

# 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:*

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### Rest Without Guilt: A Self-Care & Recovery Worksheet

#### Introduction

Rest is not something you have to earn. It is a natural part of being human — as essential as breathing, eating, or connecting with others. Yet for many people, slowing down can feel complicated. It may stir up discomfort, unease, or even a sense of guilt. If that's true for you, you are not alone.

This worksheet is here as a gentle companion. It does not tell you what to do or how to feel. Instead, it offers invitations: spaces to pause, reflect, and notice what rest means in your life right now. You may discover beliefs you've carried, patterns that feel familiar, or possibilities that feel new. All of these are welcome.

Nothing here is about fixing you. You are not broken. This is about creating room to soften, to listen inwardly, and to care for yourself with kindness. You can take what feels supportive and leave the rest. You can move slowly, skip sections, or return later. There is no right pace.

Think of this worksheet as a safe place to explore rest without judgment — a place where permission is already given, and where your humanity is honoured exactly as it is.

#### How to Use This Worksheet

- **Move at your own pace.** There is no rush. You can pause, return later, or skip sections entirely.
- **There are no right or wrong answers.** Whatever comes up for you is valid. Even silence or “I don't know” is a response.
- **Treat the prompts as invitations, not instructions.** They are here to spark reflection, not to tell you what you should feel or do.
- **Take breaks whenever you need.** Resting from the worksheet is also a form of rest.
- **Keep only what feels supportive.** If something doesn't resonate, you can let it go. This resource is meant to serve you, not pressure you.
- **Return as often as you like.** You may find different sections speak to you at different times.

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### Section 1: Exploring Beliefs About Rest

**Guide:** Many of us carry messages about rest from family, culture, religion, school, or past experiences. Some of these messages may have been spoken directly, while others were absorbed quietly over time. This section invites you to notice those influences with gentle curiosity. There is no need to judge them, or yourself. Simply noticing is enough.

#### **Open Questions (invitations to reflect):**

- What messages about rest have I absorbed, and where might they have come from?
- When does rest feel hardest for me, and what makes those moments challenging?
- What do I wish rest could feel like in my life?
- How does guilt show up in my body when I try to pause?
- What helps me feel safer or more supported when I allow myself to rest?

#### **Sentence Starters (to ease reflection):**

- “I feel guilty resting because...”
- “Messages I’ve received about rest include...”

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- “I wish I believed...”
- “Rest feels possible when...”
- “Rest feels complicated when...”

**Tiny Practice:** Write one gentle belief about rest — something you would like to hold onto — and place it somewhere visible. For example: “*Rest helps me show up as myself.*” Let it be a quiet reminder that rest is part of your humanity.

**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Rest activates the parasympathetic nervous system — the body’s “rest and digest” response. This lowers stress hormones like cortisol, slows the heart rate, and supports emotional recovery. Even small pauses can help your body shift toward safety and calm.

### Gentle Tips:

- Try journaling in short bursts, even one sentence, if longer writing feels overwhelming.
- Approach your reflections with curiosity rather than criticism: “*That’s interesting I feel this way.*”
- If reflection feels heavy, pause and return later. Resting from the work of self-exploration is also valid.
- Notice if certain memories or cultural phrases come up — you don’t need to change them, just acknowledge them.
- Allow yourself to explore slowly; there is no timeline for understanding your relationship with rest.

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### Section 2: Gentle Resting Techniques

**Guide:** Rest doesn't have to be dramatic or time-consuming. Sometimes the smallest pauses — a softened breath, a moment of stillness, a sip of something warm — can be powerful. This section invites you to explore what kinds of rest feel accessible to you right now. There is no single “right” way to rest; what matters is noticing what feels soothing, safe, and possible in this moment.

#### **Open Questions (gentle invitations):**

- What short pauses feel soothing to me, even if only for a few minutes?
- What longer practices feel nourishing when I have more space?
- How does my body respond when I slow down, even briefly?
- What feels safe to try today, without pressure?
- What feels unrealistic or out of reach right now?

#### **Sentence Starters (to ease reflection):**

- “A micro-rest that helps me is...”
- “Deep rest feels like...”

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- “When I pause, I notice...”
- “Rest feels easier when...”
- “I give myself permission to...”

**Tiny Practice:** Choose one gentle pause today: try a 2-minute body scan, noticing each part of your body with kindness, or sip something warm slowly without multitasking. Let it be simple and let it be enough.

**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Even brief pauses can shift the body into a calmer state. Short rests reduce heart rate, support emotional regulation, and give the nervous system a chance to reset. This means that even tiny moments of rest can have real, measurable benefits.

### Gentle Tips:

- Experiment with different lengths of rest — sometimes 2 minutes is enough, sometimes longer feels better.
- Notice how your body responds before, during, and after a pause; let curiosity guide you.
- Keep a “menu” of options (like a list of micro-rests) so you don’t have to decide in the moment.
- Allow rest to be flexible — it can look different each day.

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- If rest feels uncomfortable, start small and remind yourself that even noticing your need is a form of care.

### Section 3: Self-Care That Helps

**Guide:** Self-care can take many forms. Some practices soothe us in the moment — offering comfort, distraction, or relief. Others may take more effort but help us feel stronger, safer, and more connected over time. Both kinds are valid. This section is not about choosing the “right” kind of self-care, but about noticing what feels supportive for you right now, and what helps you feel more grounded in the long run.

#### Open Questions (gentle invitations):

- What self-care practices feel nourishing for me over time?
- What habits soothe me in the moment but don’t always sustain me?
- How do I notice the difference between avoiding and recovering?
- What boundaries help protect my rest and energy?
- What routines bring me a sense of calm or stability?

#### Sentence Starters (to ease reflection):

- “Self-care that feels good in the moment is...”



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- “Self-care that helps me long-term is...”
- “I notice I avoid rest when...”
- “Boundaries that support me include...”
- “I feel stronger when...”

**Tiny Practice:** Choose one supportive self-care action today. It doesn’t have to be big — it could be saying “no” to something that drains you, eating something nourishing, or taking a short walk. Let it be small, kind, and doable.

**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Long-term self-care strengthens resilience by supporting the brain’s regulation systems. Practices like sleep, boundaries, and gentle movement reduce burnout risk and help the nervous system recover from stress. Even small, consistent acts of care can create lasting changes in how the body and mind respond to pressure.

### Gentle Tips:

- Ask yourself: “*Does this leave me feeling lighter or heavier?*” Let that guide your choices.
- Try one supportive action and simply notice how it feels, without judgment.
- Celebrate small shifts — even saying “no” once is meaningful.
- Allow both kinds of self-care (momentary and long-term) to coexist; neither is wrong.

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- Remember: self-care doesn't have to be perfect or polished. It only needs to feel kind to you.

### Section 4: Releasing Guilt & Reframing Rest

**Guide:** Guilt often shows up when we pause — especially if we've learned that worth is tied to productivity or sacrifice. This section is not about erasing guilt or forcing positivity.

Instead, it invites you to notice those thoughts gently, and to experiment with reframing them in ways that feel believable and kind. Even if guilt remains, you can still choose rest. Rest and guilt can coexist; the practice is giving yourself permission anyway.

#### **Open Questions (gentle invitations):**

- What guilt thoughts come up when I rest, and how do they sound in my mind?
- How might I respond to those thoughts with kindness instead of criticism?
- What affirmation feels believable for me today, even if small?
- In what ways does guilt affect the choices I make about pausing or continuing?
- What kind of permission feels most supportive for me right now?

#### **Sentence Starters (to ease reflection):**

- “I don't have to earn rest by...”

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- “Resting helps me...”
- “I’m allowed to...”
- “Even if I feel guilty, I can still...”
- “My body is asking for...”

**Tiny Practice:** Write one gentle affirmation on a card and place it by your bed, desk, or another space you see often. Let it be simple and true for you — something like *“I am allowed to pause”* or *“Resting helps me return to myself.”*

**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Self-compassion practices reduce activity in the brain’s threat system (the part that fuels guilt and self-criticism) and increase oxytocin, a hormone that supports feelings of safety and calm. This means that even small acts of kindness toward yourself can shift your nervous system toward recovery.

### Gentle Tips:

- Write affirmations in your own words; they don’t need to sound polished or perfect.
- Place reminders where you’ll see them often — on a mirror, phone, or notebook.
- If guilt persists, allow rest anyway. Feelings don’t have to dictate your choices.
- Notice how your body feels when you repeat an affirmation; let that guide you.

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- Treat affirmations as gentle companions, not rules — they are here to support, not pressure.

### Section 5: Calm-Down Menu

**Guide:** When emotions run high, it can feel overwhelming to know what to do. This section is not about forcing calm or “fixing” feelings — it’s about offering gentle options that may help your body and mind settle. You don’t need to try everything. Choose one practice that feels safe and manageable in the moment. Even the smallest step toward soothing yourself is enough.

Overthinking often shows up alongside overwhelm. It can feel like your mind is racing, looping through worries, or replaying scenarios. This section also invites you to notice when your thoughts feel tangled, and to experiment with gentle ways of stepping back from them. You don’t need to stop overthinking completely — even small pauses can help create space.

#### **Open Questions (gentle invitations):**

- What helps me calm down quickly when I feel overwhelmed?
- What grounding practices feel safe and accessible for me?
- How does movement shift my mood or energy?
- What words help me set boundaries when I need space?
- What sensory input (touch, sound, smell, sight) feels soothing to me?

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- When I notice myself overthinking, what helps me soften or redirect my focus?

### Sentence Starters (to ease reflection):

- “When I feel overwhelmed, I...”
- “A grounding practice that helps me is...”
- “Movement that feels good is...”
- “I need space when...”
- “I feel calmer when...”
- “When I catch myself overthinking, I...”

**Tiny Practice:** Try box breathing: inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4. Repeat gently a few times, noticing how your body responds. If your mind feels busy, try naming five things you can see around you — this can help shift attention from racing thoughts to the present moment.

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**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Breathwork increases vagal tone, which helps activate the parasympathetic nervous system — the body’s natural calming response. This can reduce anxiety symptoms, lower heart rate, and bring a sense of steadiness. Even a few breaths can make a difference. Overthinking is often linked to heightened activity in the brain’s “default mode network,” which fuels rumination. Gentle grounding practices — like focusing on breath or sensory input — can help quiet this network and bring relief.

### Gentle Tips:

- Notice which practices soothe you most often and keep those close at hand.
- Keep a grounding object nearby — a stone, fabric, or anything textured — so it’s available when needed.
- Practice calming techniques when you’re already calm, so they feel familiar and easier to access in harder moments.
- Allow yourself to stop if something doesn’t feel supportive; choosing not to continue is also a form of self-care.
- Remember: calming down doesn’t mean erasing emotions. It means giving yourself space to feel safer while they move through you.
- If you notice yourself overthinking, try gently shifting focus to your senses or body — even for a moment.
- Treat overthinking with compassion: it often comes from a mind trying to protect you. Pausing is not failure; it’s care.

## Mindfulness & Breathing Exercises

**Guide:** Mindfulness and breathing are gentle ways to reconnect with the present moment. They don’t need to be complicated or perfect — even a few breaths or seconds of noticing can help. This section offers simple practices you can experiment with. Choose what feels safe and accessible. You don’t have to do them all, and there’s no “right” way.

- **Box Breathing:** Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4. Repeat gently.

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- **4-7-8 Breath:** Inhale for 4, hold for 7, exhale for 8. Helps slow the nervous system.
- **Sighing Out Tension:** Take a deep breath and release it with a long, audible sigh.
- **Five Senses Check-In:** Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- **Mindful Sip:** Drink something slowly, noticing its warmth, texture, and taste.
- **Body Scan:** Close your eyes and gently notice each part of your body, softening tension as you go.
- **Hand-to-Heart Breathing:** Place a hand on your chest, breathe slowly, and notice the rise and fall.
- **Counting Breaths:** Count each inhale and exhale up to 10, then begin again.
- **Grounding Touch:** Hold a textured object (stone, fabric, wood) and focus on the sensation.
- **Walking Mindfulness:** Take slow steps, noticing the feeling of your feet connecting with the ground.

**Sciency Bit (gentle reassurance):** Mindfulness and slow breathing activate the parasympathetic nervous system, calming the body's stress response. Research shows these practices can lower blood pressure, reduce anxiety, and improve emotional regulation. Even a few mindful breaths can shift the brain's focus from overthinking to presence.

### Gentle Tips:

- Start small — even one mindful breath counts.
- Try different techniques and notice which feel most natural.
- Use everyday moments (walking, eating, showering) as opportunities for gentle mindfulness.
- If your mind wanders, that's normal — simply notice and return to the breath without judgment.
- Keep practices flexible; they don't need to look the same each time.

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### 🌻 Closing

Rest is not a luxury — it is a lifeline. It is part of being human, part of how we heal, and part of how we reconnect with ourselves. You are allowed to pause. You are allowed to feel tired. You are allowed to rest, even if no one else gives you permission.

This worksheet is not a checklist to complete or a set of tasks to master. It is a companion — something you can return to whenever guilt creeps in, when your body feels heavy, or when your mind won't stop racing. You can move through it slowly, revisit sections, or simply hold onto one phrase that feels kind.

Let this be a reminder: rest is not weakness, avoidance, or failure. It is care. It is recovery. It is survival.

💡 *“You are not required to set yourself on fire to keep others warm.”*