PTSD WORKBOOK / BEGIN

Begin with choice

You are in charge of what you write, skip, and share.

What happened to me?

Stress reactions after trauma are not a character flaw. This workbook offers present-focused support. It is not trauma processing, an exposure exercise, or a replacement for evidence-based treatment.

What would make this workable?

Choose a comfortable place, a short time, and a way to stop. You can keep your eyes open throughout.

What I want support with today

Name a current need, such as sleep, feeling less alone, or getting through an appointment. No trauma details are needed.

Permission to stop

If writing, breathing, or body-focused exercises increase distress, stop. Look around, change activities, or contact support. You do not have to push through.

PTSD WORKBOOK / NOTICE

Find the present moment

Start with the world around you.

A brief orientation

Notice where you are and today’s date. Look for three neutral objects. Feel the support of the chair or floor if comfortable. Check your surroundings; do not assume you are safe if there is current danger.

What I can notice now

Name a color, an object, and a sound in your current space.

What helps me stay connected?

Would light, movement, water, an open door, or a trusted voice feel more comfortable?

My own grounding words

Write a simple phrase about the present, such as “I am in my living room. It is Tuesday.” Use only facts that are true.

PTSD WORKBOOK / PRACTICE

Understand a current pattern

Notice needs without retelling the trauma.

An early signal

What tells you that stress is rising: feeling jumpy, pulling away, losing focus, or another sign?

What is happening around me?

Name a current setting or demand if useful. You can use a general label and skip details.

What response helps me function?

What leaves you steadier later? What gives short relief but causes trouble afterward?

Bring patterns to care

A trauma-informed clinician can help with recurring flashbacks, nightmares, avoidance, or feeling constantly on guard. You do not need to work through traumatic memories alone.

PTSD WORKBOOK / EXPLORE

Build a choice menu

Have more than one option available.

An outward-focus option

Pick a brief activity: name room objects, listen to ordinary sounds, or sort a few items. Stop if it adds distress.

A connection option

Who can offer calm, practical support? What would you want them to say or do?

An everyday-care option

Choose one manageable action involving food, rest, routine, a pleasant activity, or time outside.

Different days, different needs

Calming does not have to mean closing your eyes or focusing on breathing. You can choose movement, conversation, or a simple task.

PTSD WORKBOOK / PLAN

Make care feel more manageable

You can tell people what helps you feel in control.

What I want my provider to know

Focus on current symptoms and daily impact. You may say, “I am not ready to share details.”

A request I can make

Examples: explain each step, ask before touch, offer breaks, or let me bring a support person.

A plan for a difficult appointment

What will help before, during, and after? How can you signal that you need a pause?

PTSD WORKBOOK / CARRY FORWARD

Choose a supported next step

Recovery can include both skills and professional care.

A tool I want to keep

Which option felt workable? What will remind you that it is available?

A next step with support

Name a care question, a person to contact, or a small routine to try. You can ask someone to help arrange care.

When to seek help

Ask for care if symptoms interfere with daily life, continue, or worsen. If there is current danger or you cannot stay safe, use immediate support instead of an exercise.

Read more from trusted sources

VA: Self-Help and Coping
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/selfhelp_coping.asp

VA: Coping with Traumatic Stress Reactions
https://www.ptsd.va.gov/gethelp/coping_stress_reactions.asp

Original reflection exercises by Grace in Healings. For immediate support, visit Our Healing Room / Crisis Support.