

A TRAUMA TOOLBOX

HOW TO INCLUDE YOUR SOUL IN HEALING TRAUMA

INTRODUCTION

As the people of the world seem to be in a constant cycle of trauma and healing, I was moved to offer something simple; a balm for the spirit. A Trauma Toolbox is for fellow humans who have experienced any type of trauma, and is designed to augment and complement therapeutic treatment with a focus on the soul. Nothing can replace or compare to good, solid, therapy regarding trauma, and there are so many effective modalities available now. My hope is that you, the reader, have found the right one for you.

A Trauma Toolbox is a daily practice, a way to bring your soul into your healing process and focus your mind and spirit each day toward healing. As trauma survivors, it's important to acknowledge that our soul is also wounded. We may be in traditional therapy, physical therapy, whatever it takes to heal the unimaginable; integrating soul work into these therapies will only bring deeper healing and strengthen our ability to move forward.

This simple toolbox follows the English alphabet, with a word, a thought, to be read and contemplated each day. Each thought is surrounded by quotes from healers and thought-leaders on the subjects of trauma and healing, faith and grace. Each daily thought includes a meditation with an intention to carry through the day. Each page concludes with a journal prompt if you are a person who gains insight through journaling.

So, I offer 26 days or 26 ways to include your soul in healing trauma. It's a toolbox to use for self-compassion, growth, and to enhance the healing of your mind and body. What you can build with this toolbox (in tandem with traditional therapy) is a wholly healed human. No small task. For me, the soul component was critical in my own healing of trauma. It helped me find a forgiveness beyond forgiveness. It helped me rebuild my faith in myself, my fellow humans, and God. Rebuilding this faith is a gift to yourself that *only you can experience*. No one can give this to you, all wrapped up in a pretty package. You have to seek it out, practice it, and acknowledge your progress along the way.

Many others have walked this journey before us. They give us hope - and a blueprint! I learned from them, and hope to pass along as much as I understand - so far. I'm still learning, still growing, still healing. I hope this toolbox provides you a structured yet spiritual way to include your beloved soul in healing trauma. Let's hold hands and begin.

Victoria McGee
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A = ALLOW

“Healing does not mean going back to the way things were before, but rather allowing what is now to move us closer to God.” ~ Ram Dass

Often, when we think about healing from trauma, we have a strong desire to feel like we did before we experienced trauma. It’s like wanting psychic surgery to remove the memories and the residual stress and anxiety, even as we know that is not possible. However, the more we want it taken away, the longer it takes to heal.

To allow means that just for today, just for this moment, we allow whatever we’re feeling to be okay. We try not to judge it, but simply notice it, and *allow* it. We allow where we are in our healing process to be the perfect place, not desiring to be better quicker, but trusting that even on the days we may not feel it, healing is happening. We allow space for the healing, not in spite of our feelings today, but welcoming all of them as part of the process.

Meditation:

“Today I allow my healing process to be whatever it is, without judgment. I allow my feelings to be present and to feel them fully, without judgment. I allow myself to sit with the current state of my mind, body, and soul, without judgment. I allow myself to be in my current stage of healing – I rest in it – I place my hand on my heart, and with compassion for myself, I remind myself that I am capable of allowing myself to feel and to heal.”

Today, I allow my healing process to be whatever it is, without judgment.”

“We, like the Mother of the World, become the compassionate presence that can hold, with tenderness, the rising and passing waves of suffering.” ~ Tara Brach

Journal prompt: What are some areas of resistance in my healing journey? Where could I focus the energy of allowing?

B = BREATHE

“Breath is the bridge which connects life to consciousness, which unites your body to your thoughts. Whenever your mind becomes scattered, use your breath as the means to take hold of your mind again.” ~ Thich Nhat Hanh

The importance of learning to breathe, and regulating our breath, whether in meditation or simple relaxation techniques, cannot be overstated when it comes to healing trauma. The benefits of mastering the breath have been scientifically documented. The beneficial effect on our mind and nervous system is measurable, and the best part is, it’s free.

According to Harvard Health, when we shallow breathe, the lower part of our lungs never gets their full share of oxygenated air. This can leave us feeling short of breath and anxious. This is why taking deeper breaths often will relax us right away. Our lower lungs receive oxygen and no longer panic that there isn’t enough breath for us to survive. When we blend deep breathing with relaxing music, imagery or a mantra of some kind, the benefits are even greater.

As we recover from trauma, we practice regulating our breath as it helps us regulate our nervous system. We learn we are not at the mercy of outside forces that might make us tense, angry, or scattered. We empower ourselves with the ability to take charge of our breath, filling our lungs completely, noticing our capacity to take care of ourselves.

The 4–square breathing method is helpful for many people. It is simple and you can do it anywhere. Inhale deeply to a count of four, hold your breath for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, and hold again for a count of four before inhaling again. Think of nothing but counting the breath, repeat until you feel calm.

Meditation:

“Today I practice breathing with intent. I set aside time to sit and simply notice my breath. I fill my lungs as deeply as I can with oxygen, observing how my diaphragm supports my lungs. Like water, breath is vital for survival, and I recognize that, for me, breath is a balm for healing trauma. I am grateful for this tool, and I commit to use it when I am triggered, or anxious, or scattered. I inhale Divine healing and peace, and exhale tension and fear.

Today, I recognize that I am capable of using my own breath as a tool of calm.”

“Wherever we are, we can take a deep breath, feel our body, open our senses, and step outside the endless stories of the mind.” ~ Jack Kornfeld

Journal prompt: Practice a breathing technique. Write about how your body felt, and how you felt in your body, before and after the breathing practice.

C = COURAGE

“Courage doesn’t always roar. Sometimes courage is the quiet voice at the end of the day that says ‘I will try again tomorrow.’” ~ Mary Anne Radmacher

Physical healing requires courage, but our bodies come wired to heal whenever a wound occurs. Not so with mental, emotional, or spiritual healing. These require tremendous courage and a conscious resolve we don’t always feel capable of. Like physical therapy for recovery from physical wounds, trauma recovery requires regular attention, stretching our minds and hearts, and facing our psychic wounds full on with compassion and the determination to heal.

Healing trauma requires the courage to not only recognize our wounds, explore and integrate the tools it takes to be wholly functional again, but also face the fact that this wound is now part of us, and how we carry it will determine much of our life going forward. It also requires courage to seek and ask for help, to move on when the help isn’t quite right, and to let certain people and places fall away that no longer serve our highest good.

Healing isn’t easy, but it is necessary, and the courage to do it can come from many places! Look for support from God, friends, therapists, and support groups. All who have healed trauma will tell you it took tremendous courage, so remember that you are not alone. You are not alone.

Meditation:

“Today I take time to acknowledge that the journey I am on requires courage, perhaps more courage than has ever been required of me. I close my eyes and place my hand on my belly, knowing that I have reserves of strength within to draw upon. I discover that my desire to heal is stronger than the fear of facing my trauma, for I know my life will be fuller and more balanced for having healed this wound.

Today, I give my fear to God, filling my breath, lungs and belly with courage and strength, recognizing that these powerful attributes already dwell within me.”

“You’re not a victim for sharing your story, you are a survivor setting the world on fire with your truth. And you never know who needs your light, your warmth, and raging courage.” ~ Alex Elle

Journal prompt: Write about someone whose courage you admire. Draw parallels between their courageous path and your own.

D = DIVINE

“I looked in temples, churches, and mosques. But I found the Divine within my heart.” ~ Rumi

The Divine, God, Yahweh, the Universe, whatever you believe, whatever brings you comfort, is an integral and necessary part of healing from trauma. In addition to therapy (a mental and emotional journey), engaging your soul in healing trauma is the spiritual part of your journey that will provide a framework for your perception of what you’ve experienced and how you might choose to move forward.

We often wonder why this trauma occurred. It occurred because we are living a human life, and sometimes terrible things happen. This quote from author Jennifer Worth is particularly helpful when we start to question why: “God is not in the event. God is in the response to the event.” We cannot in this life understand why certain things happen, but we can engage the Divine in responding to what happened.

Prayer and meditation are your direct links to the Divine. Opening this channel will provide you with a GPS system for navigating your healing. Let God guide your response to this event. Let the Divine hold you as you take this healing journey. Rely on, lean on, and trust the Universe. Trust the Divine within yourself. You don’t need to have all the strength for the journey; God will carry your burden if you will give it.

Meditation:

“Today, I rely on the Divine to guide my healing. I ask for balm for my soul, for my wounded heart and mind. I relax into the arms of God, knowing I will be given guidance when to work hard for my healing, and when to rest. I accept God’s grace and love, surrendering into God’s strength, knowing I’m not doing this alone.

Today, I give my healing process to the Divine, resting in the presence of God, trusting that healing is happening and bowing my head in gratitude.”

“When you enter a place of stillness, you awaken the divinity within you.” ~ Peggy Sealton

Journal prompt: Investigate what the Divine means to you. How has your vision of God changed throughout your life? Did your experience of trauma change your relationship with God?