

Journal Prompts

For the space between sessions — and before you begin.

By Ziv Vosberg, LMFT · zivlmft.com

These prompts were written for people who are ready to look — even if they don't quite know what they're looking for yet. You don't need to have the right words. You don't need to finish every prompt. You just need to start.

There are no wrong answers here. This is not a test. It's an invitation.

Some of these questions will feel easy. Others will sit with you for days. Both are useful. If a question brings up something big — something you're not sure how to hold alone — that's exactly the kind of thing therapy is for.

How to use these prompts:

Set aside 10-20 minutes in a quiet space. Write without editing yourself. If you get stuck, write about being stuck. Return to prompts that feel unfinished — often the ones that resist you are the ones worth sitting with longest.

SECTION 1 — ANXIETY & THE NERVOUS SYSTEM

Anxiety often shows up in the body before it shows up in the mind. These prompts invite you to slow down and get curious about what your nervous system has been trying to tell you.

1.

Where do you feel anxiety in your body? Be as specific as you can — not just 'my chest' but what does it actually feel like? Tight? Hot? Like something pressing?

2.

What does your anxiety tell you is about to happen? What is it trying to protect you from?

3.

When did you first remember feeling this way? How old were you, and what was happening around you?

You don't have to trace it to a single moment. Just notice whatever comes up.

4.

What does your life look like when anxiety is running the show? What do you avoid, delay, or over-prepare for because of it?

5.

What does 'calm' feel like in your body — not just the absence of anxiety, but an actual physical sense of ease? When have you felt it, even briefly?

6.

If your anxiety could speak, what would it say? What is it most afraid of?

7.

What do you tell yourself about your anxiety? Is that story helping you or keeping you stuck?

8.

What would you do differently if anxiety weren't making decisions for you?

SECTION 2 — ATTACHMENT & RELATIONSHIPS

Our earliest relationships teach us what to expect from love — and we carry those lessons into every relationship that follows. These prompts invite you to examine the patterns, not to assign blame, but to understand.

1.

What did love look like in your family growing up? Was it consistent? Conditional? Quiet? Loud?

2.

What did you learn, explicitly or implicitly, about what you had to do to be loved?

3.

Think about a relationship — romantic, friendship, or family — where you found yourself working harder than the other person. What kept you there?

4.

When someone you care about pulls away or goes quiet, what is the first story your mind tells you? Is that story usually accurate?

5.

Do you find it easier to give or receive in relationships? What do you think that's about?

6.

What does 'too much' mean to you in a relationship — when do you feel like you're asking for too much, or that someone else is?

7.

Describe a moment when you felt genuinely seen by another person. What made it feel different?

8.

What would it mean to let someone love you without having to earn it?

Sit with this one. Don't rush to an answer.

9.

What patterns do you notice repeating across your relationships? When did that pattern first make sense?

10.

If you felt completely safe in a relationship — no fear of abandonment, no need to shrink yourself — what would you say or do differently?

SECTION 3 — POSTPARTUM, PARENTHOOD & IDENTITY

Becoming a parent is one of the most significant identity shifts a person can go through — and one of the least supported. These prompts are for anyone in the middle of that transformation, at any stage.

1.

Who were you before you became a parent? What parts of that person do you miss? What parts are you glad to have left behind?

2.

What did you expect parenthood to feel like? How does the reality compare?

3.

What feelings about parenthood are you most afraid to admit — even to yourself?

This is a judgment-free space. The feelings you're most afraid of are often the most important to look at.

4.

When you imagine your 'good parent' self, what does she look like? Is that person realistic, or is she someone you can never quite be?

5.

What did you not expect to grieve when you became a parent? What have you lost that nobody named for you?

6.

How has becoming a parent changed your relationship with your own body?

7.

What do you wish someone had told you before your baby arrived?

8.

If you could tell your baby anything about who you were before they came — what would you want them to know about you?

9.

What kind of parent do you want to be? How close or far do you feel from that person right now?

10.

What do you need right now that you're not getting? Who could give it to you — and what's making it hard to ask?

SECTION 4 — EATING DISORDER RECOVERY

Recovery isn't just about behavior — it's about understanding what the eating disorder has been doing for you, and building something else in its place. These prompts invite you to get curious rather than critical.

1.

When you think about your relationship with food, what's the first word that comes to mind? Where does that word come from?

2.

What does the eating disorder give you? What would you lose if it weren't there?

This is not a trick question. There is something it has been providing — safety, control, relief, identity. Understanding that is the beginning of healing.

3.

What emotions tend to come just before the eating disorder behaviors? What are you trying not to feel?

4.

What does your inner critic say about your body? Whose voice does it sound like?

5.

When did food first start to feel complicated? What was happening in your life at that time?

6.

What would it mean to be 'in recovery'? What are you afraid it would require you to give up?

7.

Describe a moment — even a very small one — when you felt okay in your body. What made it possible?

8.

What does shame feel like for you? Where do you feel it? What tends to trigger it?

9.

If the eating disorder could no longer be your way of coping, what else might you reach for?

10.

What do you deserve that you're not currently giving yourself?

SECTION 5 — GRIEF & LIFE TRANSITIONS

Grief isn't only about death. It's about any loss — of a relationship, an identity, a future you imagined. These prompts are for anyone in the middle of a change they didn't ask for, or one they chose but still find hard.

1.

What are you grieving right now? Name it as specifically as you can — not just 'my relationship' but the particular thing about it you miss most.

2.

What are you not allowed to grieve — what loss feels too small, too complicated, or too shameful to name?

Those are often the most important ones.

3.

How do you usually handle grief? Do you move toward it or away from it? What happens when you do?

4.

What version of yourself existed before this loss? What did that person believe, value, or count on?

5.

What has this loss taught you about what matters to you?

6.

Who is allowed to witness your grief? Who do you tend to protect from it — and why?

7.

What would it look like to carry this loss instead of trying to get over it? What's the difference between those two things?

8.

What are you afraid will happen if you fully let yourself feel the grief?

9.

If this transition — as painful as it is — is pointing you toward something, what might that be?

10.

What do you need to say goodbye to before you can move forward? Have you said it yet?

SECTION 6 — GETTING STARTED WITH THERAPY

These prompts are for anyone who is considering therapy but isn't quite sure where to begin — or what they're even looking for. You don't need to have it figured out. These questions are just a starting point.

1.

What made you start considering therapy right now? What has changed, or what have you finally gotten tired of?

2.

What are you hoping therapy will change? Be as specific as you can.

3.

What are you afraid therapy might ask you to look at?

4.

If you could wake up six months from now feeling different — what would be different? What would you notice first?

5.

What have you already tried? What helped, even a little? What didn't?

6.

Is there something you've never said out loud to anyone? You don't have to write it here — just notice whether it exists.

7.

What do you believe about yourself that you suspect might not be true?

8.

What would it mean to get better? Is any part of you resistant to that?

Sometimes healing feels threatening — it means giving up ways of being that have kept us safe. Noticing that resistance is important.

9.

What do you deserve that you haven't been giving yourself?

10.

What would you want a therapist to know about you before you even walked in the door?

A note from Ziv

These prompts were written with care, but they are just a doorway. The real work happens in relationship — with a therapist, with people who feel safe, and slowly, over time, with yourself.

If something came up while you were writing that feels too big to hold alone, please reach out. That's not a sign something is wrong. It's a sign you're ready.

Book a free 15-minute consultation at zivvosberg.clientsecure.me

Ziv Vosberg, LMFT · zivlmft.com · (408) 831-8804 · Telehealth across California