

Compassionate Connection Therapy

Welcome to Your Reflection Space

This worksheet was created with care—for anyone moving through something tender, uncertain, or important. Whether you're processing pain, seeking clarity, rebuilding trust, or simply needing space to breathe, you're welcome here.

These worksheets offer gentle tools for reflection—resources that meet you where you are, without pressure or expectation. They're designed to support emotional exploration at your own pace, in your own way.

The mission is simple: To make emotional support more available in a time when many are struggling. To offer free, compassionate resources with no hidden agenda. To help you reconnect with your own voice, in ways that feel safe and steady.

If this mission resonates, feel free to share it. Post it, print it, pass it along. Your share might be someone's first moment of feeling understood.

These worksheets are offered with care, for personal use only. They're here to support your healing—not to rush it. You don't need to finish every section. You don't need to have all the answers. Take what supports you. Leave what doesn't. Your pace, your process, your wellbeing—these come first.

You're not alone. Even if we've never met, this resource is offered with quiet solidarity—holding space, cheering you on, and believing in your capacity to heal.

A Gentle Note on Safety

These worksheets are designed for personal reflection. They are not a substitute for therapy or professional treatment.

If you're in therapy, consider sharing this resource with your therapist before exploring. If you're not in therapy, please reflect in a space that feels emotionally and physically safe.

You might choose to explore alongside someone you trust—a friend, partner, or support person. If that isn't available right now, this worksheet can still be a quiet companion. Go gently. In your own time. In your own way.

Where to Find the Worksheets

If this resource feels meaningful, please share it. Healing is communal—and your share might be someone's first step toward feeling less alone.

These worksheets are shared freely across platforms:

Website: <https://CompassionateConnectionTherapy.co.uk>

Facebook: Compassionate Connection Therapy

TikTok: @rosa.tomassi.bella

Instagram: @connectiontherapyrhl

Let's make emotional support tools free, gentle, and accessible—together.

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A Note on Contact

These worksheets are shared freely, but individual support cannot be offered through messages or comments. If you need support, please speak with a therapist or someone you trust. These tools are here to guide gentle exploration—not to replace professional care. Thank you for understanding, and for sharing with kindness.

If You're in Crisis

These worksheets are not for emergencies. If you feel overwhelmed or unsafe, please reach out:

- Samaritans — 116 123 (free, 24/7)
- NHS 111 — urgent mental health advice
- 999 — if you or someone else is at immediate risk

You deserve support, safety, and care.

Copyright and Usage

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You are welcome to share this resource with others for support, as long as:

- *You credit Rosa Tomassi-Bella and Compassionate Connection Therapy*
- *You do not alter the content in any way*
- *You do not use it for commercial purposes or financial gain*

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Compassionate Connection Therapy

Growing Around Grief

A Gentle, Reflective Worksheet Inspired by Tonkin's Model

Grief is not something we “get over.” It isn’t a task to complete, a phase to finish, or a wound that must neatly close. Grief is something we learn to live alongside — something we carry, honour, and grow around in our own time and in our own way. It can feel heavy one day and quieter the next. It can surge unexpectedly or sit softly in the background. However it shows up, it is a natural expression of love, loss, and being human.

Tonkin’s Model of Grief offers a compassionate way of understanding this. Instead of imagining grief shrinking or fading away, the model invites us to imagine *life* slowly expanding around it. The grief remains part of us — not as a sign of “not healing,” but as a reflection of what mattered. As life grows, new experiences, relationships, strengths, and meanings begin to form. These don’t replace the grief or ask it to disappear. They simply create more room for us to breathe, to move, and to exist with what we carry.

This worksheet is here as a gentle companion. It isn’t here to push you toward “acceptance,” “closure,” or any particular emotional destination. There is no right way to grieve, no timeline you must follow, and no expectation about what your grief should look or feel like. Your experience is allowed to be layered, shifting, contradictory, tender, or unclear. All of it belongs.

You can move through this in whatever way feels right for you. You might write, draw, reflect silently, or simply read and let the words settle. You might complete it in one sitting, or return to it slowly over days, weeks, or months. You might find that some prompts feel right today, and others feel right another time. All of that is completely okay.

Everything you feel is welcome here — the emotions you can name, the ones you can’t, the ones that surprise you, and the ones that come and go. Grief is deeply personal, and this space is designed to meet you gently, without judgement, pressure, or assumptions.

If it feels supportive, you might pause before you begin. Take a slow breath. Notice how you’re arriving in this moment. You don’t need to change anything about how you feel. This is simply a moment of kindness toward yourself before you continue.

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How to Use This Worksheet

This worksheet is here to support you gently, without urgency or expectation. Think of it as a soft place to land — something you can dip into, step away from, and return to whenever you need. There is no single “right” way to use it. Let it meet you exactly where you are.

Here are some ways you might move through it:

- **Move slowly. There is no rush.** Grief has its own rhythm, and your pace is allowed to shift from moment to moment. You don’t need to finish anything in one sitting.
- **Pause whenever you need to.** If something stirs emotion, brings up memories, or feels tender, you can stop, breathe, or step away. Your wellbeing comes first.
- **Use the open questions as gentle invitations.** These questions are here to help you explore your experience with curiosity and compassion. They are not instructions or tasks. You don’t need to answer all of them, and you don’t need to answer them fully. Even a single word, a short phrase, or a quiet reflection is enough.
- **Turn to the sentence starters when questions feel overwhelming.** Sometimes open questions can feel too big or too sharp. Sentence starters offer a softer entry point — a way to begin without needing to know where you’re going. You can complete them with a word, a phrase, or a few lines. There is no pressure to go deeper than feels safe.
- **Choose your format.** You might write paragraphs, jot down a few words, sketch shapes or colours, or simply read and let the reflections settle inside. All of these are valid. There is no required way to express yourself here.
- **Return as often as you like.** Grief changes, and what feels true today may feel different tomorrow. Revisiting a prompt can offer new insights, or simply a moment of grounding.
- **Skip anything that feels too much.** You don’t need to push through discomfort. You can choose what feels manageable and leave the rest for another time — or not at all.
- **Let this be a space of kindness toward yourself.** Try to approach each section with gentleness rather than expectation. You’re not here to perform or prove anything. You’re here to honour your experience in whatever way feels right for you.

If it feels supportive, you might take a slow breath before you begin or place a hand somewhere that feels comforting. This is your space — soft, spacious, and entirely yours.

✦ SECTION 1 — Meeting Your Grief Gently

Exploring the “stone” of grief

🌱 A Gentle Guide

When grief feels vast, shapeless, or hard to describe, giving it a form can sometimes help you meet it with a little more understanding. Imagining your grief as a stone is not meant to minimise it or make it smaller — it’s simply a way of noticing how it feels *today*, in this moment, without needing to define it forever.

You might picture a stone that is heavy and dense, or one that is small and smooth. It might feel jagged, warm, cold, fragile, or ancient. It might be something you hold carefully in your hands, something you tuck into a pocket, something you place down beside you, or something you keep close to your heart. There is no right or wrong way for your stone to look or feel.

This exercise is an invitation to gently observe your grief rather than wrestle with it. By giving it shape, you may find it becomes a little easier to sit with — not because it becomes lighter, but because it becomes more familiar, more nameable, and more connected to your lived experience.

If imagining a stone doesn’t feel right, you can adapt the image. Some people picture their grief as a weather pattern, a colour, a sound, or a landscape. Others imagine it as a weight they carry, a knot in a rope, or a wave in the ocean. What matters most is that the image feels *true for you*.

Take your time. Let the image come naturally. You don’t need to force anything. Even if nothing comes to mind, simply pausing to notice how grief feels in your body or thoughts is enough.

💬 Open Questions

1. If your grief were a stone, what qualities would it have today — its size, texture, temperature, or weight?

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2. How does this “stone” sit with you — in your body, your thoughts, your routines, or your relationships?
3. What feels familiar about this grief, as though it has been with you for a while?
4. What feels new, unexpected, or different about it today?
5. What helps you hold this grief with a little more gentleness, even for a moment?
6. If your stone could speak, what might it want you to know or acknowledge?
7. How does the shape of your grief shift depending on your energy, environment, or support?

Sentence Starters

Sometimes open questions can feel too big. These sentence starters are here as gentler entry points — ways to begin without needing to know where you’re going. You can complete them with a word, a phrase, or a few lines.

- “Today, my grief feels like...”
- “If I could place this stone somewhere, I would choose...”

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- “The weight of my grief shows up when...”
- “I notice my grief most when...”
- “Right now, I’m learning that my grief...”
- “A part of me wants to hold this stone by...”
- “My grief changes shape when...”

Tiny Practice

Place your hand over your heart, your stomach, or another part of your body where grief seems to settle. Take a slow breath. Quietly say (out loud or internally):

“This is grief. And I am allowed to feel it.”

If that feels too direct, you might soften it to:

- “This is a moment of grief.”
- “I’m doing the best I can with something that matters.”
- “It’s okay that this feels heavy.”

Let the words land gently, without pressure to believe them fully. They are simply an offering of kindness to yourself.

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A Sciency Bit

When emotions feel overwhelming, the brain can slip into survival mode, making it harder to think clearly or soothe ourselves. Giving grief a shape — like a stone — is a grounding technique that helps the brain shift from raw emotional activation into a more regulated state.

This happens because:

- **Imagery activates the prefrontal cortex**, the part of the brain involved in reflection, meaning-making, and emotional regulation.
- **Naming or visualising emotions reduces amygdala activity**, which is responsible for threat detection and emotional intensity.
- **Externalising feelings (placing them outside the body, even symbolically)** can make them feel more manageable and less consuming.

This doesn't remove the grief — it simply creates a little more space around it, allowing you to meet it with steadiness rather than overwhelm.

✨ SECTION 2 — What Has Grown Around Your Grief

Honouring the life that has expanded alongside loss

A Gentle Guide

Grief doesn't cancel out growth. Both can exist at the same time, even if that feels contradictory. You may still hurt deeply and also notice small shifts in how you move through the world. These changes aren't signs that the loss was “for the best,” or that you're supposed to feel grateful for pain. They are simply reflections of the quiet, natural ways humans adapt when life asks more of us than we ever wanted to give.

Growth around grief can be subtle — almost unnoticeable at first. It might show up as a new routine that steadies you, a relationship that feels more precious, a moment of clarity, or a softness you didn't expect. It might be the way you check in with yourself more often, how you've learned to ask for help, or how you've become more patient with your own limits.

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Sometimes growth is as small as remembering to breathe through a difficult moment or allowing yourself to rest when you need it.

This section isn't about forcing positivity or searching for silver linings. It's about gently acknowledging the ways your life has expanded around your grief — not to overshadow the pain, but to honour the resilience, tenderness, and humanity that coexist with it.

If nothing feels like it has grown yet, that's okay. Growth doesn't always appear early, and it doesn't always look like progress. Sometimes the only thing that has grown is the ability to get through another day, or to breathe through another wave. That counts too.

Take your time with this section. Let whatever arises be enough. Even the smallest noticing is valid.

Open Questions

1. What new routines or supports — even very small ones — have helped you feel steadier or more anchored?
2. What have you learned about yourself since your loss, whether through difficulty, tenderness, or quiet noticing?
3. Which relationships or connections feel more meaningful, comforting, or grounding now?
4. What moments of softness, strength, or clarity have surprised you, even briefly?
5. What helps you feel grounded — a breath, a ritual, a place, a person, a memory, a practice?

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6. In what ways have you adapted, even if you didn't intend to or want to?
7. What parts of your life feel like they've stretched, shifted, or opened since your grief began?

Sentence Starters

Sometimes questions can feel too wide or overwhelming. These sentence starters are here as gentler entry points — a way to begin without needing to know where you're going.

- “One thing that has grown around my grief is...”
- “I’ve noticed I’m becoming someone who...”
- “A small shift I’m grateful for is...”
- “I feel supported when...”
- “Something that helps me stay connected to myself is...”
- “I’m learning that I can...”

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- “A gentle change I didn’t expect is...”

Tiny Practice

Think of one thing — however small — that has supported you recently. It might be a person, a habit, a moment of rest, a comforting object, a memory, or even a breath you allowed yourself to take.

Pause for a moment and acknowledge it without minimising it or brushing it aside.

You might say quietly:

- “This helped me.”
- “This mattered.”
- “This gave me a little space.”

Let yourself feel the truth of that, even if only for a moment.

A Sciency Bit

Research on post-traumatic growth shows that after significant loss, many people naturally develop new strengths, deeper empathy, or clearer priorities. This doesn’t mean the loss was beneficial or necessary — it simply reflects the brain’s remarkable ability to adapt.

Here’s what’s happening beneath the surface:

- **The brain seeks meaning and coherence**, especially after something life-altering.
- **New neural pathways form** as you learn, reflect, and adjust to a changed world.
- **Connection and support regulate the nervous system**, making space for resilience.
- **Small acts of coping accumulate**, gradually expanding your capacity to navigate life alongside grief.

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Growth doesn't replace grief — it grows *around* it, creating more room for you to exist, breathe, and move forward in ways that honour both your pain and your humanity.

✦ SECTION 3 — What Still Feels Tender

Making space for the parts that still ache

🌱 A Gentle Guide

Some parts of grief remain tender, no matter how much time has passed or how much growth has happened around it. This tenderness is not a sign that you're "stuck," "not healing," or doing anything wrong. It is a sign of love, memory, meaning, and the depth of what you carry.

Grief can soften and shift, but certain moments, reminders, or emotions may still feel sharp or raw — and that is a completely human response. Tenderness is not weakness. It is a reflection of how deeply something mattered, and how much it continues to matter.

This section is an invitation to gently acknowledge the places within you that still ache. Not to fix them, minimise them, or force them into resolution, but simply to notice them with kindness. Tenderness often shows up in unexpected ways: a sudden wave of emotion, a quiet heaviness, a moment of longing, or a feeling you can't quite name. Sometimes it's a memory that still stings, a conversation you never had, or a part of the story that feels unfinished.

You don't need to have the "right words" for this. You don't need to explain or justify why something still hurts. You don't need to make sense of it. You're simply giving yourself permission to acknowledge what is still tender — with no pressure to change it.

If it feels difficult to approach this section, you can take it slowly. You might choose just one small thing to name. You might write a few words or simply sit with the questions. Whatever feels manageable is enough. Even silence can be a form of acknowledgement.

💬 Open Questions

1. What memories or moments still feel overwhelming, sharp, or emotionally charged?

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2. What emotions feel closest to the surface when you think about your grief — sadness, anger, longing, confusion, numbness, or something else?
3. What feels hard to talk about or express, even with people you trust?
4. What do you wish others understood about your grief, your experience, or your needs?
5. What feels untouched, unspoken, or too tender to explore fully right now?
6. Are there particular dates, places, or situations that still bring up strong feelings?
7. What part of your grief feels like it needs gentleness rather than solutions?

Sentence Starters

Sometimes questions can feel too wide or overwhelming. These sentence starters are here as softer entry points — a way to begin without needing to know where you're going.

- “A part of my grief that still feels tender is...”
- “I find it difficult when...”

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- “I wish people knew that...”
- “Sometimes I still feel...”
- “What I haven’t said yet is...”
- “A moment that still catches me off guard is...”
- “I’m learning that this part of my grief needs...”

Tiny Practice

Place your hand somewhere that feels comforting — your heart, your chest, your stomach, your shoulder, or anywhere that feels right. Take a slow breath.

Quietly say: **“It makes sense that this still hurts.”**

If that feels too strong, you might soften it to:

- “This part of me is tender, and that’s okay.”
- “I’m allowed to feel this.”
- “This pain matters.”

Let the words land gently, without needing to believe them fully. They are simply an offering of kindness to yourself.

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A Sciency Bit

Emotional pain activates many of the same neural pathways as physical pain. This is why grief can feel heavy in the chest, tight in the throat, or sharp in the stomach. The brain interprets emotional loss as a form of threat or injury, which is why the body responds so strongly.

When you name what feels tender — even quietly to yourself — something important happens:

- **The amygdala (the brain’s alarm system) becomes less reactive.**
- **The prefrontal cortex (responsible for reflection and regulation) becomes more active.**
- **Your nervous system shifts toward a more grounded state.**

This doesn’t remove the pain, but it can make it feel more bearable, more held, and less overwhelming. Naming tenderness is a form of self-support — a way of saying, “*I see you. I’m here.*”

✦ SECTION 4 — What You Want to Nurture Next

Inviting gentle growth without pressure

A Gentle Guide

Healing isn’t about “moving on” or leaving anything behind. It’s about tending to what needs care, in ways that feel possible and kind. Grief can take up a lot of space, and sometimes the parts of life that once felt nourishing, grounding, or meaningful become quieter or harder to reach. This section is an invitation to notice what might be ready — even in the smallest way — for a little attention, warmth, or support.

You don’t need to feel motivated, inspired, or certain. You don’t need to have a plan. You don’t need to know what healing “should” look like. This is simply about sensing where a gentle shift might be welcome. It could be something practical, emotional, relational,

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creative, or spiritual. It could be something tiny, like drinking water more regularly, stepping outside for a moment of fresh air, reconnecting with a comforting routine, or allowing yourself to rest without guilt.

Sometimes nurturing looks like doing less. Sometimes it looks like softening expectations. Sometimes it looks like asking for help. Sometimes it looks like remembering a part of yourself that has been quiet for a while. And sometimes nurturing simply means acknowledging that you deserve care, even if you're not sure what that care looks like yet.

There is no pressure here. You're not choosing a direction for your whole life — just noticing what feels ready for a little gentleness. Even the smallest act of care is enough.

Open Questions

1. What part of your life feels ready for a little more care, attention, or softness?
2. What helps you feel soothed, safe, or slightly more grounded — even for a moment?
3. What would healing look like for you, in a way that honours your pace and your needs?
4. What do you want to reconnect with — a practice, a feeling, a part of yourself, a relationship, a value?
5. What small step feels possible, manageable, or comforting right now?
6. What boundaries, supports, or rhythms might help you feel steadier?

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7. What would “being gentle with yourself” look like in your daily life?

Sentence Starters

Sometimes questions can feel too wide or overwhelming. These sentence starters are here as softer entry points — a way to begin without needing to know where you’re going.

- “I’d like to nurture...”
- “A part of me that needs gentleness is...”
- “Healing, for me, looks like...”
- “A small step I could take is...”
- “I want to reconnect with...”
- “Something that feels quietly important is...”
- “I’m learning that I need...”

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Tiny Practice

Choose one small act of care you can offer yourself today. It might be:

- a slow breath
- a pause before rushing into the next thing
- a warm drink
- a moment of stillness
- stepping outside for a few seconds
- loosening your shoulders
- placing a hand on your heart
- allowing yourself to rest without justification

Let it be tiny. Let it be enough.

You might say to yourself: **“This is one small way I’m caring for myself today.”**

A Sciency Bit

The brain responds powerfully to small, manageable steps. When you take even a tiny action that supports your wellbeing, your brain releases dopamine — a neurotransmitter linked to motivation, reward, and a sense of capability. This creates a positive feedback loop, making healing feel more possible and less overwhelming.

Small steps also:

- reduce activation in the brain’s threat system
- support nervous system regulation
- build a sense of agency
- help re-establish routines that anchor you
- create gentle momentum without pressure

Healing doesn’t require big leaps. It grows through small, compassionate choices that honour your capacity in each moment.

✦ SECTION 5 — Staying Connected to What Matters

Honouring love, memory, and meaning

🌱 A Gentle Guide

Grief often reflects something precious — love, connection, identity, belonging, or significance. Even when the pain feels sharp or overwhelming, it can sit alongside moments of warmth, memory, or meaning. Staying connected to what matters doesn't mean clinging to the past or refusing to move forward. It simply means honouring the threads that still feel important, comforting, or grounding.

Connection can take many forms. It might be a memory that brings a soft smile, a value you want to carry forward, a ritual that steadies you, or a feeling that reminds you of who or what shaped you. It might be something tangible — an object, a place, a scent — or something internal, like a quality, a lesson, or a sense of purpose.

There is no “right” way to stay connected. Some people find comfort in rituals; others find it in quiet reflection, creativity, nature, or acts of kindness. Some connections feel steady; others come and go. Some feel comforting; others feel bittersweet. All of these experiences are valid.

This section is not about forcing meaning or searching for silver linings. It's about gently noticing what still matters to you — what feels worth holding, remembering, or honouring — and allowing those things to support you in ways that feel nourishing rather than heavy.

Take your time. Let whatever arises be enough. Even the smallest recognition — a memory, a value, a ritual, a moment of connection — is meaningful.

💬 Open Questions

1. What memories feel comforting, grounding, or meaningful — even if they also bring a little ache?

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2. What values, qualities, or ways of being do you want to carry forward because they feel important to you?
3. What helps you feel connected to what (or who) you've lost — a feeling, a ritual, a place, a story, a practice?
4. What rituals, routines, or small acts help you feel anchored or supported?
5. What brings you a sense of meaning — in your relationships, your choices, your creativity, your daily life?
6. What parts of your identity feel shaped by the love, connection, or significance behind your grief?
7. What helps you feel like you're honouring what mattered without pressuring yourself to "move on"?

Sentence Starters

Sometimes questions can feel too wide or overwhelming. These sentence starters are here as softer entry points — a way to begin without needing to know where you're going.

- "A memory I hold close is..."
- "Something I want to carry forward is..."

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- “I feel connected when...”
- “A ritual that supports me is...”
- “Meaning shows up for me when...”
- “A value that feels important to honour is...”
- “I feel grounded when I...”

Tiny Practice

Choose one memory, value, or ritual that feels comforting or meaningful — even if only slightly.

Hold it gently in your awareness for a moment.

You might place a hand on your heart, take a slow breath, or simply sit with the feeling it brings.

Let yourself acknowledge: **“This matters to me.”**

No pressure to do anything with it. Just recognition. Just presence.

A Sciency Bit

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Meaning-making is a natural part of how humans integrate grief. When people connect their loss to values, memories, identity, or purpose, the brain begins forming new neural pathways that support emotional resilience.

This process:

- helps the nervous system regulate
- reduces the intensity of emotional overwhelm
- strengthens the prefrontal cortex (responsible for reflection and meaning)
- supports a sense of continuity and identity
- allows grief to coexist with growth, rather than compete with it

Meaning-making doesn't erase grief — it simply creates more space around it, allowing you to carry it with a little more steadiness and a little less isolation.

Closing: A Gentle Reminder

Grief is not a problem to solve or a wound you must hurry to heal. It is a human experience — tender, complex, and deeply personal — and it deserves to be honoured with the same care you would offer to anything precious.

There is no finish line you need to reach, no timeline you must follow, and no expectation for how you “should” feel.

You are allowed to move at your own pace, even if that pace changes from day to day. You are allowed to feel what you feel, even if those feelings seem contradictory or unexpected. You are allowed to grow and still grieve — these two experiences can sit side by side without cancelling each other out. You are allowed to carry love and pain together, because both can be true at the same time.

If you return to this worksheet in the future, you may find that different parts speak to you, or that new insights, new tenderness, or new forms of growth emerge. You may notice shifts that feel subtle or profound, or you may simply meet yourself exactly where you are. All of it is welcome. All of it is valid.

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There is no “right way” to do this. There is only *your* way — shaped by your history, your heart, your relationships, your values, and your humanity.

You are doing the best you can with something that matters deeply. Your effort, your tenderness, your survival, your love — they all count.

And truly, gently, wholeheartedly: **that is enough.**