

5-Minute Grounding *for* Grief

Simple Writing Practices
for Panic, Guilt, Triggers,
and Sleepless Nights



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A Note on Safety and Care

This workbook is for reflection, writing, and educational support only. It is not therapy, medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment, and it is not a substitute for care from a licensed mental health professional.

Grief can bring up painful, intense, or unexpected emotions. You are free to skip any exercise, pause, return later, or use this workbook alongside support from a trusted professional. Move at whatever pace feels right for you, and stop whenever you need to.

If you feel at risk of harming yourself or someone else, call 911 in the United States or go to your nearest emergency room. If you are in emotional distress or a mental health crisis, you can call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, for free and confidential support, available at any hour. If you are outside the United States, contact your local emergency number or a national crisis or grief support line in your country.

Reaching for help is not a failure. It is one of the most caring things you can do for yourself while you grieve.

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Before You Begin: A Five-Minute Way to Meet Grief

Some days, grief feels too large for a full workbook. The longer exercises ask for more than you have. Even sitting down with a pen can feel like one task too many. This small book is made for those exact moments. It does not promise to ease your grief in five minutes, and it does not ask you to feel better, think positively, or explain your loss to anyone. It offers one small, doable step for the times when that is all that fits.

Five minutes is not meant to fix anything. It is enough time to pause, notice where you are, and place a few honest words on a page. Some days that will feel like plenty. Other days you may manage only a line or two, and that counts too. There is no minimum here, and there is no grade.

Every practice in this book follows the same gentle shape: notice, name, write, breathe, and return. You notice where you are right now. You name what is present, whether that is a feeling, a thought, or tiredness. You write a little. You take one easier breath. Then you return to the rest of your day, knowing the page will wait for you.

These practices are writing only, so you will never be asked to draw. A pen and paper work well, though a note on your phone or any blank page is just as good. You are free to stop, repeat, or skip any exercise. There is no order you have to follow and no page you have to finish.

If grief ever feels like more than you can carry alone, please reach toward support. In the United States, you can call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, at any hour. If you are in immediate danger, call 911. Reaching out is a sign of care for yourself, not a failure.

The five short practices below are a soft way to begin. Try one now, or read them and come back when you feel ready.

The One-Minute Check-In

Use this when: you want a soft way to arrive on the page.

Five-minute practice: Pause. Take one slower breath. Quietly notice your body, your feeling, and your need.

Write: Three words only. One word for your body, one for your emotion, and one for what you need right now.

Close with: Read your three words once, then rest a hand flat on the page for a moment.

Choose the Smallest Page

Use this when: everything feels like too much and you are not sure where to start.

Five-minute practice: Set aside anything that looks brave or deep. Look only for what is possible today.

Write: One sentence about what feels doable right now, not what seems impressive.

Close with: Remind yourself that small is enough for today.

The Stop Sentence

Use this when: you want to set up permission to pause before you ever need it.

Five-minute practice: Think of a few plain words that mean you are allowed to stop.

Write: One short sentence you can return to, such as, I can pause here and come back later.

Close with: Place a small mark beside it so it is easy to find again.

Before I Go Deeper

Use this when: you are deciding whether to begin a harder practice.

Five-minute practice: Check in with yourself honestly, without judging whatever answer arrives.

Write: A few words on whether you feel steady enough right now, or whether you need rest first.

Close with: Honor what you wrote. Choosing rest is just as valid as choosing to continue.

My Five-Minute Promise

Use this when: you want a gentle agreement with yourself before you go on.

Five-minute practice: Think about your pace, your limits, and the people or places you can lean on.

Write: A short promise to yourself about going slowly, stopping when needed, and reaching for support.

Close with: Read your promise once, take one easy breath, and let the page wait for you.

You can return to any of these whenever a day feels heavy. They will be here, steady and unhurried, for as long as you need them.

When Panic Rises

Grief can reach the body before it reaches words. Your chest tightens, your thoughts speed up, your breath turns shallow, and it can feel as if everything is happening at once. This is often called panic, and during grief it is far more common than people expect.

Panic in grief is not fear without a reason. It is frequently a body that has been carrying too much: a sudden absence, a rush of memory, or the strain of holding yourself together for a long stretch of time. Your nervous system is trying to keep you safe, even when the feeling is anything but calm.

The practices in this chapter are short and steadying. They do not try to push the grief away, and they do not ask you to explain it. They simply help you find the ground beneath you again, one small detail at a time. You might read them now, while things are quiet, so they feel familiar when you need them later.

If a practice ever makes the feeling sharper, you can stop and try another, or close the book for a while. If panic feels like more than you can come down from, please reach for support. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour, and you can call 911 in an emergency. There is no shame in needing a steadier hand than your own.

Try whichever practice feels possible. You do not need to do them in order, and you do not need to finish them all.

Name the Room First

Use this when: panic makes the room feel far away or unreal.

Five-minute practice: Look slowly around you. Let your eyes land on five separate things.

Write: List the five things you see, then add one line: I am here, in this room.

Close with: Say that last line once more, quietly, and let your shoulders drop.

Feet, Chair, Table

Use this when: your body feels like it is floating or spinning.

Five-minute practice: Notice where your body meets something solid.

Write: Describe three points of contact, such as your feet on the floor, your back on the chair, your hand on the table.

Close with: Press gently into one of those points and feel it hold you.

The Slowest Sentence

Use this when: your thoughts are moving too fast to follow.

Five-minute practice: Choose one simple thing happening right now.

Write: Write a single sentence about it as slowly as you can, with no meaning added, only what is plainly true.

Close with: Read it back at the same slow pace.

Panic Is a Wave, Not a Command

Use this when: the feeling is loud and insists you must act now.

Five-minute practice: Remind yourself that a feeling can be strong and still not be in charge.

Write: Finish this line: This feeling is loud, but it does not have to decide what I do next.

Close with: Set the pen down and wait three slow breaths before anything else.

The Cold Water Note

Use this when: you need a quick way to interrupt the rush.

Five-minute practice: Take a sip of water or hold something cool against your hands.

Write: Write three plain facts about what you just felt, such as temperature, weight, or texture.

Close with: Notice that you are still here, a moment later than before.

Count the Safe Edges

Use this when: the room feels blurred or overwhelming.

Five-minute practice: Find the edges and outlines around you.

Write: Note three solid edges you can see, such as a door, a table, a window, or a book.

Close with: Let your eyes rest on one of them for a few seconds.

Permission to Sit Down

Use this when: you feel pressure to fix or solve the feeling immediately.

Five-minute practice: Give yourself permission to do nothing for a short while.

Write: Write a short permission in your own words, beginning with, Right now I do not have to.

Close with: Sit with that permission and let the urgency soften a little.

The One-Object Anchor

Use this when: your attention keeps scattering.

Five-minute practice: Choose one ordinary object near you.

Write: Write five plain observations about it, with no feelings attached, only what you notice.

Close with: Keep the object in view as the moment passes.

Return to Breath Without Forcing It

Use this when: your breathing feels tight and you are trying too hard to control it.

Five-minute practice: Let your breath be uneven for now. You do not need to fix it.

Write: Write the line, My breath is allowed to be imperfect, then note one sensation in your body.

Close with: Let the next breath arrive on its own.

After the Peak

Use this when: the sharpest part of the panic has begun to ease.

Five-minute practice: Notice that the feeling is already changing.

Write: Write one sentence about what you need now that the peak has passed, such as rest, water, or quiet.

Close with: Offer yourself that one small thing if you can.

Panic usually rises and eases, even when it does not feel that way in the moment. Finding your way back to the page can be one small way of finding your way back to the room.

When You Feel Empty, Numb, or Far Away

Some days grief does not feel like sadness at all. It feels like nothing. You move through the hours flat and far away, as if you are watching your own life from behind glass. You may worry that the absence of tears means your love was somehow less real.

Numbness is not a failure, and it is not the opposite of grief. Emptiness, distance, and quiet can be the mind's way of protecting you when feeling everything at once would be too much. The fog often lifts in its own time, and it usually does not need to be forced.

Because numbness leaves little to hold onto, the practices here ask very little of you. They begin with plain noticing rather than deep feeling. You do not have to produce an emotion to do them well. Showing up to the page at all is enough.

It can help to remember that grief takes energy, even when you cannot feel it working. Numbness is often the cost of carrying something heavy for a long time, and it tends to come and go rather than stay forever. You are not doing grief wrong by feeling little. There is nothing you have to unlock today, and no feeling you must reach before the day is allowed to count. Meeting yourself exactly as you are, flat and tired and far away, is its own kind of honesty.

If the distance ever turns into a sense of not being real or not being safe, treat that as a signal to reach for support rather than push harder. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any time.

Try one practice and then stop. There is no need to feel better by the end. You are simply keeping yourself gentle company on a day that asks for less, not more.

Nothing Is Still Something

Use this when: you feel flat and unsure whether anything is there at all.

Five-minute practice: Let numbness be a starting point instead of a problem.

Write: Write three lines that begin with, Today, numbness feels like.

Close with: Notice that naming the blankness is already a small act of presence.

The Blank Page Permission

Use this when: you have nothing to say and feel you should.

Five-minute practice: Release the idea that the page needs words to count.

Write: Write one sentence that confirms an empty response is also a response.

Close with: Let the rest of the page stay blank without guilt.

Neutral Details Only

Use this when: feelings are out of reach but you want to stay connected to the moment.

Five-minute practice: Become a calm witness to the room around you.

Write: Describe what is near you using plain details, with no emotional words.

Close with: Let the room simply be the room for now.

A Small Sign of Being Here

Use this when: the day feels like it is passing without you in it.

Five-minute practice: Look for one quiet proof that you are present.

Write: Note one thing you did today, however small, that shows you are here.

Close with: Let that one thing be enough.

The Fog Sentence

Use this when: you feel wrapped in a heavy, distant fog.

Five-minute practice: Imagine the fog could ask for something gentle.

Write: Finish this line: If this fog could ask for one gentle thing, it might ask for.

Close with: Consider offering yourself that gentle thing in a small way.

No Feeling Required

Use this when: you are tired of waiting to feel the right way.

Five-minute practice: Free yourself from needing an emotion first.

Write: List five things you are allowed to do today without feeling anything first.

Close with: Choose one of them, or simply rest in knowing you could.

The Quiet Body Scan

Use this when: you feel disconnected from your own body.

Five-minute practice: Move your attention slowly from head to feet.

Write: Note three sensations you find, without calling any of them right or wrong.

Close with: Thank your body quietly for carrying you this far.

A Word Beside the Numbness

Use this when: the emptiness feels like the only thing in the room.

Five-minute practice: Look for one calm word that can sit next to it.

Write: Choose a single word to place beside the numbness, such as rest, warmth, patience, or stillness.

Close with: Let that word keep the numbness company for a while.

Enough Contact for Today

Use this when: you want to touch the day in some small way.

Five-minute practice: Pick one tiny, doable point of contact.

Write: Write one minimal step toward the day, such as making tea, opening a window, or answering one message.

Close with: Do it gently if you can, and let that be the whole task.

On empty days, simply staying near yourself is enough. The feeling will return in its own time, and you do not have to chase it.

When Triggers Arrive Without Warning

A song, a smell, a photograph, a familiar street, a date on the calendar, an empty chair. Grief can open suddenly when you least expect it, set off by something small that carries far more weight than anyone else would guess.

These moments are often called triggers, but they are not a sign of weakness or of going backward. They are points where memory and love press close to the surface. Part of steadying yourself is learning the difference between being pulled fully into the past and remembering something while staying here in the present.

The practices in this chapter help you meet a trigger without being swept away by it. They keep one foot in the present moment while letting the memory exist. None of them ask you to relive anything in detail.

It can also help to understand why these moments hit so hard. A trigger is often a shortcut straight to a memory, slipping past the slow, reasoning part of the mind. That is why a familiar scent or a few notes of a song can bring a wave before you have had a chance to brace for it. None of this means you are fragile. It means the bond you carry is real, and that your mind and body remember what mattered. Knowing this can make a sudden reminder feel a little less frightening and a little more like love showing up unannounced.

If a trigger ever opens something that feels too large to hold alone, you can pause and reach for support. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour. You are allowed to step away from any reminder that is too much right now.

As you work through this chapter, remember that the goal is never to stop the triggers, which would mean stopping the memories themselves. The goal is to widen the small gap between the reminder and your response, so that you can feel a wave coming and still keep one hand on the present.

Choose the practice that fits the moment. You can return to the others another time.

Here, Not Then

Use this when: a reminder pulls you toward the past.

Five-minute practice: Anchor yourself in the present before the memory grows.

Write: Write three facts about this present moment, then one fact about the memory.

Close with: Notice that you can hold both without losing the room around you.

The Trigger Name

Use this when: something set off a wave and you are not sure what.

Five-minute practice: Name the trigger plainly, without building it into a long story.

Write: Write what the trigger was in a few words, nothing more.

Close with: Let naming it be where this practice ends.

One Inch of Distance

Use this when: a memory feels like it is standing right on top of you.

Five-minute practice: Create a small space between you and the feeling.

Write: Write the line, This memory is near, but I can still notice the room.

Close with: Look up and find one thing in the room to confirm it.

The Sound That Opened It

Use this when: a song or sound stirred something up.

Five-minute practice: Let yourself acknowledge what it touched.

Write: In one short paragraph, write what the sound brought up, at whatever depth feels safe.

Close with: Lower the volume of the moment by resting your eyes for a breath.

Photo Pause

Use this when: you are about to look at a photograph, or just have.

Five-minute practice: Give yourself permission to go slowly.

Write: Write one line about pace, such as, I can look slowly, and stop whenever I need to.

Close with: Look only as long as feels right, then set it down with care.

The Place That Changed

Use this when: a familiar place now feels different.

Five-minute practice: Notice what shifted without judging it.

Write: Write why the place feels changed, then add one small grounding step you can take.

Close with: Take that step, even if it is only a slow breath.

Date on the Page

Use this when: a meaningful date is approaching or here.

Five-minute practice: Meet the date on paper before it meets you.

Write: Write the date, the place, the time, and one caring sentence for yourself.

Close with: Keep that caring sentence somewhere you can return to.

Unexpected Tears

Use this when: tears arrive without warning.

Five-minute practice: Let the tears be allowed, without needing to explain them.

Write: Finish this line: These tears may be carrying.

Close with: Rest a hand on your chest until the wave settles a little.

The Trigger Exit Plan

Use this when: a reminder is becoming too strong.

Five-minute practice: Decide ahead of time how you will step back.

Write: Write three actions you can take if a trigger grows too intense.

Close with: Know the plan is there, ready, whether or not you use it.

After the Memory Passes

Use this when: the trigger has eased and the present returns.

Five-minute practice: Notice what remains once the intensity fades.

Write: Write one sentence about what you still carry with you now that the wave has passed.

Close with: Let that be a gentle place to end.

Triggers will keep arriving, because love leaves traces everywhere.
Each time, you can meet them a little more gently than the last.

When Guilt and Regret Get Loud

Grief often arrives with a harsh companion: the voice of guilt. What if I had done more. If only I had said something. Why did I not see it sooner. These thoughts can be loud, circular, and merciless, especially in the quiet hours.

Guilt and regret are common in loss, even when you did nothing wrong. They are often love with nowhere to go, turned inward. This chapter does not rush to reassure you or tell you to let it all go. Instead, it helps you become a gentler witness to these feelings, without pretending they are not there.

The aim is not to win an argument with the guilt. It is to soften the way you speak to yourself while the guilt is present, and to make a little room beside it for honesty and care.

It can help to know that guilt often grows in the gap between what we wished we could control and what was ever truly ours to control. In grief, the mind searches for a reason, and it frequently lands on you, because blaming yourself can feel more bearable than facing how much was simply out of anyone's hands. This does not mean the guilt is fair, only that it is human. You can take it seriously as a feeling without accepting it as the final truth about who you are or about what happened.

If guilt ever turns into thoughts of harming yourself, please treat that as a moment to reach for support right away. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour, and you can call 911 in an emergency.

As you move through these practices, try to keep one quiet idea nearby: you can be both responsible and forgivable at the same time. Acknowledging a regret honestly does not require you to carry it as punishment for the rest of your life. The aim here is honesty held with mercy, not a verdict against yourself.

Take these slowly. One practice is plenty for a heavy day.

The Guilt Voice

Use this when: the inner critic is loud and certain.

Five-minute practice: Let the guilt speak first, onto the page, where you can see it.

Write: Write down what the guilt voice is saying, word for word, without arguing yet.

Close with: Notice that you wrote it, which means you are not fully inside it.

The Softer Witness

Use this when: you have heard the guilt and need another voice.

Five-minute practice: Imagine a kind, fair witness who knows the whole story.

Write: Write what that gentle witness would say to you in return.

Close with: Read their words once more, slowly.

What I Knew Then

Use this when: hindsight is being used against you.

Five-minute practice: Separate what you know now from what was possible then.

Write: Finish both lines: At that time, I knew. And: At that time, I did not know.

Close with: Let the second line stand as plainly as the first.

The Human Limit

Use this when: you are holding yourself to an impossible standard.

Five-minute practice: Recall the real limits any person faces.

Write: Write three human limits that were present then, such as tiredness, fear, or simply not knowing.

Close with: Allow those limits to be true without erasing your love.

One Thing I Wish I Had Said

Use this when: words were left unspoken.

Five-minute practice: Give one of those words a place to land.

Write: Write one sentence you wish you had been able to say.

Close with: Read it aloud if you can, gently, to no one and to them.

One Thing I Hope They Knew

Use this when: you long to be sure they understood your heart.

Five-minute practice: Turn toward what was true between you.

Write: Write one sentence about the love, care, or closeness you hope they felt.

Close with: Let that hope rest beside the regret.

The What-If Container

Use this when: a what-if keeps circling.

Five-minute practice: Give the question a single place to live.

Write: Write one what-if, then beside it write, This question hurts because.

Close with: Close the container for now, knowing you can return if you choose.

Regret Without Punishment

Use this when: regret has turned into self-punishment.

Five-minute practice: Separate acknowledging regret from harming yourself with it.

Write: Write how you can name this regret honestly without using it as a weapon against yourself.

Close with: Set the weapon down, even if only for tonight.

A Kinder Courtroom

Use this when: you keep putting yourself on trial.

Five-minute practice: Imagine the same case heard by a gentler, fairer judge.

Write: Write the new verdict that judge would give, knowing everything you carried.

Close with: Let that verdict be the one you take with you.

Lay One Stone Down

Use this when: the weight of guilt feels too heavy to carry whole.

Five-minute practice: Choose one small piece you do not have to hold today.

Write: Write one guilty thought you are willing to set down, just for now.

Close with: Picture placing it on the ground and taking one lighter breath.

You can hold both your regret and your humanity at once. Speaking kindly to yourself is not the same as excusing anything. It is simply how you keep going.

When Grief Comes in Waves

Just when you think the worst has passed, grief can rise again without warning. A morning that began steady falls apart by afternoon. A good week is followed by a day that knocks you flat. This is the nature of grief: it moves in waves, not in a straight line.

A wave does not mean you are back at the beginning. It does not erase the steadier days you have had. Grief simply does not travel in tidy steps, and an intense return of feeling is part of how it moves, not a sign that something has gone wrong.

This chapter offers language for the wave itself: where it begins, how it feels in the body, what it might be asking for, and what helps as it softens. The goal is not to stop the waves, but to ride them with a little more steadiness and self-kindness.

It can help to picture grief less like a staircase and more like weather. A clear morning can give way to a sudden storm, and a storm can pass into stillness again, often without much warning. For many people, the waves tend to grow further apart over time, though not in a straight or predictable way. When one arrives, it is not a punishment and not a setback. It is simply grief moving through you, the way it has always moved, and like weather, it will change again. Your only task in a wave is to keep yourself reasonably safe until it eases.

If a wave ever feels like more than you can come back from, please reach for support. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour. You do not have to weather every wave by yourself.

As you use these practices, it can help to treat a wave as something to move through rather than something to defeat. You are not trying to make it stop on command. You are simply staying with yourself, kindly and patiently, until it begins to loosen its grip.

Reach for whichever practice meets you where you are right now.

The Wave Has a Beginning

Use this when: a wave is rising and you feel caught off guard.

Five-minute practice: Look back for the first moment you noticed it.

Write: Write when and how you first sensed the wave starting.

Close with: Knowing where it began can make it feel a little less sudden.

The Wave Has a Body

Use this when: the feeling is strong and physical.

Five-minute practice: Locate where the wave lives in your body right now.

Write: Note where you feel it, such as your chest, throat, stomach, hands, face, or shoulders.

Close with: Rest a hand near that place, gently, for a moment.

The Wave Has a Message

Use this when: the wave feels overwhelming and meaningless.

Five-minute practice: Ask what it might be pointing toward.

Write: Finish this line: This wave may be asking me to notice.

Close with: You do not have to act on it, only to hear it.

The Wave Is Not the Whole Ocean

Use this when: the grief feels like it is everything.

Five-minute practice: Look for what else is also true in this moment.

Write: Write three things that exist alongside the grief right now, however ordinary.

Close with: Let those things share the space without competing with the grief.

Ten Breaths on Paper

Use this when: you need something simple to hold onto.

Five-minute practice: Pair each breath with a single word.

Write: Write ten short lines, one word per breath, whatever words arrive.

Close with: Read the ten words down the page slowly.

The Hardest Minute

Use this when: a single moment feels unbearable.

Five-minute practice: Narrow your focus to just this minute, not the whole day.

Write: Describe one hard minute without judging the rest of the day by it.

Close with: Remind yourself that minutes pass, even the heavy ones.

What Helps the Wave Soften

Use this when: you want comfort that is realistic, not forced.

Five-minute practice: Think of what eases the edge without pretending to fix it.

Write: Note three things that do not solve the grief but make it a little softer.

Close with: Reach for one of them if you can.

Permission Not to Function Perfectly

Use this when: you are pushing yourself to keep performing.

Five-minute practice: Loosen the demand to do everything well today.

Write: Write one sentence that gives you permission to move more slowly.

Close with: Let one task wait without guilt.

After the Wave

Use this when: the intensity is beginning to drop.

Five-minute practice: Notice what your body is asking for now.

Write: Write what you need as the wave recedes, such as rest, warmth, food, or stillness.

Close with: Offer yourself that care, even in a small way.

This Does Not Erase Progress

Use this when: a hard wave makes you feel you have lost ground.

Five-minute practice: Hold the wave and your progress at the same time.

Write: Finish this line: A hard wave does not mean.

Close with: Let your own words steady you before you move on.

Waves rise and waves fall. None of them undo the steadier ground you
are slowly finding, even when the day says otherwise.

When Loneliness Fills the Room

Grief can be deeply lonely. The phone stops ringing. People who once asked how you were doing have moved on. Evenings stretch long, and the silence in a room can feel louder than any noise. Loneliness in grief is its own particular ache.

This kind of loneliness is not the same as ordinary time alone. It is shaped by a specific absence, by missing one person or one presence that no one else can replace. Naming that clearly can ease a little of the confusion that often comes with it.

This chapter gives words to the absence, and it also offers small, manageable ways to feel less alone. Connection does not have to be large to count. Sometimes a single safe contact, or even quiet company on the page, is enough for one evening.

It can help to name the particular loneliness that grief brings. It is not only the absence of company, but the absence of one specific presence, one voice, one way of being known. Other people may be all around you and the ache can remain, because they are not the person you are missing. This is not ingratitude, and it is not something to fix quickly. Recognizing the exact shape of the loneliness can make it feel less like a flaw in you and more like the natural echo of a bond that mattered.

If the loneliness ever becomes too heavy to hold, please reach toward support. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour. You deserve company in this, even when it is hard to ask for.

As you try these practices, it can help to lower the bar for what counts as connection. On a hard evening, connection might be a single text you do not even send, a hand resting on a familiar object, or a few words written to no one in particular. None of these replace the presence you are missing, and they are not meant to. They are simply small ways of reminding yourself that you are still here, and still worth keeping company, even when the room is quiet and the hour is late.

Use whichever practice feels possible tonight, and leave the rest for another time.

The Empty Chair Sentence

Use this when: an absence feels almost physical in the room.

Five-minute practice: Speak to the empty space without correcting yourself.

Write: Write one sentence to the absence, exactly as it comes.

Close with: Let the sentence stand, unedited.

What I Miss in the Ordinary

Use this when: it is the small, daily things you ache for.

Five-minute practice: Turn toward the everyday moments rather than the big ones.

Write: Note three ordinary things you miss, such as a voice, a text, a routine, or a presence.

Close with: Let yourself miss them without rushing to feel grateful instead.

The Room Is Too Quiet

Use this when: silence makes the loneliness sharper.

Five-minute practice: Notice what makes the quiet harder, and what might ease it.

Write: Write what makes the silence louder, and one thing that could soften it.

Close with: Try that one softening thing, such as a low light or a familiar sound.

A Message I Do Not Have to Send

Use this when: there is something you wish you could say to someone.

Five-minute practice: Let the words exist without an audience.

Write: Write a short message you do not have to send to anyone.

Close with: Keep it or cross it out, whichever frees you more.

Safe Connection Menu

Use this when: you want contact but reaching out feels like too much.

Five-minute practice: Make connection smaller and more possible.

Write: List three doable forms of contact, such as a text, a voice note, sitting near someone, or distant company.

Close with: Pick the easiest one, or simply know the menu is there.

When People Do Not Understand

Use this when: you feel unseen by the people around you.

Five-minute practice: Put the unmet wish into words for yourself.

Write: Finish this line: I wish people understood that.

Close with: Let the page hold what others have not been able to.

A Boundary for Company

Use this when: company is welcome but only on certain terms.

Five-minute practice: Decide what you can and cannot offer right now.

Write: Write one sentence that sets a gentle limit on visits, questions, or conversations.

Close with: Trust that protecting your energy is a form of care.

A Small Companion Object

Use this when: you want something steady nearby.

Five-minute practice: Choose one object that feels like quiet company.

Write: Write why this object can stay beside you today.

Close with: Keep it within reach as the evening goes on.

Not Alone With This Page

Use this when: the night feels especially solitary.

Five-minute practice: Let the page itself be a kind of company.

Write: Write one sentence that treats this book, this page, or your own breath as a quiet witness.

Close with: Notice that, in this small way, you are not entirely alone.

Loneliness in grief is real, and it is not the whole story. Small connections still count, and you are allowed to reach for them at your own pace.

When Sleep Feels Out of Reach

Grief is often loudest at night. The day's distractions fall away, the house goes quiet, and the missing grows sharper in the dark. You may lie awake replaying memories, dreading the morning, or simply unable to slow your mind enough to rest.

Night grief is real, and it is exhausting. This chapter is meant to be gentle on a tired mind, so the practices here are short, calm, and a little repetitive on purpose. This is not the time for deep digging or hard questions.

The aim is to unload a little, set a few things down until morning, and help your body notice small signals of safety. None of these practices promise sleep, but they can make the waiting for it feel less lonely and less tightly wound.

It can help to know that the mind often saves its hardest feelings for the night. During the day there are tasks, people, and noise to hold the grief at a distance. When all of that quiets, the feelings that waited patiently in the background finally have room to surface. This is not a sign that you are getting worse. It is simply what happens when the busy world lets go of you for a few hours. Being awake with grief in the dark is one of the loneliest parts of loss, and it deserves gentleness rather than frustration. If you cannot sleep, you have not failed, and resting your body, even without sleep, still offers it some care.

If the nights ever feel unbearable, please reach for support. In the United States, you can call or text 988 at any hour, including the middle of the night. You do not have to get through the dark alone.

As you use these practices, try to loosen the pressure to sleep. The harder you chase rest, the further it tends to drift, and grief can make that chase even more tiring. Instead, let the goal be gentleness rather than sleep itself. If your mind keeps circling, let it circle a little more softly. If your body stays awake, let it at least be at rest. Lying quietly in the dark, warm and still, gives your body something even when sleep will not come. Some nights that is the most honest thing you can offer yourself, and it is enough. Morning will arrive, and you will meet it as you are.

Keep these by the bed. One quiet practice is enough.

The Bedside Dump

Use this when: your mind is crowded with loose thoughts.

Five-minute practice: Empty them onto the page without sorting.

Write: Write every stray thought in short lines, in any order.

Close with: Set the pen down and tell yourself the page is holding them now.

Not Tonight List

Use this when: tomorrow's worries are crowding into the night.

Five-minute practice: Move what can wait out of the present moment.

Write: List the things you may carry tomorrow but do not have to hold tonight.

Close with: Picture leaving the list on the bedside table until morning.

The Pillow Sentence

Use this when: you want one calm thought to rest beside.

Five-minute practice: Choose a single gentle line for the night.

Write: Write one sentence you would like to lay beside your pillow.

Close with: Repeat it softly as you settle.

The Dark Room Check

Use this when: the dark feels unsettling or too large.

Five-minute practice: Let plain facts make the room feel known again.

Write: Note five neutral facts about the room in the dark.

Close with: Let the familiar room hold you for now.

When Missing Gets Louder at Night

Use this when: the absence feels strongest in the quiet.

Five-minute practice: Let the missing have a small, contained place.

Write: Finish this line: At night, I miss.

Close with: Rest a hand on your chest and let the words settle.

A Softer Thought to Repeat

Use this when: a harsh thought keeps looping.

Five-minute practice: Offer your mind a kinder line to circle instead.

Write: Choose one repeatable sentence, such as, I can rest without solving this.

Close with: Return to it whenever the harder thought comes back.

The Morning Can Hold This

Use this when: everything feels urgent in the dark.

Five-minute practice: Hand the urgency over to the daylight.

Write: Write what can safely wait until morning.

Close with: Let the night be only the night.

Three Gentle Body Signals

Use this when: your body is tense and braced.

Five-minute practice: Send small signals of safety to your body.

Write: Note three tiny releases you can offer, such as unclench your jaw, soften your hands, let your shoulders drop.

Close with: Do each one slowly, then let your body be.

If I Wake Again

Use this when: you fear waking in the small hours.

Five-minute practice: Prepare a simple plan for if it happens.

Write: Write a short plan for what you will do if you wake again.

Close with: Knowing the plan is there, let yourself rest as you can.

Rest may come in pieces for a while, and broken rest is still rest. Be as gentle with your nights as you would be with someone you love.

Returning to the Day: Small Closings, Support, and Repeatable Practices

If you have made it here, even by skipping ahead, you have already done something steadying. You have kept yourself company through hard moments instead of facing them with nothing in your hands. This final chapter is meant to turn these pages into a tool you can return to again and again, on your own terms.

It helps to remember the simple shape that runs through every practice in this book: notice, name, write, breathe, and return. You notice where you are. You name what is present. You write a few honest words. You take one easier breath. Then you return to your day, or to rest, knowing the page will be here when you need it next.

There is no schedule for using this book and no order you must follow. On a panicked afternoon, you might turn to the practices for panic. On a numb, faraway morning, you might choose the ones for emptiness. When a wave rises, when guilt gets loud, when the night will not let you sleep, or when the loneliness fills the room, you can open straight to the chapter that fits. Let your energy and your need choose for you.

If you are not sure where to begin on a given day, let the feeling lead. Racing and breathless points toward the practices for panic. Flat and far away points toward the practices for emptiness. A sudden reminder points toward the practices for triggers. A loud inner critic points toward the practices for guilt. A rising swell points toward the practices for waves. A silent room points toward the practices for loneliness. A restless night points toward the practices for sleep.

Grounding is not the same as healing, and it does not have to prove anything. These five minutes are not a test you pass or fail. Some days a practice will help a great deal. Other days it will only help a little, and that is still worth something. You are allowed to use this book imperfectly, exactly as grief is lived.

Grief changes shape over time. It rarely disappears, but it can grow quieter, more bearable, and woven into a life that continues to hold both love and loss. The practices here are meant to support you

through that long, uneven process, not to rush its end. There is no finish line you are failing to reach.

It also helps to know, before a hard day arrives, where your support lies. The exercises below help you gather that in advance, so that on a difficult day you are not starting from nothing. Keep them somewhere you can find them quickly.

You may also find it steadying to revisit a few practices often enough that they become familiar. When a practice is well worn, it asks less of you in the moment. Your hand already knows where to go, and the words come more easily, even on a heavy day. Familiar tools are kinder tools, because they do not ask you to learn anything new while you are hurting.

Be patient, too, with how slowly some days move. Five minutes spent steadying yourself is never wasted, even when nothing seems to change by the time you close the book. You are building a quiet habit of turning toward yourself instead of away, and habits like that grow stronger in small, repeated moments rather than in single dramatic ones.

However you use what you have learned here, let it be on your own terms. Some readers will return to this book daily for a season, then set it aside as the days grow a little easier. Others will keep it close for years, opening it only on the hardest nights. Both are right. A tool is meant to serve you, not the other way around, and grief asks for different things at different times.

If you are ever in immediate danger, or thinking about harming yourself or someone else, call 911 in the United States or go to your nearest emergency room. If you are in emotional distress or crisis, you can call or text 988 at any hour, or chat at [988lifeline.org](https://www.988lifeline.org), for free and confidential support. Reaching for help is one of the bravest and most caring things you can do for yourself in grief.

My Hard-Day Plan

Use this when: you want a plan ready before the next hard day arrives.

Five-minute practice: Think through three levels of support, from what you can do alone to when you need immediate help.

Write: Write a plan in three parts. First, what I can do on my own, such as a practice from this book or a small comfort. Second, who I can reach out to, naming a person or two you trust. Third, when I need immediate help, including calling or texting 988, or calling 911 in an emergency.

Close with: Keep this plan somewhere easy to find, so that on a hard day you do not have to think it up from nothing.

My Repeat Practice

Use this when: you want a few reliable practices to return to.

Five-minute practice: Look back through the book and notice which practices helped, even a little.

Write: Choose three practices you want to use again. For each one, note its name and when it tends to help, such as at night, during a wave, or when guilt gets loud.

Close with: Mark those pages so you can find them quickly when you need them.

One Sentence for the Days Ahead

Use this when: you want something small and steady to carry forward.

Five-minute practice: Think of a sentence that is honest and kind, and light enough to hold on a heavy day.

Write: Write one closing sentence to carry with you, such as, I can meet this moment gently, or words of your own that feel true.

Close with: Read it once more, take an easy breath, and let it stay with you.

Let this book be a companion rather than a task. It does not need to be finished, and it does not keep score. Use a single practice and close it again, return after weeks away, or skip whole chapters that do not fit your loss. The pages will not mind, and neither should you. Whenever a day feels heavy, they will be here, steady and unhurried, for as long as you need them.

Further Support and Resources

This workbook is a companion, not a replacement for human support. If grief feels like more than you can carry, or if it begins to affect your safety, sleep, health, or daily life over time, reaching out for help is a wise and caring step.

If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, please reach for help right away. In the United States, you can call or text 988, or chat at 988lifeline.org, for free and confidential support at any hour, and you can call 911 in an emergency. If you are outside the United States, contact your local emergency number or a national crisis helpline in your country. A quick online search for a crisis line in your country, or a visit to your doctor, can point you toward the nearest support.

For ongoing grief support beyond a crisis, you might consider a licensed therapist or counselor, especially one experienced in grief and loss; your family doctor, who can listen and refer you onward; a local or online grief support group, where others understand this particular kind of loss; or a trusted hospice, hospital, faith, or community organization near you, as many of these offer bereavement support at little or no cost.

It can be especially worth reaching out if the heaviest feelings are not easing at all over many months, if you feel unable to manage daily life, if you are leaning on alcohol or other substances to cope, or if hope feels permanently out of reach. None of these mean you are grieving wrongly. They are simply signs that you deserve more support than any book alone can offer.

Wherever you are, you do not have to grieve alone. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness. It is one of the kindest things you can do for yourself.