represent? What charge does it carry?**

- **Does this item carry a positive charge and reflect who you are today?**



- **How to release? Offer to someone. Donate. Discard Mindfully.**

RITUALS OF RELEASE & REMEMBRANCE

Making the decision to keep or release is one step. The act itself can be a powerful ritual, acknowledging the item's role and consciously shifting its place in your life.

THE GRATITUDE RELEASE

Hold the item, thank it for its role and the memories it held, and consciously release the associations it carried.

THE STORY OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Briefly write down the story associated with a difficult item before releasing it, acknowledging its impact without letting it control your present.

THE TRANSFORMATION RITUAL

If an item can be repurposed, transform it into something new. For example, use fabric from old clothes to make a new cushion.

THE MEMORY BOX

Choose a beautiful box. Decorate it if you like. Fill it with items you want to keep but do not need on display daily, such as letters and small mementos. This becomes a contained space for these memories.

THE SHARING CEREMONY

If offering items to others, do so with intention and shared remembrance.

OTHER WAYS TO MARK A RELEASE

- **Write a goodbye letter to an object before parting with it**

Acknowledge its story and release the weight it held.

- **Frame one item with intention**

Give it a place of honour, and consciously decide to let the rest go from your physical space.

- **Create a memory box or drawer for items you are not ready to display daily**

This will be your contained space for revisiting whenever you choose.

- **Light a candle or use a cleansing scent**

When entering a room you are reclaiming after releasing painful triggers, this signals a new, intentional beginning to your brain.

THE SPACE WILL MEET YOU WHERE YOU ARE

I am so proud of you.

You have embarked on a profound journey, exploring the hidden language of your home and its intricate dialogue with your brain.

You have mapped the emotional landscape, identified triggers and anchors, made courageous choices about what to keep and what to release, and begun implementing design shifts grounded in intention and neuroscience. Intentional design truly is a mirror and a tool.

And, when done with care, a form of therapy.

Now, empowered by understanding and guided by intention, it is time to decide what it will remember next. It is time to design the chapters of your healing, your growth, and your vibrant becoming, right within the walls of your own sanctuary.

Step forward, gently and with courage. Your space is ready to meet you where you are, and to support you where you are going.

With deepest respect and support for your journey,

Lolade Ajai

The Sentient Home