

WEHEALUS

The Continued Healing Journey

*A 12-Week Companion Workbook for Women
Healing from Complex Trauma*

Safety & Stabilization · Remembrance & Mourning · Reconnection & Growth

WeHealUS.org

This workbook belongs to: _____

WELCOME, FRIEND

How to Use This Workbook

This workbook walks Judith Herman's three stages of trauma recovery [1] over twelve weeks, alongside the WeHealUS interactive Healing Hub. Use it on paper, on screen (the answer boxes are fillable), or both — whatever helps you process best.

Weekly (30-45 minutes).

Read the week's Learn section, write through the three Reflect prompts, do the Practice, and sit with the Faith Anchor. Work in order if you can — each week builds on the last — but revisit any week whenever you need it. Healing spirals; that is normal.

Daily (2-3 minutes).

Use the daily check-in grid at the back, or the Daily Check-In tab in the online hub: one slow breath, one feeling, one honest line, one gratitude. Small and consistent beats big and occasional.

Your faith, your words.

This journey is faith-based and belongs to every tradition. Where you see 'God/Source,' substitute the name that feels like home — God, Source, Higher Power, Creator, the Divine [13].

Your pace, always.

Trauma-informed practice honors choice [7]. Skip, pause, return smaller. If writing pulls you past your edge, ground yourself first (Week 3) — and nothing here requires reliving details to heal.

A gentle truth: this workbook is a psychoeducational and spiritual companion — a friend for the journey. It walks alongside professional care; it does not replace therapy, medical treatment, or recovery programs, and it does not diagnose. If deep memories or overwhelming feelings surface, that is a sign to bring a licensed trauma therapist alongside you [12] — the Resources page at the back can help you find one.

PHASE 1

Safety & Stabilization

Weeks 1-4 · Understand, steady, and anchor yourself

Understanding CPTSD: Naming What Happened

LEARN

Complex PTSD (recognized in the WHO's ICD-11 [15]) develops after prolonged, inescapable trauma. Beyond classic PTSD, it brings struggles with emotions, deep shame, and difficulty with closeness. The ACE Study [5] showed how common such wounds are; trauma lives in the body and brain, not in your character [2]. Naming what happened is the first act of healing.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Daily: hand over heart — 'What happened to me was not my fault. What I do with my healing is my responsibility — and I am here, doing it.' [8]

FAITH ANCHOR

You were never invisible to God/Source — not then, not now. Offer one honest sentence about what happened. Honesty is a form of prayer.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · When you read the description of complex trauma, what did you recognize in your own life?

2 · What names have you called yourself that were really symptoms, not character?

3 · Finish this sentence: 'What happened to me was real, and it mattered, because...'

I completed Week 1. I showed up for my healing.

Safety First: Building Your Anchor

LEARN

Every credible approach to recovery begins with safety [1] — physical, emotional, and internal. For women whose trauma includes substance use, safety also means protecting sobriety before deep trauma work [11]. Safety is the first trauma-informed principle [7]. This week: a safety plan, a support-team list, and one calming place you can return to.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Write a pocket safety card: 3 contacts, 2 things that calm you, 1 place you can go. Photograph it. If a person endangers you: DV Hotline 1-800-799-7233.

FAITH ANCHOR

'Refuge' is one of the oldest names for God/Source. You gather the numbers and lock the doors; let the Divine hold what you cannot control. Both are sacred work.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Rate your safety 1-10: physical situation / relationships / inner world. What raises each by one point?

2 · List your support team — every real name (friend, therapist, sponsor, pastor, hotline). One step toward adding one more?

3 · Describe your safe place (real or imagined) with all five senses.

I completed Week 2. I showed up for my healing.

The Window of Tolerance: Befriending Your Nervous System

LEARN

Between hyperarousal (panic, rage) and hypoarousal (numb, fog) lies the window of tolerance [9]. Trauma narrows it — a protective nervous-system response, not weak willpower [4]. Emotional flashbacks plunge you into old fear without a picture attached [3]. The skill: notice where you are, and use body-based tools to return [14]. Every return teaches your body the road home.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Practice 5-4-3-2-1 grounding daily BEFORE you need it: 5 things you see, 4 touch, 3 hear, 2 smell, 1 taste [14].

FAITH ANCHOR

Breath and spirit share a word in many sacred languages. Each slow exhale can be prayer: in — 'I am here'; out — 'I am held.'

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · What does 'above the window' look like for you? 'Below'? Name the earliest warning sign of each.

2 · Recall a recent moment you left your window. What happened just before? Triggers are information, not weakness.

3 · Which grounding tool worked best in your body? When exactly will you use it next?

I completed Week 3. I showed up for my healing.

Self-Compassion: Ending the Inner War

LEARN

Trauma installs an inner critic that once kept you safe by keeping you small [3]. The way out is self-compassion — self-kindness, common humanity, mindfulness [8] — linked to lower shame, anxiety, and depression. It is not self-pity: it is treating yourself like someone you are responsible for helping. In addiction recovery it is relapse prevention: shame fuels the cycle; kindness starves it [11].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Neff's self-compassion break when pain rises: hand on heart — 'This is a moment of suffering. Suffering is part of life. May I be kind to myself in this moment.' [8]

FAITH ANCHOR

If God/Source is compassionate, cruelty toward yourself contradicts the heart of the Divine. Sit and imagine being looked at with tenderness, not disappointment. Stay a moment longer than is comfortable.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Write three sentences your inner critic says most. Answer each as you would if it were said about your best friend.

2 · Where did the critic's voice come from? Whose words are those, really?

3 · Write yourself a short letter of compassion. Begin: 'Dear brave one...'

I completed Week 4. I showed up for my healing.

PHASE 2

Remembrance & Mourning

Weeks 5-8 · Tell, grieve, and reclaim — at your pace

Your Story, Your Pace

LEARN

With safety in place, remembrance begins [1]. Telling your story turns trauma from a wordless force in the body into a narrative with a survivor [2]. Pace is everything — you choose what, how much, to whom, when [7]. You never have to relive details to heal. One drop at a time; deep processing goes best with a skilled trauma therapist alongside [12].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

After story-writing, a return ritual: stand, feel your feet, say today's date and your age aloud — 'That was then. I survived it. I am here now.' [14]

FAITH ANCHOR

The sacred texts are full of lament — honest anguish addressed to God/Source. Lament is faith that trusts the Divine can handle the truth. Write or speak one lament this week.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Write the 'table of contents' of your story — chapter titles only, no chapters.

2 · Choose ONE tolerable chapter; write one paragraph. Note your window number (1-10) first. Stop at your edge.

3 · Who has earned the right to hear parts of your story? Who has not? Both lists are wisdom.

I completed Week 5. I showed up for my healing.

Grieving What Was Lost

LEARN

Under complex trauma lies unfinished grief — for what happened and for what should have happened and didn't: the safe childhood, the protective parent, the years lost to survival or addiction. Mourning is an essential stage; the tears ARE the healing [1]. Grief comes in waves and coexists with love and laughter. Name the losses specifically so they can be mourned and laid to rest.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

One small grief ritual: light a candle, write a goodbye letter you don't send, plant something, visit water. Ritual gives each wave a beginning and an end.

FAITH ANCHOR

The promise across faiths is not that God/Source prevents all sorrow, but that the Divine is nearest in it. Bring one loss by name; ask for comfort and strength to carry what remains.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Inventory: What did the trauma take? Concrete (time, health, money, people) and invisible (innocence, trust, ease, dreams).

2 · Which loss were you never allowed to grieve? Give it its own paragraph. Give it its funeral.

3 · What survived? What did trauma NOT take from you? Write that list and read it aloud.

I completed Week 6. I showed up for my healing.

Healthy Anger & Boundaries

LEARN

Many women — especially women of faith — were taught anger is dangerous or sinful. But anger is the part of you that knows you were violated and insists you matter [1]. Suppressed, it turns inward; honored, it becomes boundary energy. A boundary states what you will and won't accept plus what YOU will do if crossed. Boundaries reclaim power and voice [7]. Expect pushback — it is evidence the boundary was needed.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Practice one small 'no' without over-explaining or apologizing twice: 'No, that doesn't work for me.'
Boundary guilt is growing pain, not wrongdoing.

FAITH ANCHOR

Even the gentlest traditions record holy anger against injustice. Ask God/Source to help you aim yours — into boundaries that protect what the Divine calls precious: you.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · What were you taught about anger growing up? What did believing it cost you?

2 · Write about one situation where your anger was RIGHT. What was it protecting?

3 · Draft one boundary: 'I will no longer _____. If _____ happens, I will _____. ' Who will resist it, and how will you hold it?

I completed Week 7. I showed up for my healing.

The Inner Child & Your Parts

LEARN

Prolonged trauma divides the labor: one part copes, others carry the fear, shame, and unallowed anger. Survivors describe a wounded inner child frozen at the age of the hurt, and a loud inner critic still guarding her [3]. Healing is reunion, not exile: the woman you are now giving the child you were the protection no one gave her then — reparenting [3]. If you experience lost time or fully separate parts, bring this to a trauma therapist [12].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

One act of reparenting: the meal she loved, rest without earning it, the small silly thing. To the critic: 'Thank you for protecting us. I have her now.'

FAITH ANCHOR

Whatever your earthly parents could not give, let God/Source parent the child in you this week. She was never too much. She was never not enough. Neither are you.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Find or imagine a photo of yourself as a girl. What do you feel first? Write to her from that.

2 · What did she need most that she didn't receive? Be specific.

3 · Write a letter FROM your younger self TO you now. What does she want you to know?

I completed Week 8. I showed up for my healing.

PHASE 3

Reconnection & Growth

Weeks 9-12 · Rebuild identity, trust, meaning, and mission

Reclaiming Identity: Who Am I Now?

LEARN

Phase three: building a self and life trauma no longer defines [1]. Survival hollows identity — you know what everyone needs and go blank at 'What do YOU want?' That blankness is unexplored territory. Identity is built choice by choice. You are not 'an addict' or 'a victim' as a whole self — you are a woman in recovery, with a history, and a future that gets a vote [6][7].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

One identity experiment: 30 minutes of something you 'always wanted to' or 'used to love.' You are not auditioning. You are meeting yourself.

FAITH ANCHOR

*You are not primarily what happened to you — you are what God/Source created and is still creating.
Ask the brave question: 'Who did You make me to be, before anyone else got a say?'*

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Freely, no editing: I love... I believe... I'm curious about... I will no longer pretend to... The woman I'm becoming is...

2 · Which parts of 'you' were survival costumes? Which are real? How does your body tell the difference?

3 · What did you love at age 9 or 10, before the world told you who to be? What tiny version could you touch this month?

I completed Week 9. I showed up for my healing.

Trust & Safe Connection

LEARN

Trauma that came through people heals through people — recovery cannot occur in isolation [1]. Yet closeness is where CPTSD wounds run deepest [15]. Safety is communicated body-to-body, and every safe connection retrains the nervous system [4]. The skill is calibrated trust: small increments to people who prove trustworthy over time. Watch patterns, not promises. Peer support counts fully [7].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

One small bid for safe connection: reply to the friend, attend the group, tell one safe person one true thing. Then notice: I connected, and I survived it [4].

FAITH ANCHOR

If people wounded you in God's name, that betrayal is its own grief — and God/Source is not the ones who misrepresented the Divine. Ask for discernment, and courage to let one safe person a step closer.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · The safest person you've ever known — what exactly did they DO that felt safe? That list is your compass.

2 · Between walls-against-everyone and trusting-too-fast, where do you sit today? One step toward calibrated trust?

3 · Review current relationships against safe-person patterns. Who earns more access? Who has trust they haven't earned?

I completed Week 10. I showed up for my healing.

Meaning, Faith & Forgiveness — On Your Terms

LEARN

Trauma shatters assumptions; rebuilding meaning is central to long-term healing [10]. Spiritual struggle — anger at God, doubt — is normal, and wrestling openly tends toward growth [13]. Forgiveness is never required, never owed, never someone else's schedule, and never means reconciling or calling harm acceptable. At most it is a private, gradual release of resentment's grip on YOUR body — only if and when you choose. Self-forgiveness often comes first.

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Write a meaning statement: 'Because of what I've survived and who I'm becoming, I now...' Let suffering be soil, not sentence [10].

FAITH ANCHOR

If your faith broke, what breaks may be the too-small version. Tell God/Source one gratitude AND one anger in the same prayer. The Divine can hold both. So, increasingly, can you.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · What do you need to say to God/Source that you've been afraid to say? Say it here.

2 · Which shattered beliefs are you rebuilding — and which are you choosing NOT to rebuild because they were never true?

3 · Where are you with forgiveness — of others, of yourself? Zero 'shoulds.'

I completed Week 11. I showed up for my healing.

Post-Traumatic Growth: The Journey Continues

LEARN

You arrive with tools, language, boundaries — perhaps the first shoots of post-traumatic growth: deeper appreciation of life, closer relationships, awareness of strength, new possibilities, spiritual depth [10]. Growth grows beside the scar, not instead of it. Healing is a practice, not a graduation; hard days will come, and you will meet them as the woman these twelve weeks built [1][6]. Herman's final stage: the survivor mission — your healing lighting the way for others [1].

PRACTICE THIS WEEK

Mark the milestone: read your letter aloud somewhere beautiful, light twelve candles, write your survivor's blessing. Then schedule your continuing rhythm.

FAITH ANCHOR

Beauty from ashes; the wounded becoming healers. Ask God/Source: 'What would You like to do with my healing?' Well done, brave one. Keep walking.

Write freely — no editing, no judging. These pages are yours alone.

1 · Read your Week 1 pages, then write a letter from the woman you are now to the woman who wrote them.

2 · Name your growth across: appreciation of life / relationships / strength / possibilities / spiritual life. Where is still tender?

3 · Your continuing-care plan: daily anchors... weekly practices... my people... warning signs I need more support... my next right step...

I completed Week 12. I showed up for my healing.

DAILY CHECK-IN LOG · MONTH 1

Each day: circle your inner weather, then one honest line + one gratitude. Tiny counts. Coffee counts.

[illegible]

DAILY CHECK-IN LOG · MONTH 2

Each day: circle your inner weather, then one honest line + one gratitude. Tiny counts. Coffee counts.

[illegible]

DAILY CHECK-IN LOG · MONTH 3

Each day: circle your inner weather, then one honest line + one gratitude. Tiny counts. Coffee counts.

[illegible]

You Are Not Alone — Support & Resources

Immediate, free, 24/7

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline: call or text 988 (988lifeline.org) — for any emotional distress, not only suicidal crisis. · Crisis Text Line: text HOME to 741741. · National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233, text START to 88788 (thehotline.org). · SAMHSA National Helpline (mental health & substance use referrals): 1-800-662-4357. · RAINN Sexual Assault Hotline: 1-800-656-4673.

Finding ongoing care

Trauma-informed therapist directories: psychologytoday.com/us/therapists (filter trauma/PTSD) and findtreatment.gov. Evidence-supported care for complex trauma is phase-based, beginning with safety and stabilization [12].

Peer & faith-based support

NAMI support groups (nami.org) · Celebrate Recovery (celebraterecovery.com) · SMART Recovery (smartrecovery.org) · Adult Children of Alcoholics & Dysfunctional Families (adultchildren.org) · CPTSD Foundation (cptsdfoundation.org) · free practices at self-compassion.org [8].

WeHealUS

Healing-centered resources, partners, and the 988 Visibility Movement: WeHealUS.org.

Sources

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Content in this workbook summarizes and adapts ideas from these sources for psychoeducational use, with gratitude to the clinicians and researchers who did the original work. This workbook is not therapy, medical care, or a substitute for professional treatment, and it does not diagnose any condition.