



Steady Ground: Journaling After Trauma

Gentle prompts for steadiness between sessions. Nothing here asks you to relive anything.

Journaling can be a quiet way to care for yourself between our sessions. After something hard, though, a blank page can feel like an open door back into it. So this sheet keeps us pointed somewhere else: toward safety, steadiness, and what is true right now. There's no wrong way to do this, and you can stop any time.

First, what this is (and what it isn't)

One thing before anything else: we are not writing about what happened. That work belongs in session, together, where I can be right there with you. These prompts are about the present: what steadies you, what soothes you, what is strong in you.

If your pen starts drifting toward the event itself, that's okay and very human. Just pause, close the notebook gently, and save it for us. Stopping is not failing. Stopping is the skill.

Before you begin

A little setup makes writing feel safer. None of this is required. It's just what tends to help.

1. Pick a spot that feels calm to you: a favorite chair, your kitchen table, anywhere you can settle.
2. Set a timer for 5 to 10 minutes. Short is good. When it rings, you're done.
3. Keep something comforting nearby: tea, a blanket, a pet, a glass of water.
4. Remind yourself out loud if you like: "I can stop any time. I only write about today."

Check in with yourself first

Before you write, take ten seconds to notice where you are inside. Think of it like a traffic light.

Green means steady enough: you feel present, your feet are on the floor, you can look around the room. This is writing weather.

Yellow or red means revved up (racing heart, buzzy, on high alert) or shut down (foggy, numb, far away). If you're here, skip the writing for now and go straight to the "Stop and ground" section below. That's not quitting. That's using this sheet exactly right.

You can check in again partway through, too. The light can change, and you're allowed to change with it.

The prompts

Pick one. Just one is plenty. Skip any that don't fit today. You can answer the same prompt every day if you want; the answers will change over time, and that's the point.

1. What tells me I am safe right now? Look around and list the small proofs: the locked door, the daylight, the quiet, your own breath.
2. Three things that helped me get through this week. They can be tiny: a nap, a text from a friend, a hot shower. Tiny counts.
3. The people, places, pets, and things that steady me. This is your anchor list. Keep it somewhere you can find it on a hard day.
4. What does calm feel like in my body? Describe it so you can recognize it when it visits: warm hands, slower breath, softer shoulders.
5. A strength I've used before that is still in me. Think of one hard thing you've already gotten through. Name what got you through it.
6. My comfort menu. List something soothing for each sense: a song, a soft blanket, a smell you love, a taste, something kind to look at.
7. Right now, in this room... Describe the ordinary things around you, like a friendly reporter of the present moment.
8. One kind thing I can do for myself today. Small is perfect: a glass of water, a short walk, going to bed a little earlier.
9. When things feel like too much, what helps? Your coping inventory: what already works for you, plus one thing you'd like to try.
10. A small hope I'm holding. Not a five-year plan, just something you're looking forward to this week or this month.

If writing starts to feel like too much: stop and ground

Sometimes a feeling arrives faster than we expect. If that happens, you haven't done anything wrong. Your body is just asking for steadiness first. Here's how to give it that.

1. Put the pen down and close the notebook. You can come back another day, or not. Both are fine.
2. Press your feet flat into the floor. Feel the ground holding you up.
3. Look around slowly. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear.
4. Run cool water over your wrists, or hold something cold, and notice the temperature.
5. Say today's date and where you are, out loud: "It's Saturday. I'm in my kitchen. Right now, I'm safe."
6. Do something gentle and ordinary next: make tea, step outside, pet the dog, text someone kind.

Bringing it to session (only if you want to)

Your journal is yours. You never have to show me a single page. But if something you wrote feels important, or a prompt kept bumping into bigger feelings, you're welcome to bring it in: the page itself, or just the gist. We'll take it from there, together, at a pace that works for you.

Some days you'll fill a page. Some days you'll write one line. Some days you'll just hold the notebook, and that counts too. I'm glad you're taking this gentle kind of care with yourself.

This handout is a companion to therapy, not a replacement for it. Anything it stirs up is welcome in session, where we can hold it together. If you're in crisis, call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) any time, day or night.