

SAFE HEALING METHOD

SAFE HEALING WORKBOOK

A Guided Journey of Healing from Grief, Trauma and Emotional Pain

SELF-AWARENESS • ACCEPTANCE • FORGIVENESS • EMPOWERMENT

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Welcome Letter

Dear Friend,

This workbook is your personal guide through the SAFE Healing Method. SAFE stands for:

- **Self-Awareness** – learning to notice and name your emotions and patterns.
- **Acceptance** – learning to live with reality, even when it's painful.
- **Forgiveness** – learning to release resentment or guilt.
- **Empowerment** – rebuilding your identity, strength, and purpose.

There is no "right" way to heal. This workbook is yours to use at your own pace. Some days you may feel ready to write and reflect. Other days, you may just read and rest. Both are okay. Healing is not a straight line, it's a journey.

As you move through this workbook, I invite you to:

- Be gentle with yourself.
- Take breaks when needed.
- Return to exercises as often as you want.

> ***"This is your SAFE space for healing."***

With warmth,

Your SAFE Healer _____

PLEASE READ BEFORE YOU BEGIN

This workbook is for **education and self-reflection**. It is not therapy, diagnosis or a substitute for care from a qualified mental health professional.

Some exercises may bring up strong feelings. If that happens, pause, return to your safety plan on page 8, and reach out to someone you trust or a mental health professional.

If you are in crisis in Canada, call or text 9-8-8, any time. Elsewhere, contact your local emergency number or crisis line.

Workbook Outline

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SAFE HEALING METHOD

01

Grounding & Emotional Safety

Before we go deeper, we create safety

“Healing moves at the pace of safety.”

Creating a Sense of Safety

WHAT SAFETY MEANS EMOTIONALLY

Emotional safety is the feeling that you can exist, feel, and express yourself without being overwhelmed, judged, or harmed. It does not mean that difficult emotions disappear. It means you have ways to support yourself when emotions show up. When emotional safety is present, your nervous system can slow down, your body can relax, and healing becomes possible.

REFLECTION

What does emotional safety mean to you?

Your Personal Safety Anchors

Safety anchors are people, places, thoughts, activities, or sensations that help you feel more grounded and steady. These anchors can be external (a person, a space) or internal (a memory, belief, or practice). List your safety anchors below:

People I feel safe with: _____

Places where I feel calmer: _____

Activities that help me feel grounded: _____

Thoughts, prayers, affirmations, or reminders that help me: _____

Physical sensations that soothe me (e.g., warmth, deep breathing, music): _____

Grounding & Breathing Practice

Grounding helps bring your attention back to the present moment, especially when emotions feel intense.

SIMPLE BREATHING EXERCISE

- Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 counts
- Hold for 2 counts
- Breathe out gently through your mouth for 6 counts
- Repeat for 1–2 minutes

After practicing, check in with yourself:

What do you notice in your body? _____

_____

Did anything shift, even slightly? _____

_____

BODY AWARENESS CHECK-IN

Your body often notices stress before your mind does. Learning to listen to your body is a powerful safety skill. Pause and scan your body from head to toe. Answer gently — there are no right or wrong answers.

Where do I feel tension or discomfort right now? _____

_____

Where do I feel neutral or calm?

What does my body need in this moment? (rest, movement, water, reassurance, breath, space)

EXERCISE 1 My Safety Plan

This plan is for moments when emotions feel intense. When I notice I am becoming overwhelmed, I will:

Pause and breathe — What breathing or grounding technique will I use?

Ground myself — What anchor will I turn to?

Seek support if needed — Who can I reach out to?

Remind myself — A comforting or grounding statement

EXERCISE 2 Grounding Practice Tracker

Use this to build consistency and awareness.

DATE	GROUNDING PRACTICE USED	HOW I FELT BEFORE	HOW I FELT AFTER

REFLECTION

What practices seem to help me the most? _____

_____

EXERCISE 3 Body Scan Reflection

After completing a body scan or grounding exercise, reflect below.

What did I notice in my body today? _____

Did any sensations surprise me? _____

What does this teach me about my needs? _____

CLOSING REMINDER

You can return to this section anytime you feel unsettled. Creating safety is not a one-time step, it is something you build and return to again and again.

> ***"Healing moves at the pace of safety."***

SAFE HEALING METHOD

02

Pillar 1: Self-Awareness

Understanding your inner world without judgment

“You cannot heal what you cannot name.”

Learning About Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is the ability to notice what is happening within you — your thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and behavioral responses. When you become aware of these internal experiences, you gain clarity about what you are feeling and why, creating space to make more intentional and compassionate choices. Self-awareness is the foundation of all healing work. This pillar focuses on helping individuals gently notice their inner world without judgment and without the pressure to fix or change anything right away. It involves recognizing emotional reactions, body cues, thought patterns, and habitual responses so that pain or stress is no longer experienced on autopilot.

Importantly, self-awareness is not about overanalyzing or endlessly dissecting yourself. It is about learning to observe your experience with curiosity instead of criticism. For someone grieving, this may look like noticing that certain times of day bring heavier emotions. For someone with trauma, it may begin with recognizing when their body feels tense or when their nervous system shifts into alert mode. As awareness grows, so does the ability to pause, respond with care, and create a sense of safety within oneself.

Below are a few simple exercises designed to help you build self-awareness gently and practically.

EXERCISE 4 My Grief/Trauma Timeline

Draw a line across the page. Mark important events related to your loss or trauma. Write a few words or symbols for each.

Event One **Event Two** **Event Three** **Event Four** **Event Five**

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Which event feels most “alive” for me today?

How do I feel when I look at this timeline?

Learning to Name Your Emotions

Use this feelings wheel whenever you need help finding the words for what you're feeling. Start from the center and work outward — whatever you can name, you can start to manage.



How to use it

1. Pick the core feeling closest to how you feel. 2. Move outward for a more exact word.
3. Say it or write it: "Right now, I feel _____." More than one feeling at once is normal.

SAFE Feelings Wheel © Chris Abojei · SAFE Healing Method

EXERCISE 5 When Grief Shows Up

Complete the table below at least three times this week.

SITUATION/TRIGGER	WHAT I FELT IN MY BODY	WHAT I THOUGHT	WHAT I DID

REFLECTION PROMPT

What patterns do I notice in how grief/trauma shows up for me?

Daily Self-Awareness Journal

Each evening, write:

Today, grief/trauma showed up when...

The feeling that stood out most today was...

One way I cared for myself today was...

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03

Pillar 2: Acceptance

Making peace with what is, without giving up

"Acceptance doesn't mean liking what happened, it means allowing yourself to live with what is real."

Learning About Acceptance

When we resist reality, our suffering often intensifies. Acceptance does not mean saying that what happened is okay or approving of pain. It means acknowledging, “This is my reality right now, and I am choosing to meet it rather than fight it.”

Acceptance is the second pillar of the SAFE Healing Method and focuses on reducing resistance to what is true in the present moment. It is not about giving up or becoming passive. Instead, acceptance allows people to conserve emotional energy by letting go of denial, bargaining, or constant inner struggle. When acceptance develops, individuals stop battling their experience and begin to relate to it with greater steadiness and clarity.

Through acceptance, emotions are allowed to surface and move through rather than being pushed away or suppressed. This includes accepting the reality of loss, the presence of trauma-related responses, and the fact that healing is often complex and non-linear. Acceptance also means recognizing what cannot be controlled while gently identifying the areas where choice and influence still exist.

EXERCISE 6 My Pain vs. My Resistance

Grief and trauma often come with many unanswered questions. When these questions loop endlessly, they can keep us emotionally stuck — not because answers exist, but because our minds keep searching for certainty in situations that may never fully make sense. This exercise helps you separate what cannot be changed from the ways resistance adds extra suffering, and gently move toward acceptance.

Step 1 — Name the Pain (What Cannot Be Changed)

These are the facts of what happened — realities that cannot be undone, fixed, or rewritten.

Pain (cannot be changed): e.g. "I lost someone I love," "I experienced something that changed me"

Step 2 — Notice the Resistance (What Adds Extra Suffering)

Resistance often shows up as constant questioning, self-blame, or arguing with reality. These thoughts don't cause the pain, but they can deepen it.

Resistance (adds extra suffering): e.g. "This shouldn't have happened"

Step 3 — The Unanswered Questions Letter

Many people find themselves stuck in unanswered questions, directed at a loved one, God, themselves, or life. This step invites you to express those questions and imagine the response you most need to hear.

Choose who the questions are for:

☐ **A loved one** ☐ **God / a higher power** ☐ **Yourself** ☐ **Life**

Write a letter asking all the questions you've been holding inside. Don't censor yourself. (You may prefer to do this in a separate journal, where you'll have more space.)

Now, imagine the response coming back to you — from love, wisdom, or compassion rather than judgment.

Step 4 — Permission to Accept

Read what you wrote. Often, this exercise reveals that the struggle is not about missing answers, but about difficulty accepting what is already true. Complete the following statements gently and honestly:

"What I am being asked to accept right now is..." _____

"Even without all the answers, I give myself permission to..." _____

REFLECTION PROMPT

What might change for me if I let go of resistance? _____

EXERCISE 7 Two Truths I Can Hold

Write two truths that can live side by side, even if they feel opposite. Examples: "I miss them deeply, and I am still living." · "I feel broken, and I am slowly healing."

Your Two Truths: _____

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Daily Radical Acceptance Practice

Each morning, write one sentence starting with “Today, I choose to accept…” Examples: “Today, I choose to accept that healing takes time.” · “Today, I choose to accept that I cannot control the past.”

CLOSING REFLECTION

Acceptance does not require certainty. Healing does not require every question to be answered. Sometimes, acceptance simply means allowing yourself to move forward despite the unknown. These exercises are not about forcing peace — it is about making space for it.

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04

Pillar 3: Forgiveness

Releasing emotional weight for your own freedom

“Forgiveness is a gift you give yourself.”

Learning About Forgiveness

Forgiveness does not mean excusing harm, forgetting what happened, or pretending the pain was acceptable. It means choosing to release yourself from the heavy emotional weight of anger, guilt, or shame. Forgiveness is something you do for your own healing, not for the situation(s) or person(s) who caused the hurt.

Forgiveness is the third pillar of the SAFE Healing Method and focuses on easing emotional burdens through self-compassion and meaning-making. Within SAFE, forgiveness does not require reconciliation, minimizing harm, or removing accountability. Instead, it is about loosening the grip of pain so it no longer defines or controls your inner life.

This work often includes forgiving yourself for perceived mistakes, limitations, or decisions made during times of distress. It also involves releasing unrealistic expectations about how healing "should" look or how quickly it should happen.

EXERCISE 8 What Forgiveness Means to Me

Write down your personal definition of forgiveness.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Who (or what) do I feel I need to forgive — myself, someone else, or both?

What fears or barriers come up when I think of forgiveness?

EXERCISE 9 A Letter to Myself, Whoever, or Whatever

Write a letter of forgiveness — to yourself, to "whoever" you choose to extend it to, or to "whatever" you choose to release. You don't have to share it with anyone.

Sample prompt: "Dear [Your Name], I know I have been carrying blame, guilt, or shame. Today, I choose to see myself with compassion. I forgive myself for…"

EXERCISE 10 Releasing Resentment

Write down what you are ready to release. You may choose to tear up the paper, burn it safely, or place it in water and let it dissolve.

REFLECTION PROMPT

How did it feel to release this, even symbolically?

SPACE FOR YOUR LETTERS

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05

Pillar 4: Empowerment

Reclaiming your strength and shaping what comes next

"Healing is not just surviving, it is creating a life where you can thrive."

Learning About Empowerment

Empowerment is about reclaiming your voice, your identity, and your ability to choose your own path. It means remembering who you are beyond your pain, recognizing your strengths, and beginning to build new meaning and direction in your life.

As the final pillar of the SAFE Healing Method, empowerment focuses on restoring a sense of agency, purpose, and forward movement after experiences that left someone feeling powerless, lost, or stuck. It helps people reconnect with their capacity to make choices, define what matters to them, and take steps toward a life that feels meaningful again.

Empowerment is not about rushing people into action or setting unrealistic goals. It's about helping them see the choices that are available right now, however small they may seem. For someone grieving, empowerment may look like choosing how to honor a loved one's memory. For trauma survivors, it often begins with reclaiming the right to set boundaries and make decisions about their own healing.

EXERCISE 11 My Strengths Inventory

List at least five strengths or qualities that have helped you survive hard times. Examples: "I keep going," "I reach out for help," "I pray."

My Strengths:

EXERCISE 12 My Values and Goals

Write down 3 values most important to you (e.g., family, faith, kindness, growth).

Write one small action you can take this week to live by each value.

EXERCISE 13

My Next Chapter

Imagine yourself one year from now, living more empowered. Write a short story about your future self.

What am I doing?

Who is around me?

How do I feel?

Appendix: My SAFE Healing Toolkit

Write down your personalized healing tools:

One grounding skill I can use when triggered: _____

One affirmation I can repeat when I feel stuck: _____

One ritual that helps me feel connected: _____

One support person I can reach out to: _____

One goal I want to keep working toward: _____

CLOSING REFLECTION

I came into this journey feeling... _____

Now, I notice that I feel... _____

The biggest lesson I will carry with me is... _____

QUICK PRACTICES

- **Grounding (5-4-3-2-1):** Name 5 things you see, 4 you feel, 3 you hear, 2 you smell, 1 you taste.
- **Affirmations:** "I am healing at my own pace." "I carry love forward."
- **Breathing:** Inhale 4 counts, hold 2, exhale 6. Repeat 5 times.

Recommended Resources for Your Healing Journey

Your healing doesn't end here. These resources can guide, inspire, and support you as you continue on your path toward wholeness and self-discovery.

BY CHRIS ABOJEI

- **I'm Good Enough: Finding Freedom Through Self-Acceptance** – A guide to breaking free from limiting beliefs and embracing your true self with confidence.
- **My Catharsis: The Insanity in Sanity** – A raw exploration of pain, resilience, and healing through poetry, lived experience, and psychological insight.
- **The Gift of Shame: Reclaiming One of Our Most Misunderstood Emotions** – Reveals shame as a comparison emotion — a messenger that signals a perceived gap between who we are and who we believe we should be.
- **SAFE to Feel, SAFE to Heal** – Empowers readers to take responsibility of their healing with kindness and structure.

GRIEF & LOSS

- **It's OK That You're Not OK** by Megan Devine – Compassionate guidance that validates grief while offering hope.
- **The Grief Recovery Handbook** by John W. James & Russell Friedman – Step-by-step methods for healing unresolved grief.
- **When Things Fall Apart** by Pema Chödrön – Wisdom on facing life's difficulties with courage and compassion.

TRAUMA & EMOTIONAL HEALING

- **The Body Keeps the Score** by Bessel van der Kolk – Insights on how trauma reshapes the body and brain, with paths to recovery.
- **Healing the Shame That Binds You** by John Bradshaw – Tools for addressing toxic shame and reclaiming self-worth.

SELF-WORTH & SELF-COMPASSION

- **Self-Compassion** by Kristin Neff – Practical steps to cultivate gentleness and resilience toward yourself.
- **Radical Acceptance** by Tara Brach – Guidance on embracing life and yourself just as you are.

RESILIENCE & GROWTH

- **Man's Search for Meaning** by Viktor E. Frankl – Timeless insights on finding purpose even in suffering.
- **Rising Strong** by Brené Brown – Lessons on courage, vulnerability, and recovering from setbacks.
- **The Untethered Soul** by Michael A. Singer – A spiritual guide to inner freedom and lasting peace.



About the Creator of the SAFE Healing Method

Chris Abojei is a Mental Health Clinician and the co-founder of Psychaid EAP, a wellness practice dedicated to emotional and mental health resilience.

With more than a decade of professional experience, Chris has supported individuals navigating loss, trauma, identity transitions, and the complex emotional wounds that shape the human experience.

His work integrates evidence-based approaches with a warm, compassionate, and deeply human approach to healing. He is the author of *I'm Good Enough: Finding Freedom Through Self-Acceptance* and the creator of the SAFE Healing Method, a structured, accessible framework designed to help people move from emotional overwhelm to clarity, safety, and inner restoration.

Chris is committed to making healing practical, relatable, and empowering — ensuring that every person he works with discovers their capacity to feel, to process, and ultimately, to heal.

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