



Ten Small Prompts for Heavy Days

Gentle journaling for when your mood is low: small on purpose, kind on purpose.

When your mood is low, even picking up a pen can feel like a lot. So let me say this first: you don't have to do all of these. You don't have to do any of them well. One prompt, a few honest sentences, and you're done. That counts, fully. There's no wrong way to do this.

How to use this sheet

These prompts ask about small, specific, real things. That's on purpose. When mood is low, open-ended writing about why we feel bad can pull us into loops: the same thoughts circling without landing anywhere. Specific and small is the way out of the loop, not around the feeling.

A few minutes is enough. Truly.

1. Pick one prompt. Just one is plenty.
2. Set a timer for 5 to 10 minutes.
3. Answer the question that's actually asked. Small and concrete beats deep and vague here.
4. When the timer goes off, stop and close the notebook. Stopping on time is part of the practice, not quitting.

Start here: noticing

Low mood is good at hiding the okay moments. These prompts help you find them. "Okay" is the bar. Not good, not great. Okay.

1. What was the smallest thing that went okay today? "The coffee was warm" and "I answered one text" both count completely.
2. Pick one moment from today worth slowing down for, and describe it with your senses: what you saw, heard, or felt, in two or three sentences. Reliving a decent moment on paper lets you get a little more out of it.
3. Where did you feel even one percent connected today? A person, a pet, a song, a patch of sun. Name it and say what it was like.

Energy and action, without judgment

Depression tells us we "did nothing today." It's almost never true. These prompts are for keeping honest books: noticing what you actually did and what it cost you, with zero grading. In low seasons, action tends to come before motivation, not after. So we track the actions, however small.

1. List what you actually did today, however small. Got up. Showered. Fed the cat. Nothing is too small for this list; on hard days, everything on it was work.
2. What took energy from you today, and what gave a little back? Just two short lists. No judging either one; you're a scientist collecting data, not a judge.
3. What's one tiny thing you can look forward to in the next day or two? Tiny and likely: a show, a walk, a favorite mug. If nothing sounds good, pick something that used to be, and just put it on the calendar.
4. What's one step for tomorrow that takes five minutes or less? One text, one dish, one open window. Write it down and let that be the whole plan.

Kindness, and what still matters

Low mood can mute wanting: things you care about stop feeling like anything. Caring is usually still there underneath, and these prompts help you stay in touch with it. The last two ask you to practice a kinder voice. If that feels awkward at first, that's normal; awkward still works.

1. What matters to me, even now? Not goals, just what you care about: being a steady friend, honesty, your kids, music. Feeling far from it doesn't mean it's gone. Name one thing.
2. If a good friend had lived your exact day, what would you say to them? Write those sentences down. Then notice: they're for you too.
3. Write yourself a short kindness letter: three or four sentences, in the voice of someone who loves you. Not a pep talk, not a fix. Just what a kind person who really knows you would say tonight.

If writing starts to feel heavy

You can stop any time, mid-prompt or mid-sentence. Closing the notebook is always allowed and never a failure.

If you notice the same painful thought circling for more than a few minutes, that's your cue to stop writing and shift to something physical: stand up, run water over your hands, step outside, put on one song. The loop isn't a door. You don't have to write your way through it.

And if memories of painful or frightening events start to surface, please don't try to write through them alone. That work matters, and it deserves company. Bring it to session and we'll go there together, at your pace.

Some days the bravest entry is one sentence. If that's what today's page holds, you did this exactly right — and I'm glad you showed up for yourself, even a little.

This handout is a companion to therapy, not a replacement for it. It works best alongside the support of someone who knows you. If you're in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time, day or night.