



insight & change

A Reflection Workbook

SIMPLY BEING THERAPY

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Welcome

I want to say something before we begin, because I think it matters more than anything else in this workbook: understanding yourself is not the same thing as being able to live differently, and the gap between the two is not a personal failing. It is how a nervous system works.

Most people who pick this up already have a good deal of insight. You can probably explain your patterns with real clarity — why you over-function, why you keep choosing what's familiar over what's good for you, why the same argument seems to happen on a loop. You may have read the books, done the work, sat with a therapist for years. And still, in the moment that matters, the old response shows up before you've had a chance to choose something else. If that's you, I want to offer a different starting place. Instead of asking why you haven't changed yet, we're going to get curious about what your body is still learning, and what it needs in order to learn something new.

This isn't a workbook you'll finish and then feel entirely different. Change of this kind is slow and it is built through repetition, not revelation. You'll return to some of the same questions more than once across these pages, because that repetition is closer to how real change actually happens than any single insight could be. My hope isn't that you'll finish this and simply understand yourself better — you may already do that. My hope is that you'll leave with a few small, repeatable places to practice living differently.

Take your time. There's no version of this you can do wrong.

Dr. Barbie Hessel, LCSW, SEP, CPATP, SP
Founder and Psychotherapist
SIMPLY BEING THERAPY

BEFORE WE BEGIN

How to Use This Workbook

A few notes before you start.

Choose one pattern, and stay with it. Early on, I'll ask you to think of a recurring pattern you'd like to understand differently — a relationship you keep returning to, a habit that shows up under stress, a way you protect yourself that no longer fits. Try to pick something real and specific rather than a general theme. You'll come back to this same pattern throughout the workbook. That repetition is intentional; each section will ask you to look at it from a slightly different angle, the way you might in an ongoing therapy relationship.

This is about experience, not just analysis. You'll notice that many of the exercises ask what you noticed in your body, not just what you think. That's on purpose. Insight lives in the mind; change tends to live in the body. If a question feels unfamiliar or hard to answer, that's useful information — not a sign you're doing it wrong.

Go slowly. You don't need to complete this in one sitting, or even in order. Some sections may bring up more than you expect. If that happens, it's all right to close the workbook and come back another day, or to bring what comes up to a therapist or trusted person.

There is no finish line. This isn't a program that ends in being "fixed." It's a set of practices you can return to for as long as they're useful — a way of building a slightly different relationship with the patterns that have carried you this far.

INTRODUCTION

I Understand... So Why Haven't I Changed?

When I first became a therapist, I was drawn to insight above almost everything else. I loved ideas and theory, and I loved trying to understand why people think, feel, and behave the way they do. I approached my own life the same way — certain that if I could just understand a pattern clearly enough, change would follow naturally. It took me a long time to learn that this isn't quite how change works, and I learned it mostly through my own body.

I've been with the same therapist since I moved to Nashville, and it took me nearly two years to cry in her office. It wasn't that I didn't trust her, and it wasn't that I didn't have feelings — I had plenty. What felt unfamiliar was staying with them. I could talk about my emotions with real fluency. I could analyze them from every angle. Feeling them in my body was something else entirely. Around the time I was choosing my post-graduate training, a close friend and colleague listened to me go back and forth between two paths and finally said, "Study what you're afraid of." She knew I was comfortable living in ideas, and that my body was another matter. That advice sent me toward Somatic Experiencing, and it changed how I understand change itself.

I see the same thing constantly in my practice. Many of the people who come to therapy are already deeply insightful. They can tell you exactly why they people-please, why they keep choosing partners who can't quite meet them, why they're still hoping a parent will become someone they were never going to be. They can talk fluently about attachment, cognitive dissonance, family systems. The problem is rarely that they don't understand. Eventually, most of us arrive at the same place: we understand. Now what?

We can analyze a relationship to death. We can know exactly why we keep returning to the same dynamic, exactly what we want to say the next time a boundary gets crossed. Then the phone rings, or the conversation starts, or the person we promised ourselves we wouldn't call reaches out — and all of that insight suddenly feels much farther away than it did the day before.

For a long time, I assumed this meant we needed more insight. I don't think that anymore. In *A Liberated Mind*, psychologist Steven C. Hayes describes psychological flexibility — the capacity to keep moving toward what matters even while difficult thoughts and feelings are present. That idea reframed things for me: the goal isn't only to understand ourselves, but to learn how to act differently in the moments when our oldest patterns are most active. I've found a version of the same idea throughout the trauma literature — in the way Bessel van der Kolk describes how overwhelming experience continues to shape the body long after it has passed, and in the way Bruce Perry and Oprah Winfrey describe how repeated experience teaches the nervous system what to expect from the world. Different doors, same room: understanding matters, but experience is what allows change to actually take root.

From a somatic perspective, the nervous system is learning all the time — what happens when we ask for help, express anger, disappoint someone, tell

the truth. Most of that learning happens outside conscious awareness. By the time we understand a pattern intellectually, our body may have been rehearsing it for decades. So the more useful question often isn't only why we do what we do, but what happens just before we do it. Did the breath change? Did the chest tighten? Did we suddenly feel responsible for someone else's feelings? Those moments tend to tell us something insight alone cannot.

This workbook is built around that idea. We'll still make room for understanding — it's one of the real gifts of this work, and it's often where shame starts to loosen into compassion. But we won't stop there. Each section moves a little further from knowing why toward practicing something different, in small enough doses that your nervous system can actually take them in. Insight is not where change happens. It's where change begins.

SECTION 1

Why Insight Feels Like It Should Be Enough

Insight is genuinely valuable. Understanding why you shut down in conflict, or why you keep choosing partners who can't quite show up for you, gives shape to something that used to feel like static. It replaces confusion with a story that makes sense, and shame with a bit of compassion. That's not nothing — it's often the first real relief a person feels in therapy.

It's also why so much of therapy begins with understanding. Naming a pattern is usually the first way we get any distance from it. Once you can see a pattern, you're no longer only inside it; you're also, briefly, someone looking at it. That vantage point is the beginning of choice.

But insight has a limit, and most people run into it eventually. You can know exactly why you overextend yourself, and still find your hand reaching for your phone to say yes before you've finished reading the message. You can understand your attachment pattern in detail and still feel the old panic when someone pulls away. This is often the moment people feel most discouraged — not because they haven't done the work, but because they assumed understanding would be the whole answer. It's usually a sign that the pattern was never purely intellectual to begin with.

EXERCISE

List three things you understand about yourself today that you didn't understand five years ago.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What has changed because of this insight?

What hasn't?

SECTION 2

The Brain Learns. The Body Remembers.

Underneath conscious understanding is a second kind of memory — implicit memory — that doesn't store facts so much as expectations. It's the memory that makes your shoulders rise before you consciously register a familiar tone of voice, or your chest tighten before you know why. This is the nervous system doing its job: noticing what has kept you safe or unsafe before, and preparing your body accordingly, often faster than thought.

This kind of learning is central to how trauma and attachment shape us. A nervous system that grew up needing to earn love, or anticipate someone's anger, or manage another person's emotions, gets very good at those things — not because it's broken, but because it adapted to a real environment. The trouble is that this learning doesn't automatically update just because your circumstances have. Your mind can know you're safe now while your body is still running an older program.

Where knowing and reacting diverge

I Know	My Body Acts Like
I'm safe.	I'm in danger.
My partner loves me.	I'll be abandoned.
I deserve rest.	I have to earn my worth.

REFLECTION

Where do these columns not match for you? What's one place you notice the gap most?

SECTION 3

Your Protective Parts

Every pattern that feels frustrating from the outside usually made sense from the inside, at some point. People pleasing kept the peace. Overworking kept you valuable. Perfectionism kept criticism at bay. These behaviors weren't chosen at random — they were solutions, built by a younger or more overwhelmed version of you, to problems that were often very real.

It can help to name a few of the most common ones. You may recognize several of these in yourself:

- People pleasing
- Overworking
- Perfectionism
- Avoidance

- Emotional numbing
- Overthinking
- Shopping
- Food
- Exercise
- Constant productivity

None of these need to be pathologized in order to be worked with. In fact, the opposite tends to be true — the more we can meet a behavior with curiosity about what it's protecting, the more room it has to loosen.

WORKSHEET

Instead of "This behavior is ruining my life," try completing this sentence:

"This behavior is trying to protect me from..."

Name one behavior, and finish the sentence above for it.

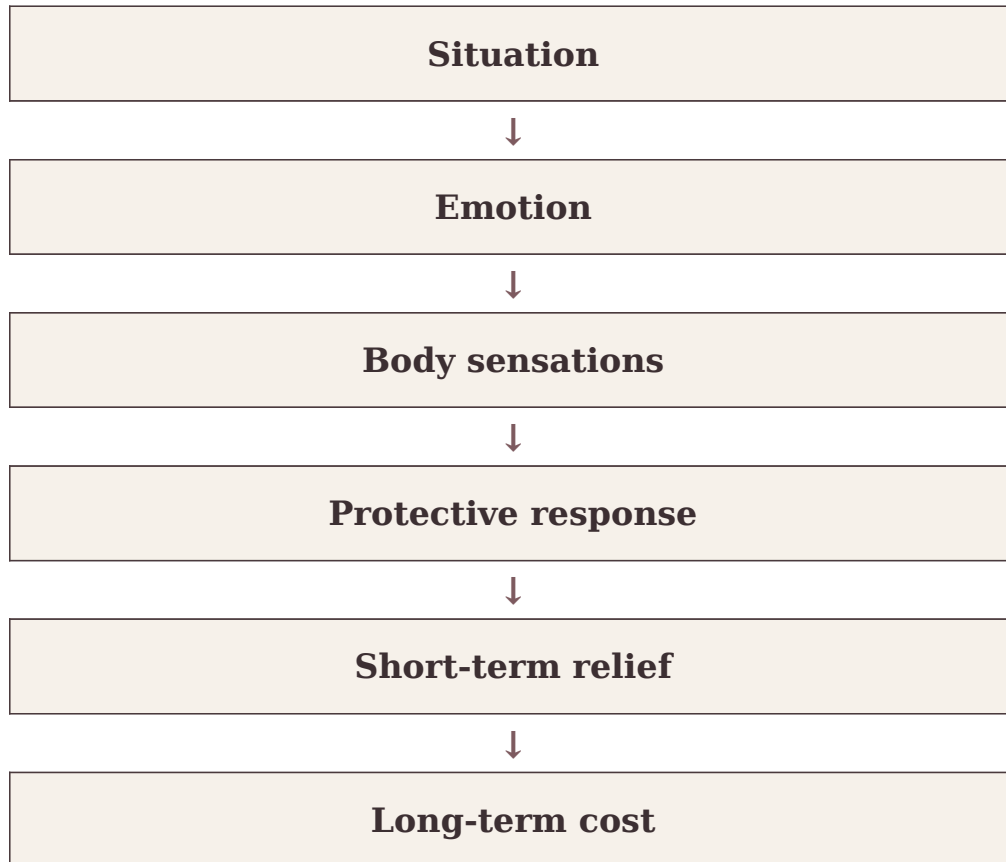
What might it cost you to keep this protection running on autopilot?

SECTION 4

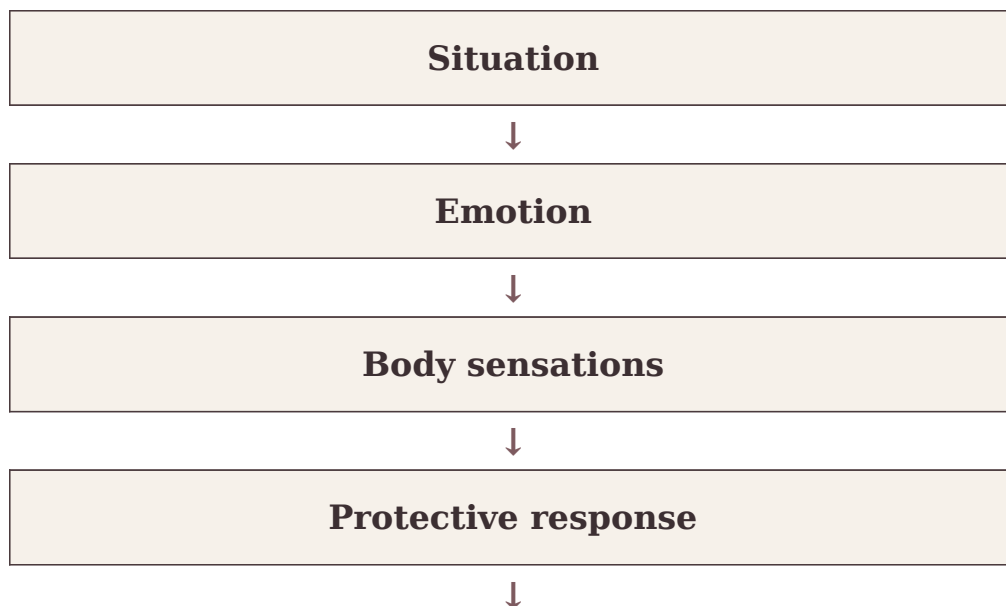
Triggers Aren't the Problem

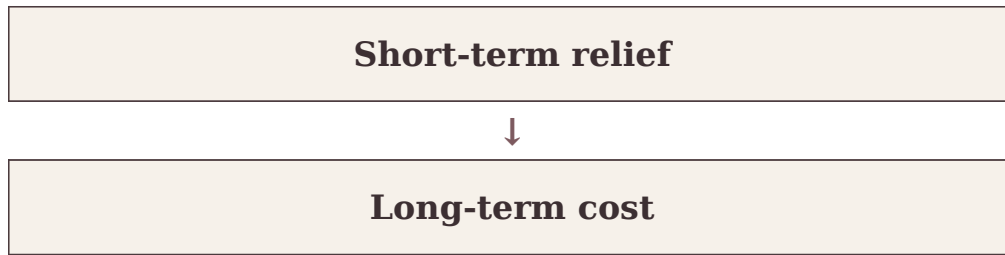
It's tempting to treat a trigger as the problem to be solved — as if the goal is to become someone nothing bothers. But a trigger is really just information: a signal that something in the present moment has activated a much older pattern. The more useful move isn't to eliminate triggers, but to get familiar with the whole sequence they set off, from the first spark to the eventual cost.

Use the map below to slow that sequence down. Work through it a few times with different situations — the goal isn't a perfect answer, just a clearer look at your own pattern.

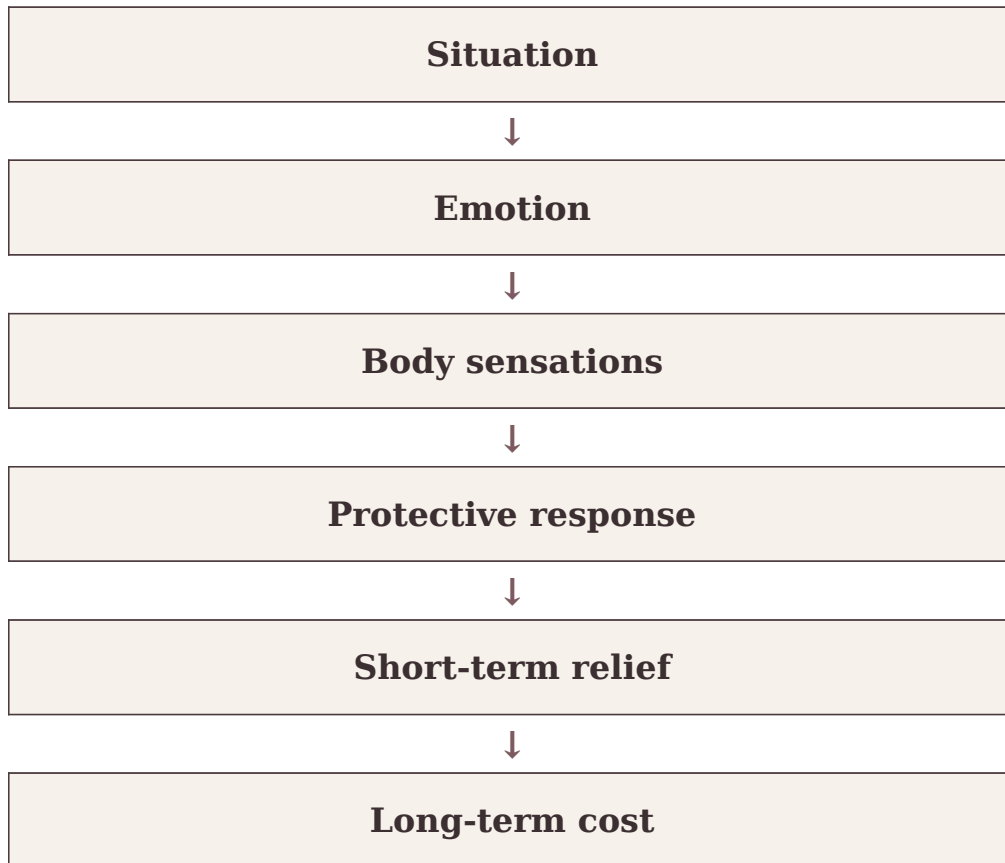


Practice Page 1

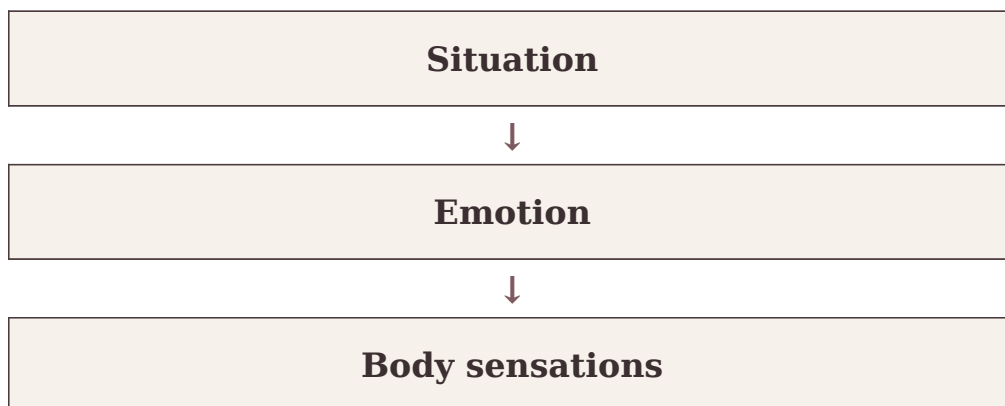


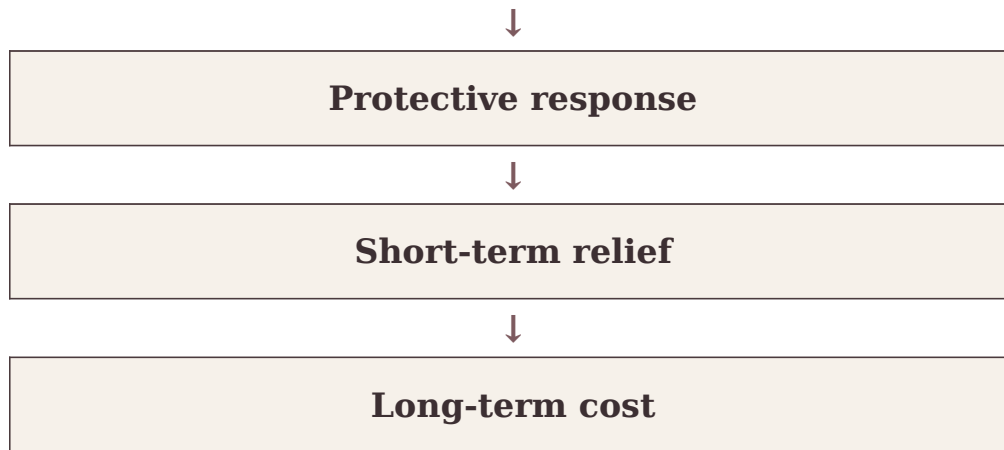


Practice Page 2



Practice Page 3

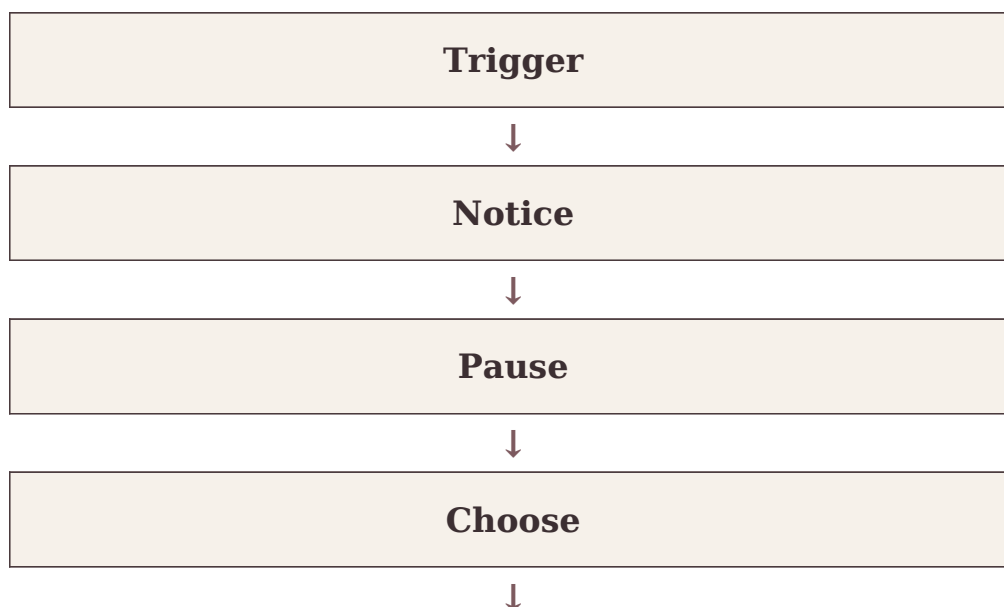


**SECTION 5**

The Moment Between Trigger and Habit

For most of us, trigger and habit feel like the same event — the phone buzzes, and before any decision seems to happen, we've already said yes to something we didn't want to do. It can feel like there's no space between the two at all.

There is a space. It's just very small, and it takes practice to feel it. This exercise is about learning to notice — and slowly widen — the gap between what happens to you and what you do next.



Respond

YOUR TURN

Describe a recent trigger — the moment before the habit kicked in.

What might "noticing" have looked like, even for one second?

If you had paused, what might you have chosen instead?

SECTION 6

The Cost of Staying Safe

Every protective strategy is a trade. It shields you from something real, and it costs you something real, usually somewhere quieter — in your creativity, your rest, your closeness with other people. Naming both sides of the trade, honestly and without judgment, is often what makes a strategy feel optional for the first time.

Example: Perfectionism

This Strategy Protects Me By...	This Strategy Costs Me...
Shielding me from criticism	My peace
Shielding me from rejection	My creativity
	My connection to others

YOUR TURN

Choose one protective strategy of your own and map its trade below.

This Strategy Protects Me By...	This Strategy Costs Me...

SECTION 7

What Does Safety Feel Like?

Many people who have spent years managing threat — real or anticipated — reach a strange gap when asked what safety actually feels like in the body. They can describe danger in vivid detail, but calm is unfamiliar territory, almost a foreign language. That gap isn't a flaw; it's simply a sign of where your nervous system has spent most of its time.

These questions aren't meant to be answered perfectly. Some may take real time to sit with, and that's the point.

How do you know you're safe?

How does your body know? What does it feel like, physically?

Where — with whom, in what place, doing what — do you feel calm?

What does "enough" feel like, in your body, not just in your mind?

SECTION 8

Practicing Small New Experiences

A nervous system doesn't change because of a decision to change; it changes through repeated, survivable evidence that something different is possible. That's why sweeping resolutions — "I'm going to stop people-pleasing forever" — rarely hold. They ask for more change, faster, than any body can actually metabolize.

A smaller experiment does more. Something specific, time-limited, and just uncomfortable enough to matter.

A few places to start:

- Let someone wait for a text back.
- Say "I'll think about it" instead of answering right away.
- Ask for help with something small.
- Leave one task unfinished on purpose.
- Rest before you're exhausted, not after.

THIS WEEK'S EXPERIMENT

Which small experiment will you try this week?

What do you predict will happen?

After you try it — what actually happened?

SECTION 9

Progress Isn't Linear

At some point, the old pattern will show up again — probably more than once. This isn't evidence that nothing has changed. Nervous systems build new pathways alongside old ones, not instead of them, and the old ones don't disappear just because a new option now exists. What tends to matter far more than any single relapse is what you do with it afterward.

When it happens, try this instead of "I failed."

What was happening right before the old pattern showed up?

What need was present underneath it?

What did your nervous system seem to believe, in that moment?

What might you try next time — even a slightly different response?

SECTION 10

Moving from Knowing to Living

Insight brought you this far — it gave the pattern a name, and the name gave you a little distance from it. What comes next isn't more understanding. It's practice: small, repeatable, survivable moments of doing something differently, until your body believes what your mind already knows.

Sit with these questions as you close this workbook. You don't need finished answers.

What part of you already knows the life you want?

What part is afraid — and of what, specifically?

What would feeling 5% safer allow you to do?

What's one small action this week that aligns with who you want to become?

BEFORE YOU GO

Where This Goes From Here

Insight was never the finish line — it was the doorway. Everything in this workbook has been an invitation to walk through it slowly, in doses small enough for your nervous system to actually absorb. That work doesn't end when you close these pages. It continues in the ordinary moments ahead: the text you let sit for an hour, the boundary you hold even though your chest is tight, the rest you allow yourself before you've earned it in the old way.

If you found yourself wanting more support putting this into practice — especially around the places where your body and your understanding don't yet agree — that's exactly the kind of work we do at Simply Being Therapy. Somatic Experiencing, in particular, is built for this gap: for helping a nervous system learn, through real experience, what your mind may already know.

Ready to keep going?

Reach out to schedule a session at [simplybeingtherapy.com](https://www.simplybeingtherapy.com)

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