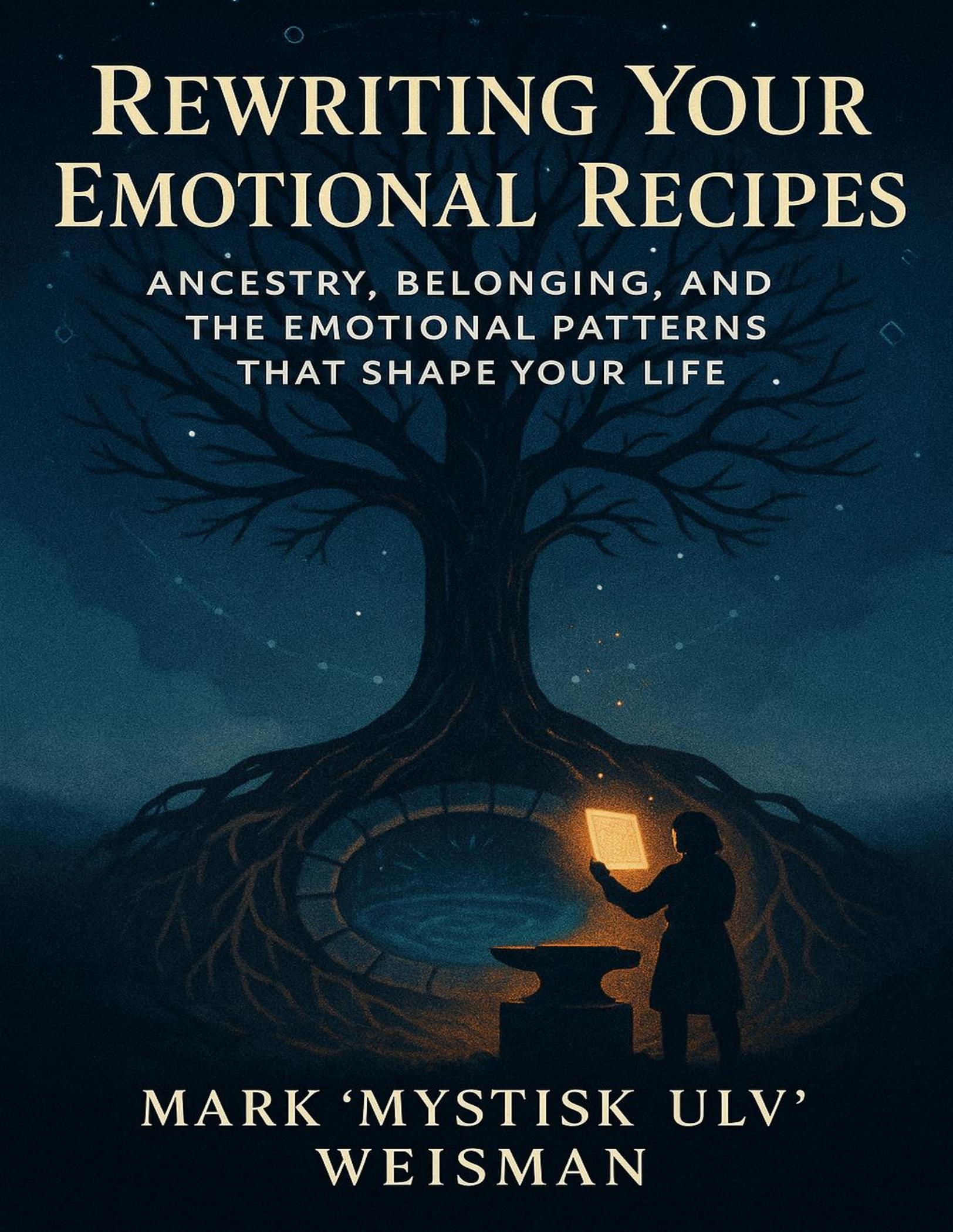


REWRITING YOUR EMOTIONAL RECIPES

ANCESTRY, BELONGING, AND
THE EMOTIONAL PATTERNS
THAT SHAPE YOUR LIFE .



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Rewriting Your Emotional Recipes

Ancestry, Belonging, and the Emotional Patterns That Shape Your Life

Mark "Mystisk Ulv" Weisman

In the Norse stories, there are three sisters who sit at the roots of the World Tree, tending the Well of Fate and weaving the threads of our lives.

They're called the Nornir.

They don't force us like puppets, and they don't erase our choices.

But they do have a way of bringing certain people, moments, and tools to our path at strangely right times.

If you're holding this book now—of all the things you could be doing with your life and your attention—I take that seriously.

You could have scrolled past.

You could have closed the tab.

You could have decided to stay with the old recipes a little longer.

But you didn't.

Whether you think in terms of fate and the Nornir, divine timing, coincidence, or “my algorithm is creepy,” I want you to notice this:

You have already made one quiet, powerful move on your own behalf.
You found your way here and chose to open this.

Let that be a win.

Before you rewrite a single recipe, before you change a single pattern, you can honestly say:

- “Some part of me wants better than the old instructions.”
- “Some part of me is willing to look.”

That's not nothing.

That's the beginning.

How to Get the Most from This Ebook

This book is meant to be used, not just read.

A few simple guidelines to help you get the most from it:

- Go slowly enough to notice yourself.

You don't have to finish it in one sitting. A chapter a week, or even a few pages at a time, is enough.

- Use real examples from your life.

When a practice invites you to think of a situation, pick something that actually happened in the last few days or weeks.

- Write something, even if it's messy.

Your answers don't have to be poetic or complete. A few honest words are more powerful than a perfect paragraph you never write.

- Take breaks when you need them.

If a section stirs up more than you can comfortably handle alone, it's okay to pause, ground yourself, or bring it to a trusted person or professional helper.

- Come back again.

The tools in this book are meant to be reused. As your life changes, your emotional recipes will show up in new ways. You can return to any chapter and work through it with fresh situations.

You don't have to agree with everything here or adopt every metaphor. Let what resonates stay, and let the rest pass by.

This is your forge. Your kingdom within. Work at the pace and depth that your system can truly handle.

Introduction

You're Not Broken. You're Carrying a Line of Stories.

Before you learned your name, you were already being written.

There were people before you—parents, grandparents, blood-kin and chosen-kin, neighbors and teachers and whole cultures—living their lives, surviving their storms, making choices about what was safe, what was dangerous, what was allowed, and what was unthinkable.

They didn't just hand down eye color, last names, and family recipes.

They handed down emotional recipes.

They showed you, often without words:

- what to do with anger
- whether tears are a problem or a language
- who is "allowed" to speak and who is supposed to stay small
- whether your needs are an inconvenience or something that matters

Some of those recipes were protective and wise.

Some of them were born in hard times and never got updated.

All of them live inside you as patterns: the ways you reflexively think, feel, and react when life presses your buttons.

This book is about those recipes.

It's not about proving that your family or culture were "bad," and it's not about pretending they were flawless. It's about doing something much more interesting and honest:

Seeing what you inherited,
choosing what you'll keep,
and deliberately rewriting what you'll pass on.

Because here's the truth most of us feel but rarely name:

You're not just an individual trying to "get it together."

You're the current edge of a long human river, carrying unmet needs for belonging, safety, and dignity that started long before you—and will flow on after you.

You carry old storms in your nervous system.

You also carry old strengths in your bones.

Both matter.

Emotional Recipes: The Invisible Spellbook

When something happens—a tone of voice, a text that doesn't get answered, a bill you weren't expecting—you don't respond from a blank slate.

Your mind and body reach for a familiar “recipe” you didn't sit down and consciously write:

- If someone sounds upset, I fix it immediately so they won't leave.
- If I'm not the best, I'm nothing—so why try?
- If I feel overwhelmed, I disappear into my phone or my vices.
- If I need help, I swallow it. We don't burden people.

These recipes are usually a mix of:

- Ancestry – the emotional habits and survival strategies of the people you come from
- Culture – the messages your society sends about value, success, gender, race, class, faith, and who belongs
- Personal experience – the moments that hurt, thrilled, shamed, or shaped you

When these recipes work, they help you stay connected, stay safe, and feel like you belong somewhere.

When they don't, they quietly sabotage your relationships, your health, your work, your recovery, your sense of self—and still claim they're “protecting” you.

This book won't ask you to throw out your heritage or pretend you're starting from zero.

Instead, we'll do something more respectful and powerful:

We'll open the spellbook. We'll read the old instructions.

And then, with as much honesty and kindness as we can manage, we'll begin to rewrite them.

Why Belonging Matters So Much

Humans are herd creatures wearing headphones.

We like to imagine ourselves as completely independent, but our nervous systems were built for tribes, villages, extended families—groups where you either belonged or you were in danger.

To a deep, ancient part of your brain, being rejected or shamed still feels like a threat. That's why:

- you dread disappointing certain people
- you replay awkward conversations at 2 a.m.
- you overwork to be “useful enough,” or shrink to be “easy enough”
- you accept less than you deserve because you're afraid of being alone

So many of our emotional recipes are really just strategies for belonging:

- If I'm always useful, they'll keep me.

- If I never show weakness, I'll be safe.
- If I don't have needs, no one can reject me.

Ancestry and culture matter here because they tell you what belonging costs.

Maybe your people survived by not talking about feelings.

Maybe they survived by working until their bodies broke.

Maybe they survived by turning everything into a joke.

Maybe they survived by obeying, by fighting, by drinking, by praying, by staying invisible.

Those strategies might have been necessary in their time.

But you're living in a different world.

Belonging now might mean learning new recipes: ones that let you be honest, rested, visible, and still connected. Recipes that honor where you come from and who you're becoming. That's the work we're doing here.

What This Book Is (and Isn't)

This is not:

- a miracle cure
- a replacement for therapy, medication, or recovery
- a demand that you confront the worst thing that ever happened to you, alone, in your living room

This is:

- a set of clear models to understand what's happening inside you
- a series of questions and practices to help you spot your own emotional recipes
- an invitation to see your ancestry and culture as context and resource, not just baggage
- a way to claim a little more agency over how you respond when life comes at you hard

In the chapters ahead you'll see metaphors like the Mood Ring, the Well of the Self, the Recipe Card, the Horn of Feeling, and the Me Gate. Treat them like maps: simple images to help you notice where you are and what options you have.

You don't have to agree with every idea. You don't have to share my spiritual, cultural, or ancestral background. Your people and your path are your own.

All I ask is that you bring the truth of your experience, a little curiosity, and a willingness to consider that:

You are not just "too much" or "not enough."

You are a living intersection of stories, some of which it's time to rewrite.

Ready?

Let's look at the recipes together.

Chapter 1 – The Big Picture

The Chain Beneath Your Reactions

Every time you think, “*I don’t know why I reacted like that,*” there is a chain underneath.

Something happened out in the world.

Something moved inside you.

And by the time you notice yourself snapping, withdrawing, fawning, or numbing out, the chain has already run its course.

This book is about learning to *see* that chain.

Not so you can control every feeling like a machine, but so you can walk into your inner world like a ruler entering their own kingdom—with curiosity, humility, and a bit more authority than you had before.

You can imagine this chain like a hidden **inner hall** or **forge**:

- At the very top, near the doors, is everything that happens “out there.”
- Deep down, beneath the floor, are wells and roots and old stories.
- In between are chambers where signals get turned into chemistry, chemistry into emotion, emotion into identity, and identity into memory.

Most of the time, this all happens faster than thought.

Here, we’re going to slow it down.

The Eight Links in the Chain

We’ll spend later chapters walking each link in detail, but first, let’s meet the whole cast.

You don’t have to memorize this. Just let it wash over you and notice what feels familiar.

Link 1 – Out There, In Here

Sensory Input & Imagination

It starts with something **out there**:

- a voice, a look, a silence, a notification, a smell, the way someone moves their shoulders when you walk in

Your eyes, ears, skin, nose, and tongue pick up what they can—through all the fog, wind, noise, lighting, technology, fatigue, and history you’re living in.

Your senses are not perfect instruments. They’re old tools that have travelled with you your whole life, and with your people before you. They deserve some credit, even if they don’t always give you a clean picture.

Then your **imagination** jumps in.

It fills in gaps. It guesses at tone. It assigns motives. It runs old images and fears and fantasies.

By the time that first link has finished, you’re no longer dealing with “pure reality.” You’re dealing with **your version** of what happened—constructed from imperfect input and fast storytelling.

Link 2 – The Mood Ring

Your Emotional Weather

Into that constructed moment, you bring your **Mood Ring**: the emotional weather you were already carrying.

Maybe you woke up heavy. Maybe you’re quietly proud of something you did. Maybe you’re low-sleep, high-stress, three coffees in, and hovering at a 7/10 on anxiety before anything even happens.

Your Mood Ring colors everything:

- On a clear day, a late reply is nothing.
- On a stormy day, the same delay feels like rejection.
- On a numb day, you might not register much at all—until it piles up later.

Your recipes don’t start from zero.
They start from whatever the weather already was.

Link 3 – The Well of the Self

Ancestry, Culture, and the Deep Story of “Me”

Beneath the floor of the inner hall is the **Well of the Self**.

This is where your deepest stuff lives:

- values, beliefs, and vows
- family rules and cultural messages
- personal and ancestral wounds
- the stories you've been told all your life about who "we" are and how "we" survive

Some of the water in this well is clear: courage, loyalty, creativity, faith, love.

Some of it is silted: shame, "not enough," "too much," "people like us don't get that."

When new input and your current mood drip down into this well, they don't hit neutral water. They hit everything your people and your life have already poured into you.

[Link 4 – Conversion to Biochemistry](#)

When Story Becomes Chemistry

From the Well, the stream flows into your **body**.

Your brain and nervous system turn all that meaning into actual **chemistry**:

- hormones
- neurotransmitters
- stress chemicals
- shifts in heart rate, muscle tension, breathing

This is where the story starts to become sensation:

- the tight chest, the buzzing limbs, the heavy stomach
- the numb, floaty, "I'm not really here" feeling
- the sudden heat of anger or flash of shame

Your body is not betraying you. It's doing its ancient job: preparing you to run, fight, freeze, fawn, or connect.

[Link 5 – The Recipe Card](#)

What You Learned to Call This

Then we hit the **Recipe Card**—the part of you that learned what to *call* all of this.

Growing up, you watched how your people named feelings:

- Was “sad” allowed, or did they call everything “tired”?
- Was “angry” okay for some people and not others?
- Was “afraid” renamed “dramatic,” “weak,” or “disrespectful”?

You also learned what to do with those names:

- “If you’re angry, you explode... or you swallow it... or you joke it off.”
- “If you’re hurt, you hide... or you work harder... or you numb out.”

Your Recipe Card is where you store that wiring:

“When it feels like this, this is what we call it, and this is what we do.”

Link 6 – The Horn of Feeling

When Chemistry Turns into Emotion

The **Horn of Feeling** is where the chemistry and the Recipe Card combine into full-color emotion.

The body’s signals + your learned labels = your felt experience of:

- rage, grief, panic, joy, shame, disgust, excitement, relief

This is often the first point in the chain where you consciously notice:

“Oh. Now I feel like this.”

By then, a lot has already happened.

Link 7 – The Me Gate

Who Gets to Live in Your Inner Kingdom

The **Me Gate** is one of the most powerful—and neglected—parts of the chain.

It’s the place where you decide (usually very fast, often unconsciously):

- **What belongs to you** and what doesn’t
- Which emotions you let move through, and which ones you clamp down on

- Which identities you accept (“I’m the screwup,” “I’m the rock,” “I’m the problem,” “I’m the caretaker”)
- Which roles you feel allowed to inhabit in your own kingdom

The Me Gate is where you choose, moment by moment, who gets to sit at your inner table.

Sometimes you welcome things that hurt you. Sometimes you exile things that could help you. Sometimes the Gate feels like it runs itself.

One of our big tasks in this work will be reclaiming more conscious say at this Gate.

Link 8 – Memory

How It Becomes Part of Your Story

Finally, everything flows into **Memory**.

Moments turn into:

- stories you tell about yourself and others
- evidence your brain uses to predict how the world works
- fuel for future recipes

If you walk the same chain enough times, your system eventually says:

“This is just who I am. This is just how it is.”

But what has been practiced is not the same as what is true.

Memory is not just an archive. It’s part of the forge where your future expectations are hammered out. That means it’s also a place where change can echo backwards and forwards.

Why Seeing the Whole Chain Matters

Most of us only notice **two** points:

- “Something happened.”
- “Now I feel / acted like this.”

Everything in between feels like a blur.

When you can see more links in the chain, you gain:

- **Understanding** – “I’m not crazy; a lot just happened very fast.”
- **Compassion** – “Given my senses, mood, history, and body, this reaction makes sense.”
- **Leverage** – more places to gently intervene:
 - adjusting the environment
 - tending the Mood Ring
 - cleaning the Well
 - rewriting the Recipe Card
 - standing more fully at the Me Gate

You can’t control every input or emotion.
But you can learn where your choices *actually* live.

That is the heart of rewriting your emotional recipes.

A Few Questions to Carry Forward

You don’t have to answer these on paper yet. Just hold them lightly as you read:

- Which link in the chain already feels familiar to you?
(Do you live mostly in your thoughts, your body, your moods, your stories?)
- Which link do you almost never think about?
(Is there a part of this chain that feels like a blank space?)
- When you remember your biggest “I don’t know why I reacted like that” moments...
which parts of the chain do you suspect were most active?

In the chapters ahead, we’ll walk each link slowly, like tracing a thread by hand.

You don’t have to fix it all.
You just have to be willing to look.

Chapter 2 – Out There, In Here.

Sensory Input and Imagination

Every emotional recipe starts with something simple:

Something happens.

Someone speaks.

A phone buzzes.

An email lands.

A door closes a little louder than usual.

A smell appears in a hallway and your stomach drops, even if you're not sure why.

Before any of that becomes:

- “I’m angry.”
- “I’m anxious.”
- “I’m nothing.”
- “I’m not safe.”

it has to cross the bridge from **out there** to **in here**.

This chapter is about that bridge.

It has two main planks:

- **Your senses** – how your physical form receives the world.
- **Your imagination** – how your mind finishes the picture and predicts what might be happening.

If you only remember one line from this chapter, let it be this:

You do not experience the world as it is.

You experience the world as your senses deliver it, and as your imagination finishes the story.

The World Through Imperfect Hardware

Your senses are the first guardians at the gate of your inner kingdom.

They are not perfect instruments fresh from the factory. They are **old tools**—eyes, ears, skin, nose, tongue—that have travelled with you through your whole story.

They've also been shaped by:

- age, injuries, illnesses, and medications
- sleep (or the lack of it)
- past stress and trauma
- the environments you spend most of your time in

On a foggy morning, your eyes do not see the same world they see on a clear afternoon. In strong wind, your ears don't catch words the same way they do in a quiet room. If you're squinting into bright sunlight or listening through a bad microphone, what you "take in" is already distorted before any feelings or stories get involved.

Even on a good day, your "raw data" is not truly raw. It has already been softened, filtered, and shaped by:

- lighting and weather
- background noise and distance
- the clothes on your skin and the chair beneath you
- exhaustion, hunger, pain, or overstimulation

Your senses deserve credit: they've kept you alive and oriented this long. But they don't give you a clean, laboratory-grade picture of reality. They give you **their best version**, in that moment, under those conditions.

What you experience as "what happened" is already the world translated through this body that carries both your story and your ancestors' stories.

From Senses to Signals: Bioelectricity and Imagination

As your senses pick up the world, your nervous system begins to convert those inputs into tiny **bioelectric signals**—pulses traveling along nerves toward your brain.

This is where your **imagination** quietly steps in.

Imagination is not just for children and artists. It's what your mind does every day to keep you alive:

- It fills in gaps in the data.
- It predicts what might be about to happen.
- It prepares you for possible threat or loss.

You almost never see a full picture of anything. You see:

- a handful of clues

- a pile of remembered patterns
- and a mind that hates uncertainty

So imagination says things like:

- “We’ve seen this shape before.”
- “Last time this happened, it went badly.”
- “Let’s assume the worst so we’re ready.”

Sometimes this is useful. It can keep you from walking into real danger.

Other times, it means you suffer from things that exist only in your **forecast**, not in the present moment.

A Simple Example: The Silent Phone

You send a message to someone you care about.

An hour goes by.

Then four hours.

Then a day.

No reply.

Sensory fact:

- There is no new message from this person on your device.
- The last thing on the screen is still your message.

That’s it. That is all your senses can confirm.

Everything else is imagination.

Imagination might say:

- “They’re mad at me.”
- “I said something wrong.”
- “They don’t respect me.”
- “This always happens to me.”
- “I knew I shouldn’t have reached out.”

Those are not facts.

Those are **stories** built on top of one simple sensory reality: no reply yet.

Depending on the day, your body may respond to these stories with:

- a tight chest
- a sinking stomach
- racing thoughts
- a familiar wave of shame

By the time this stream reaches the rest of the chain—Mood Ring, Well of the Self, biochemistry, Recipe Card—it is no longer “no reply.”

It has become:

“Proof that I don’t matter.”

“Proof that I messed up.”

“Proof that people like me always get left.”

The only thing your senses actually confirmed, though, was still:

There is no reply yet.

This edge—between **what happened** and **what you decided it meant**—is the first place your emotional recipes begin to cook.

What We Focus Out Because We Don’t Believe It

Recognizing the imperfection of your sensory input isn’t just about seeing what you **added**.

It’s also about noticing what you **refuse to see**.

Sometimes something important is right in front of you, but you “focus it out” because you don’t believe it can be true for you.

For example:

- You don’t believe someone could genuinely care about you, so you don’t take in their care. You remember the one sharp word and forget five kind gestures.
- You don’t believe you’re in danger, so you ignore clear red flags. You focus on the nice parts and explain away the harm.
- You don’t believe you’re worthy of respect, so you discount respectful behavior and obsess over small slights.
- You don’t believe you’re allowed to have needs, so you barely register when someone offers support.

Your beliefs act like a filter on the lens.

If something doesn't match the story you already hold about yourself, others, or the world, your attention may slide right past it—even when your senses picked it up faithfully.

Part of the work at this first stage is to ask, gently:

“What might I be leaving out of my picture of reality, simply because it doesn't fit what I believe about myself or the world?”

Core Discipline at This Stage

So the core discipline at this first link in the chain becomes:

- **Remembering that your senses are limited and biased.**
- **Treating your interpretation of reality as a draft, not a verdict.**
- **Being curious about both what you've added and what you might be leaving out** because you don't expect it to be true for you.

You are not required to doubt every experience.

You are invited to recognize that:

- your hardware is imperfect
- your imagination is powerful
- your beliefs can filter as well as focus

The more honestly you can see this first bridge—from out there to in here—the more room you'll have to work with everything that comes next.

In the workbook section at the end of this book, we'll return to this chapter with concrete practices and logs you can use to explore your own sensory habits and imaginative stories.

For now, hold this simple awareness:

Before any emotion shows up with its full force, a lot has already happened at the level of senses and imagination.

Next, we'll look at the **Mood Ring**—the emotional weather you're bringing into each moment before anything even happens.

Chapter 3 – The Mood Ring

The Emotional Weather You Bring into Every Moment

Before anything happens, you're already feeling *some* kind of way.

Not necessarily a big, dramatic emotion—just a background climate:

- a little wired
- a little flat
- quietly hopeful
- vaguely irritated
- heavy, but not sure why

That background climate is what we're calling your **Mood Ring**—the emotional “weather” you bring into every room, message thread, and conversation before a single new thing occurs.

We usually ignore it.

We tell the story as if the moment began with the event:

“They said this, and *that* made me feel that.”

But by the time your phone lit up, your name was called, or that door closed, your Mood Ring was already glowing.

If you don't account for that, you end up blaming yourself for “overreacting” or blaming other people for “making” you feel things that were already building inside you long before they walked in.

Weather vs. Event

Think of an actual landscape.

The same storm hits very differently depending on:

- whether the ground is dry or already soaked
- whether the river is low or already close to flooding
- whether the wind has been whipping at the trees for hours

Your inner world is similar.

A stressful email on a rested, grounded day is one thing.
The same email on top of five bad nights of sleep, three unresolved conversations, and a week's worth of quiet self-doubt is something else entirely.

We tell the story as:

“The email ruined my day.”

The more accurate version is:

“I was already at a 7/10 before the email.
The email was just the last bit of weight on the pile.”

That pile—the **accumulated emotional pressure and charge** you were already carrying—is your Mood Ring.

What Shapes Your Mood Ring

Your Mood Ring is not random. It's a composite of many quiet influences:

- **Body state**
 - Sleep (or lack of it)
 - Blood sugar, hydration, caffeine, meds
 - Pain, illness, hormones, chronic conditions
- **Recent events**
 - Arguments, near-misses, good news you haven't processed
 - The last thing you read or scrolled past
 - The last person you interacted with
- **Unfinished emotional business**
 - Conversations you're avoiding
 - Decisions you're postponing
 - Feelings you've pushed down because “now isn't the time”
- **Background stories**
 - “I'm behind.”
 - “I'm alone in this.”
 - “People like me can't afford to relax.”
- **Ancestral and cultural weather**
 - The unspoken stress your family carries
 - The pressure your culture places on people like you
 - The collective mood of your community, workplace, or country

All of that adds up to your **starting point**.

When something happens “out there,” it doesn’t land on neutral ground. It lands on whatever weather your Mood Ring is already broadcasting.

Same Event, Different Weather

Let’s return to a version of the “silent phone” moment.

Scenario: You send a vulnerable message to someone you care about. An hour passes with no response.

The sensory facts are simple:

- Phone: silent.
- Screen: unchanged.

Your **Mood Ring** is what makes that silence mean very different things.

On a clear day

You’ve slept okay. You feel generally steady. You’re not sitting on a pile of unspoken hurt.

Your brain might go:

- “They’re probably busy.”
- “Maybe they’re composing a thoughtful reply.”
- “I’ll check back later.”

You might feel a *twinge* of anxiety or impatience, but it’s tolerable.

On a stormy day

You’re underslept, already anxious, and carrying a recent memory of being ignored.

Now the same silence might feel like:

- “Of course. I shouldn’t have opened up.”
- “I said too much. They’re pulling away.”
- “I knew this was going to happen.”

Your heart might race. Your chest might tighten. You might spiral into older stories of being abandoned or mocked.

Same outer event.

Different inner weather.

Very different emotional recipe.

The Mood Ring Is Not a Moral Report Card

A lot of people treat their baseline mood as a verdict:

- “If I’m not upbeat, I’m failing.”
- “If I’m anxious, I’m broken.”
- “If I wake up heavy, I’m back to square one.”

But the Mood Ring is a **reading**, not a judgment.

It’s like checking the sky before you go out:

- If it’s cloudy, you bring a coat.
- If it’s blazing hot, you bring water.
- If it’s storming, you maybe don’t start a long hike.

You don’t yell at the clouds for existing. You adjust.

Same with your inner weather.

Instead of:

“I shouldn’t feel like this,”

you can begin to say:

“Given what my body, brain, and life have been carrying, it makes sense that my Mood Ring looks like this.”

That doesn’t mean you *like* it. It means you’re honest about it—and honesty gives you options.

Reading Your Mood Ring

You don’t need a complex system here. Simple is better.

A quick inner check only needs two things:

1. **A few words to describe the weather**
2. **A rough intensity rating (0–10)**

Examples of weather words:

- “wired and edgy”
- “foggy but okay”
- “flat and checked out”
- “sad but calm”
- “quietly hopeful”
- “heavy and tight”

Then ask:

“Right now, I’m about a ___ out of 10 on intensity.”

0 = neutral / blank

10 = completely overwhelmed

You’re not trying to fix it in that moment. You’re just getting an honest reading, the way you might glance at the sky before deciding whether to carry an umbrella.

Why the Mood Ring Matters for Your Recipes

When you ignore your baseline, you end up with stories like:

- “I exploded out of nowhere.”
- “I fell apart over nothing.”
- “I shut down for no reason.”

There was a reason.

- You were already **loaded**.
- Your system was already at a 6, 7, or 8 out of 10.
- The event that finally triggered the recipe was just the last drop in a nearly full cup.

Seeing your Mood Ring clearly lets you:

- **Lower shame** – “I wasn’t crazy; I was already near my limit.”
- **Adjust expectations** – “Maybe today isn’t the day for that deep conversation.”

- **Plan supports** – “I’m at an 8/10; I might need to text a friend, rest, or say no to extra demands.”

And, over time, it helps you see patterns:

- certain times of day that are more volatile
 - certain weekly rhythms (Sunday nights, Monday mornings, etc.)
 - certain people or places that reliably raise or lower your baseline
-

What You Can Do (Without Fixing Everything)

You cannot:

- instantly change your entire life stress load
- control every thought or emotion that passes through
- force yourself into a permanent “good mood”

You can:

- start checking in with your Mood Ring once or twice a day
- tell the truth about your actual baseline before big decisions or conversations
- give yourself a bit more margin when you know the weather is rough

Sometimes that looks like:

- “I’m at a 7/10 right now. I’ll respond to that message after a short walk instead of right this second.”
- “I’m feeling flat and numb. I’m not going to judge myself for not being more enthusiastic today.”
- “I’m actually at a 3/10 and quietly okay—that’s good to notice too.”

Knowing the weather doesn’t stop the storm.

It tells you how to travel through it.

Questions to Carry Forward

Again, you don’t have to write these out yet, unless you want to. Just let them sit in the back of your mind as you move through your days:

- If I had to name my Mood Ring for today in a few words, what would I call it?
- Over the last week, when did I feel most “loaded” before anything even happened?

- Are there particular times, places, or people that seem to reliably raise or lower my baseline?
- How might my reactions make more sense if I took my Mood Ring into account?

In the next chapter, we'll drop beneath the weather and look into the **Well of the Self**—the deep place where your ancestry, culture, beliefs, and old wounds live, shaping what all this weather *means* to you.

Chapter 4 – The Well of the Self

Ancestry, Culture, and the Deep Story of “Me”

Beneath the busy halls of your inner kingdom, beneath the doors and corridors where daily life rushes by, there is a quieter place.

If you follow the stairways down, past the noise of the day and the surface weather of your Mood Ring, you eventually reach a chamber where the stone is cool and the air smells like old stories.

In the center of that chamber is a **well**.

This is the **Well of the Self**.

It is where the deepest waters of your identity gather:

- what you believe about yourself and the world
- what you value, fear, hope for, and expect
- the rules you were given about love, work, gender, power, faith, money
- the stories your people told about who “we” are and how “we” survive

Every stream in your emotional chain passes through this well.

The clearer the water, the clearer your experience.
The more silt and sediment in it, the murkier everything becomes.

This well is not something you built alone.
It’s something you inherited—and something you’re now responsible for tending.

What Lives in the Well

If we could lower a lantern down into this well, what might we see suspended in the water?

- **Values**
 - “Family matters.”
 - “Honesty matters.”
 - “Loyalty above all.”
 - “Freedom is non-negotiable.”
- **Beliefs**
 - “People can change.” / “People never change.”
 - “The world is basically safe.” / “The world is basically dangerous.”
 - “I am wanted.” / “I’m a burden.”

- **Rules and vows**
 - “Don’t bother people with your problems.”
 - “If you can’t do it perfectly, don’t try.”
 - “We don’t cry.”
 - “We always push through.”
- **Identities**
 - “I’m the strong one.”
 - “I’m the screw-up.”
 - “I’m the caretaker.”
 - “I’m the quiet one.”
- **Old hurts and impressions**
 - Moments of betrayal, humiliation, abandonment, or injustice
 - Times you were unseen, or seen only when performing
 - Times you were loved well, believed in, supported

Some of these elements float like clear, fresh water: hope, resilience, humor, kindness, creativity.

Others sit like silt at the bottom: shame, “never enough,” “too much,” “someone like you doesn’t get that.”

When new experiences drip down through this well, they mix with all of that material. They pick up its taste and color before moving on.

A Note on Ancestors, Culture, and Belonging

When we talk about the Well of the Self, we’re not just talking about **you as an isolated individual**.

This well has tributaries.

It is fed by:

- the family or caregivers who raised you
- the communities, faiths, and subcultures you grew up in
- the histories of your people—migration, war, poverty, privilege, oppression, survival
- the wider cultures you live in now: nation, media, politics, economy

Your well carries messages like:

- “We keep our heads down and work.”
- “We wear whatever mask is safest.”
- “We don’t trust authority.”

- “We don’t talk about that.”
- “We’re the kind of people who always bounce back.”
- “We stand up for each other.”

Some of those messages grew out of real danger.
Some grew out of love.
Some grew out of misunderstanding and pain.

Your nervous system doesn’t know all the history. It just drinks the water.

And because humans are wired for **belonging**, we will often accept even painful water if it helps us stay connected to our people:

- If belonging means never talking about feelings, we learn to call our pain “tired.”
- If belonging means overworking, we learn to feel guilty when we rest.
- If belonging means making ourselves small, we learn to fear being seen.

You are not wrong for absorbing what you needed to stay in the circle.
You did what your line has always done: adapt to survive.

Now you’re in a position to ask a different question:

“Which parts of this water still serve?
And which parts are slowly poisoning me?”

Clear Water, Cloudy Water

Not everything in the Well of the Self is a problem.

Some of it is deep strength:

- the stubbornness that kept your ancestors alive
- the sense of humor that carried your family through hard years
- the spiritual or ethical commitments that keep you grounded
- the instinct to protect those who are more vulnerable

Those are parts of the well you might want to honor and consciously draw from.

The trouble comes when the water is so clouded with old silt that you can’t see what’s actually in front of you anymore.

For example:

- Someone sets a reasonable boundary, but your well is full of “I’m always being rejected,” so you experience it as abandonment.
- You get constructive feedback, but your well is full of “I’m never good enough,” so you experience it as humiliation.
- You feel a normal wave of fear before trying something new, but your well is full of “We don’t take risks; we stay safe,” so you experience it as a command to freeze.

The *same* surface event, flowing through different wells, can emerge as very different feelings and reactions.

That’s why two people can live through something similar and come away with completely different stories.

It’s not just about the event.
It’s about the water it passed through.

You Didn’t Dig This Well Alone

It’s important to say this clearly:

You did not pour all this into your well.

You were born into an already flowing system.

By the time you arrived, the well already contained:

- generations of fear and courage
- patterns of silence and moments of truth-telling
- inherited shame and inherited pride
- faith, doubt, superstition, pragmatism
- anger that never got spoken
- love that didn’t always know how to show itself

Some of what’s in there is older than you by centuries.

You are not to blame for what your ancestors lived through or how they coped.
You are also not responsible for what societies and systems have done to your people.

What *is* yours, now, is the chance to notice:

- “This part of the water still helps.”
- “This part is hurting me.”
- “This part I want to transform before I pass it forward.”

You are not starting the story.
You are changing its direction.

What the Well Has to Do with Emotional Recipes

Remember the chain:

- the world comes in through your senses
- your Mood Ring colors it with your current weather
- it all sinks down into the Well of the Self

What happens next depends on what it finds there.

If your well is heavy with “I am a burden,” almost any request or conflict will pick up that flavor.

If your well is rich with “I am loved even when I struggle,” the same events bring up very different emotions and options.

Your **emotional recipes** are not written in a vacuum.
They are written in the language of your well.

For example:

- **Well message:** “We only have value when we’re useful.”
 - **Recipe:** “When someone is upset, fix it immediately and ignore your own needs.”
- **Well message:** “Our feelings are a problem for other people.”
 - **Recipe:** “When you feel big emotions, disappear, numb out, or turn it into a joke.”
- **Well message:** “We survive; we always find a way.”
 - **Recipe:** “When things get hard, reach for creativity and stubbornness instead of giving up.”

When you start to work with your recipes, you’re not just tweaking surface habits. You’re adjusting the water they’re made in.

You Are the Keeper of the Well

In the old stories, there are always people who tend the sacred wells: guardians, priests, witches, wanderers in conversation with the waters.

You are the current keeper of this one.

That doesn't mean you have to purify it all at once. No one can.

It means:

- you are allowed to get curious about what's in there
- you are allowed to honor the strengths you inherited
- you are allowed to question and update the rules that hurt you
- you are allowed to pour in new experiences and stories on purpose

Sometimes tending the well looks like:

- therapy or spiritual work
- honest conversations with family, if that's safe
- choosing communities that reflect the values you actually want
- practicing self-talk that matches the kind of water you'd rather swim in

You may not be able to empty out all the old silt.
But you can influence what gets added now.

Questions to Carry Forward

Again, you don't have to write these down yet unless you feel moved to. Let them echo a bit as you live your life:

- When I look at my life so far, what do I suspect is in my well?
 - What messages feel **clear and kind**?
 - What messages feel **heavy, shaming, or limiting**?
- What did my family, community, or culture teach me—directly or indirectly—about:
 - feelings
 - success and failure
 - gender, body, and worth
 - asking for help
 - who “we” are and who “we” are not?
- Which parts of that feel like **gifts** I want to keep drawing from?
- Which parts feel like **old protections** that might be hurting me now?

In the next chapter, we'll follow the water further down the chain—into the realm where story becomes **chemistry** and your body begins its own powerful response.

That's where emotional recipes start to show up not just as ideas, but as sensations.

Chapter 5 – The Body’s Alchemy

When Story Becomes Chemistry

By now, the chain has already done a lot of work.

- Your **scouts** (senses) have brought in a sketchy report from the outer world.
- Your **imagination** has filled in the blanks.
- Your **Mood Ring** has colored the moment with your current weather.
- The whole mix has poured through the **Well of the Self**, picking up the flavor of your ancestry, culture, and core stories.

Before you ever say, “*I feel anxious,*” or “*I’m furious,*” your body has already joined the council.

This is the stage where the kingdom’s **alchemists** get involved.

They take everything that has flowed down so far and turn it into **chemistry**—a physical, measurable response in your nervous system and tissues.

You don’t see them working, but you feel their results.

The Quiet Order: “Do Something”

Your body exists to keep you alive.

It does not care about subtle distinctions between:

- “This is a social slight,”
- “This is a financial worry,”
- “This is an echo of something that happened when I was six.”

It cares about:

- Are we safe?
- Are we threatened?
- Are we alone?
- Are we connected?
- Do we need to move, hide, fight, run, or freeze?

Based on the meaning that has already formed higher in the chain, your nervous system issues a quiet order:

“Prepare to do something.”

That order travels as electrical signals and chemical messengers through your brain, spine, organs, and muscles.

Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn

You've probably heard these words before: **fight, flight, freeze, fawn**.

They're shorthand for four broad ways the body prepares to handle perceived threats:

- **Fight** – move toward the problem, push back, defend, attack
- **Flight** – move away, escape, avoid, detach
- **Freeze** – go still, shut down, play dead, wait it out
- **Fawn** – appease, please, smooth things over, make yourself less of a target

Your body doesn't politely ask:

“Would you like a small dose of fight with your afternoon?”

It reacts faster than conscious thought.

- Heart rate adjusts
- Breathing changes
- Blood flow shifts toward or away from your limbs
- Muscles tense or go limp
- Digestion speeds up or slows down
- Pain sensitivity alters

This is the **alchemy**—turning stories and signals into chemistry.

The Body Remembers (Even When You Don't)

The alchemists in your body use your **history** as part of their formula.

If you've lived through:

- unpredictable anger
- sudden losses
- chronic stress
- unfair treatment
- physical danger

your system learns to be ready.

Certain tones of voice, facial expressions, locations, or even times of day can become **shortcuts** to activation.

You may not remember why your chest tightens in certain offices, or why your stomach turns before certain phone calls.

Your conscious mind might say:

“It’s no big deal.”

The body says:

“Last time we were in something like this, it hurt. We’re preparing.”

This is not betrayal.

It’s loyalty—from a very old, very protective part of you.

Symptoms of the Alchemy

Some of the ways you might feel this conversion from story to chemistry:

- racing or pounding heart
- shallow or held breath
- tight jaw, clenched fists, hunched shoulders
- churned stomach, nausea, knots, no appetite, or sudden hunger
- buzzing limbs, restless legs
- hot face, flushed skin, or sudden chill
- numbness, heaviness, or “floating above” your body
- tunnel vision, sharp hearing—or the opposite: everything feels far away

Some of these states are extremely uncomfortable.

Some are so familiar you might not even notice them until they become intense.

But all of them are your body’s way of saying:

“Based on what I think is happening, I’m getting us ready.”

When the Chemistry Outlives the Moment

The body’s alchemy is designed for **short bursts**:

- a real predator in the bushes

- an oncoming car
- a genuine, immediate threat

Modern life rarely works that way.

Instead, many of us live in:

- ongoing financial stress
- chronic workplace pressure
- complicated relationships
- news cycles that constantly scream “emergency”
- environments that never feel fully safe

So the chemistry rises and... doesn't fully fall.

The body doesn't get a clear signal that the danger has passed. It stays partially activated:

- sleep doesn't restore as deeply
- digestion suffers
- small triggers feel huge
- what might be a 2/10 problem lands in a 7/10 system

When that happens, it's easy to conclude:

“I'm overreacting. I'm broken.”

A more accurate translation is:

“My system has been running hot for a long time.
Even small sparks create big flames here.”

The Split Between Mind and Body

One of the most painful experiences for many people is the split between what the **thinking mind** says and what the **body** does.

- The mind: “There's nothing to worry about.”
The body: shaking, sweating, heart racing.
- The mind: “I should be over this by now.”
The body: heavy, stuck, numb, or panicked.
- The mind: “It wasn't that bad.”
The body: reacts as if it's still happening.

This split easily turns into **self-blame**:

- “Why can’t I just calm down?”
- “Why am I still like this?”
- “What’s wrong with me?”

But if you remember the chain, the body is not acting alone.

It’s responding to:

- the version of reality your senses and imagination handed it
- the current weather of your Mood Ring
- the deep messages in your Well of the Self

When you see that, the question can soften from “*What’s wrong with me?*” to:

“Given everything my system believes and remembers, does this response make sense—even if it’s more intense than the present situation?”

What You Can’t Control Here (and What You Can)

You cannot:

- stop your body from ever reacting
- fully control which ancient survival pathway activates in a split second
- turn off your nervous system like a light switch

You can:

- **Recognize the signs** of activation earlier (heart, breath, muscles, gut)
- **Name** what’s happening: “My system is gearing up for fight/flight/freeze/fawn.”
- **Support** your body in completing the stress cycle (movement, breath, safe connection, grounding)
- **Adjust your expectations** of yourself when your system is clearly running hot

Sometimes that looks like:

- taking three slow breaths *before* answering that text
- unclenching your jaw and dropping your shoulders when you notice them creeping up
- walking around the block after a hard email instead of immediately sending three more
- reaching out to a safe person and saying, “My body is really activated right now,” without needing to explain everything perfectly

You're not making activation wrong. You're acknowledging it—and working *with* your body instead of trying to bully it into silence.

Why This Matters for Rewriting Recipes

Your emotional recipes are not just scripts in your head. They're also **pathways in your body**.

If your recipe for “conflict” is:

“Heart spikes, stomach flips, jaw locks, then I shut down and agree with whatever they want,”

you're not going to change it purely with new thoughts.

You'll need to:

- notice sooner when the chemistry is rising
- give your body another option besides total collapse or total attack
- let some of that alchemical charge move through safely

When we get to the later chapters (Recipe Card, Horn of Feeling, Me Gate), we'll talk more about **how** to pair new thoughts and choices with what your body can realistically handle.

For now, it's enough to know:

You are not just your thoughts.

You are also your chemistry.

And that chemistry is trying—sometimes clumsily—to keep you alive.

Questions to Carry Forward

As you look back on recent days or weeks, gently consider:

- What are the first signs that my **body** is getting activated? (Heart? Breath? Stomach? Muscles? Skin?)
- Do I tend to lean more toward **fight, flight, freeze, or fawn** when my system is lit up? (Even if it's subtle.)

- Are there situations where my **body's response** seems much bigger than the current moment would justify—especially when seen on paper?
If so, what might my Well of the Self be saying beneath it?

You don't have to fix any of this right now.

Just noticing the alchemy—how story becomes chemistry—is a powerful step.

In the next chapter, we'll look at how that chemistry meets your **Recipe Card**: the learned instructions that say, "*When it feels like this, this is what we call it, and this is what we do.*"

That's where emotional patterns become recognizable—and rewriteable.

Chapter 6 – The Recipe Card and the Horn of Feeling

How You Learned to Name and Play Your Emotions

By now, the chain has carried a moment a long way:

- Your senses brought in a rough sketch of what happened.
- Your imagination filled in the gaps.
- Your Mood Ring colored the scene with your current weather.
- The mix poured through the Well of the Self, picking up ancestral and cultural flavor.
- The body’s alchemists turned all of that into chemistry and readiness.

At this point, your system has a lot of energy moving:

- Your heart is doing something.
- Your breath is doing something.
- Your muscles, stomach, skin, and nerves are doing something.

Now comes the question:

“What is this?”

That question is answered in two linked stages:

1. The **Recipe Card** – how you’ve learned to *name and respond* to what you feel.
2. The **Horn of Feeling** – the moment that name and energy swell into full, conscious emotion.

The Recipe Card

“When it feels like this, we call it this, and we do that.”

Picture a worn card in an old kitchen.

On it, written in someone’s handwriting, is a familiar instruction:

“When you have these ingredients and this much time, here’s what you make and how you make it.”

Your emotional **Recipe Card** works the same way.

Over the years, from family, culture, peers, faith communities, and media, you’ve absorbed patterns like:

- When your chest tightens and your voice shakes → *We call that “weakness” → We hide it.*
- When your stomach burns and your jaw locks → *We call that “disrespect” → We snap or shut down.*
- When your energy drops and everything feels pointless → *We call that “lazy” → We shame ourselves and keep pushing.*
- When your heart lifts and you feel alive → *We call that “too much” → We dial it back so no one is uncomfortable.*

You weren't born with these instructions.

You watched, listened, and learned:

- How did the adults around you talk about their own feelings?
- What happened when you cried, got angry, went quiet, or got excited?
- Which feelings were welcomed, and which ones were mocked, punished, or ignored?
- What did your culture's movies, songs, sermons, and stories say about “good” and “bad” emotions?

Every time you saw a pattern, a line got added to the Recipe Card:

“When it feels like this, we call it this, and we do that.”

The Names You Were Allowed to Use

For many people, the Recipe Card includes only a small set of emotional words:

- “fine”
- “tired”
- “stressed”
- “pissed”
- “sad”

But under those labels might actually be:

- grief
- shame
- fear
- loneliness
- disappointment
- vulnerability
- joy
- tenderness

If the only word you were allowed to use was “angry,” a lot of other experiences will get forced into that one drawer.

- Hurt? Call it anger.
- Afraid? Call it anger.
- Embarrassed? Call it anger.
- Powerless? Call it anger.

Or maybe you weren’t allowed anger at all, so everything got called “sad,” “tired,” or “dramatic” instead.

The fewer names you have, the less precisely you can tune your response.

Learned Responses

The Recipe Card doesn’t just name emotions. It also instructs you on what to **do** with them.

For example:

- **If you feel angry...**
 - shout
 - sulk
 - pretend you’re fine
 - leave
 - clean the house
 - drink or numb
 - joke it off
- **If you feel afraid...**
 - over-explain
 - freeze
 - micromanage everything
 - cling
 - disappear
- **If you feel sad...**
 - isolate
 - overwork
 - seek a savior
 - create art
 - scroll endlessly

These responses often made sense in the environment where you learned them. They kept you safe, connected, or at least less at risk.

They might not be working as well now.

But because they're on the Recipe Card, your system reaches for them automatically, the way a cook reaches for a familiar dish without thinking.

The Horn of Feeling

When the Recipe Is Played Out Loud

Now imagine a horn hanging in the great hall of your inner kingdom.

When someone sounds that horn, the whole place hears it. Everyone knows:

“Something's happening.”

The **Horn of Feeling** is the moment when:

- the body's chemistry
- the messages from the Well
- and the instructions on the Recipe Card

combine into a **full, conscious wave of emotion**.

This is often the first point in the chain where you would say:

“Now I feel angry.”

“Now I feel shame.”

“Now I feel joy.”

“Now I feel nothing, and that scares me.”

The horn can be:

- loud and obvious (an outburst, sobbing, laughing, shaking)
- muted (a heavy sigh, a single tear, an internal collapse)
- or oddly silent (numbness, blankness, dissociation)

Even numbness is a kind of “horn”—it signals that your system is so overloaded or practiced at shutting down that the feeling doesn't fully register in consciousness anymore.

Same Ingredients, Different Horns

Two people can have similar chemistry—racing hearts, tight chests, buzzing limbs—and yet sound very different horns depending on their Recipe Cards.

- One might call it **panic** and flee.
- One might call it **excitement** and lean in.
- One might call it **anger** and lash out.
- One might call it **being bad** and shut down.

The body's signals are the **notes**.

The Recipe Card tells you what **song** they're part of.

The Horn of Feeling is that song being **played aloud**.

If you change the Recipe Card—even a little—you can end up with a very different sound from similar physical sensations.

When the Horn Echoes Too Long

Sometimes the Horn of Feeling doesn't just sound once and fade.

It echoes.

- You replay the argument hours or days later.
- You re-feel the shame of a single moment for years.
- You carry resentment like a background soundtrack.
- You keep bracing for the next blow even when things are calm.

Part of that echo comes from the **Well of the Self** (old stories, unhealed hurts).

Part comes from the **body** staying activated.

Part comes from the **Recipe Card** reinforcing the same meaning:

- “This is who I am.”
- “This always happens to me.”
- “People like me never get better.”
- “I knew I was too much / not enough.”

At that point, the horn isn't just signaling a passing emotional weather front. It's becoming part of your **identity and expectation**—which we'll explore more at the Me Gate and Memory.

Why This Matters for Rewriting Recipes

When people try to change their emotional patterns, they often jump straight to:

“I’m going to stop feeling this,”

or

“I’m going to stop reacting like that.”

But without working at the Recipe Card and Horn of Feeling, that usually turns into:

- suppression (pushing everything down)
- performance (pretending you feel differently than you do)
- explosion later (when the horn finally blasts at full volume)

A more sustainable approach is:

1. **At the Recipe Card** – gently update:
 - what you call certain sensations (“Maybe this isn’t anger; maybe it’s hurt or fear.”)
 - what options you believe you have (“Maybe I don’t have to disappear—I could ask for a pause.”)
2. **At the Horn** – learn to:
 - notice more quickly when the horn is being lifted
 - allow the feeling to sound without acting out every old behavior that used to follow
 - pair the feeling with new choices

You’re not silencing the horn.

You’re changing what it means when it sounds—and what you do next.

You Are Allowed New Recipes

The recipes you learned were not random. They were crafted—consciously or not—by families, cultures, and experiences trying to keep you alive, acceptable, or manageable.

You can honor that without staying imprisoned by it.

You are allowed to:

- expand your emotional vocabulary (more names than “fine,” “angry,” or “tired”)
- question the automatic actions attached to certain feelings
- practice hearing the horn and responding with a different move

It’s slow work, but it’s real.

And every time you do it, you add a line to a new Recipe Card—one that your future self (and anyone you influence) will have access to.

Questions to Carry Forward

As you think about your own patterns, you might gently ask:

- When my body starts lighting up, what **names** do I reach for first?
Are they always the same few words?
- What did my family or culture tend to **call** emotions like:
anger, fear, sadness, shame, joy, tenderness?
Were some renamed or dismissed?
- When a big feeling shows up, what does my recipe usually tell me to **do**?
(Attack? Hide? Please? Perform? Numb? Reach out? Create?)
- Are there any feelings I only allow in **disguised form**?
(For example, hurt that only shows up as sarcasm, fear that only shows up as anger.)

You don't have to judge your answers.

Just noticing your current Recipe Card and how your Horn of Feeling tends to sound is the groundwork for change.

In the next chapter, we'll move to the **Me Gate**—the place in the chain where you decide, often without realizing it, which feelings and identities are “allowed” to belong to you, and which you exile or cling to.

That's where emotional recipes get enforced—or rewritten—at the level of who you believe yourself to be.

Chapter 7 – The Me Gate

Who Gets to Belong Inside You

Deep in the inner kingdom, past the Horn of Feeling, there is a doorway most people never notice on purpose.

It's not the front gate that faces the world.
It's an **inner gate**—one that faces *you*.

This is the **Me Gate**.

It's the place in the chain where you decide, often in a split second and mostly unconsciously:

- which feelings are “allowed” to belong to you
- which identities you'll accept as “who I am”
- which roles you must keep performing
- which parts of you must stay outside, hidden, exiled, or denied

By the time a moment reaches the Me Gate, a lot has already happened:

- the world has come through your senses
- your imagination has filled the gaps
- your Mood Ring has colored it
- your Well has flavored it
- your body has reacted
- your Recipe Card has named it
- the Horn has sounded

Now the question becomes:

“Given all of that...
what do I let this mean about *me*?”

The Me Gate is where emotional recipes stop being just reactions and start becoming **identity**.

The Inner Bouncer

One way to picture the Me Gate is as an inner **bouncer** at the door of your sense of self.

Every feeling, thought, impulse, and story about you has to pass inspection:

- “Do you fit the dress code?”
- “Are you on the list?”
- “Are you allowed in this club?”

Some visitors get waved through instantly:

- “I’m responsible.”
- “I’m the strong one.”
- “I’m the helper.”
- “I’m the one who holds it together.”

Others get stopped at the door:

- “I’m needy.”
- “I’m angry.”
- “I’m hurting.”
- “I’m overwhelmed.”
- “I don’t know what to do.”

Even if those feelings are already present in your body, your Me Gate can refuse to consciously recognize them:

“Nope. That’s not me. We don’t do that here.”

When that happens, the feeling doesn’t vanish. It just has to find another way to live—usually through tension, symptoms, or sideways behaviors.

The Roles You Were Hired For

The rules at your Me Gate didn’t appear out of nowhere.

They were built out of:

- family expectations
- cultural scripts
- survival strategies
- spiritual or moral messages
- repeated experiences in childhood, school, work, and relationships

At some point, you were **hired** into certain roles:

- the strong one
- the quiet one
- the fixer

- the clown
- the overachiever
- the scapegoat
- the peacemaker
- the “difficult” one

Some roles brought you safety, attention, or praise.

Others were projected onto you and you learned to live them because fighting them felt worse.

Over time, your Me Gate learned:

- “These roles get me fed, loved, or left alone. Let them in.”
- “Those other versions of me? They cause trouble. Keep them out.”

It’s not that you never feel anything outside your role.

It’s that the gate doesn’t let those experiences become part of your conscious identity for long.

Allowed vs. Forbidden Feelings

Think about which feelings are **easy** for you to say out loud:

- “I’m annoyed.”
- “I’m tired.”
- “I’m stressed.”
- “I’m fine.”

Now think about which ones feel dangerous, embarrassing, or “unlike you”:

- “I’m scared.”
- “I’m jealous.”
- “I’m hurt.”
- “I’m lonely.”
- “I’m proud of myself.”
- “I need help.”

Often, the forbidden feelings are the ones your Me Gate has been trained to reject.

You might still *have* them... but they don’t get to stay with their real name:

- Fear becomes irritability.
- Hurt becomes sarcasm.
- Vulnerability becomes over-explaining or joking.

- Pride becomes self-deprecation so no one thinks you're arrogant.

The feeling tries to step into the inner hall.

The Me Gate says, "Not like that. Put on a different outfit."

Identities You Cling To, Identities You Can't Bear

The Me Gate doesn't only regulate feelings. It also regulates **identities**—the stories you believe about who you are.

Some identities feel strangely comforting, even when they hurt:

- "I'm the one who always gets left."
- "I'm the one who fixes everyone else."
- "I'm the one who never needs help."
- "I'm the one who screws things up."

They're familiar. You know the lines. You know your place.

Other identities feel impossible, even if part of you longs for them:

- "I'm someone people stay with."
- "I'm allowed to rest and still be worthy."
- "I'm learning."
- "I'm allowed to matter here."

The Me Gate might hear those and say:

"That's not realistic for people like us."

"That's arrogant."

"That's weak."

"That's not safe."

So even when your outer life starts to change—healthier people, better situations—the Me Gate can keep you locked into old inner roles.

This is one reason change can feel so uncomfortable, even when it's good:

Your outer reality is trying to update,
but your Me Gate is still running the old list.

How Emotional Recipes Get Enforced Here

Let's tie this back to recipes.

Say your Recipe Card for conflict is:

“When someone is upset with me, I am bad and unlovable.”

When conflict happens:

1. Your senses and imagination interpret it as a serious threat.
2. Your Mood Ring might already be stormy.
3. Your Well adds, “We’re only safe when everyone is pleased with us.”
4. Your body floods with anxiety.
5. The Recipe Card names it as “*I messed up; they’re going to leave.*”
6. The Horn of Feeling sounds: panic, shame, dread.

Now the Me Gate has a choice:

- **Option A – Old Identity:**
 - “This proves I’m the screw-up.”
 - Let that identity in.
 - Enforce fawn (over-apologize, scramble, abandon your own needs).
- **Option B – Emerging Identity:**
 - “I did something that hurt them, but that doesn’t erase my worth.”
 - Let *that* identity in.
 - Respond with accountability and boundaries.

The gate you choose—often in microseconds—determines which **recipe** runs next.

You can see why this is such a powerful part of the chain.

When the Gate Is Too Tight

Sometimes the Me Gate is so strict that almost nothing gets in except a narrow set of “acceptable” states:

- competent
- in control
- pleasing
- unbothered
- self-sacrificing

What happens then?

- Feelings build up *outside* the gate until they explode.
- You wake up one day unable to connect with what you feel at all.
- You can't accept care because "needing" doesn't fit the identity that's allowed in.
- People experience you as distant, perfectionistic, or hard to read—even if inside, you're desperate for connection.

It can also make healing harder:

- You might dismiss your own trauma because "It wasn't that bad" compared to others.
- You might minimize your needs because other people "have it worse."
- You might refuse to see yourself as struggling until things are absolutely falling apart.

The gate thinks it's protecting you from shame or rejection.
In reality, it's grounding you in isolation and exhaustion.

When the Gate Is Too Loose

On the other hand, sometimes the Me Gate lets in **every** harsh judgment, label, or projection you've ever encountered:

- "I'm broken."
- "I'm unlovable."
- "I'm dangerous."
- "I'm a lost cause."
- "I ruin everything."

If someone once treated you as disposable, that identity is allowed to move in and rearrange the furniture.

If a group or system said "people like you don't belong," the gate might be standing open, letting that message echo in your hall for decades.

A too-loose gate doesn't protect your sense of self. It lets any passing insult or accusation become part of who you believe you are.

Rewriting recipes here means:

- becoming more selective about what identities get a key
 - deciding that some stories simply don't get to live inside you anymore
-

You at the Gate

The good news—and the hard news—is this:

You are not just the one being judged at the Me Gate.

You are also the **one standing there**.

You absorbed a lot of rules about what's allowed, but as an adult, you have some say in updating them.

That can sound like:

- “I’m scared, and that *is* me. I’m not going to pretend otherwise.”
- “I made a mistake; that doesn’t erase all of me.”
- “I feel anger; it’s allowed to exist in me without automatically making me dangerous.”
- “I feel proud of myself; I’m going to let that in instead of cutting it down.”

Sometimes the bravest move isn’t forcing out an old identity.

It’s letting a new one cross the threshold for the first time, even if it feels wrong or uncomfortable at first.

Why This Matters for Rewriting Recipes

You can change your thoughts, tweak your habits, even regulate your body better—and still feel like nothing is truly different if the Me Gate refuses to update.

Because at the end of the chain, it’s asking:

“Who does this moment say I am?”

If the answer is always some version of:

- “Still the same broken one,”
- “Still the one who doesn’t deserve better,”
- “Still the one who has to carry everything,”

then your recipes will reorganize themselves around that conclusion—no matter what you do on the surface.

When you begin to change the answers at the Me Gate to something more truthful and humane, even slightly, the rest of the chain begins to behave differently.

- You might still feel fear, but you no longer automatically conclude, “I’m pathetic.”
- You might still feel anger, but you no longer automatically conclude, “I’m a monster.”
- You might still feel sadness, but you no longer automatically conclude, “I’m a burden.”

Same emotions.

Different identity.

New recipes become possible.

Questions to Carry Forward

As you think about your own Me Gate, gently consider:

- What **roles** do I seem to be hired for in most relationships?
(Strong one, fixer, clown, caretaker, ghost, scapegoat, etc.)
- Which feelings are easy for me to say, “That’s me”—and which do I insist “aren’t like me,” even when I’m clearly feeling them?
- What identities do I cling to, even if they hurt, because they feel familiar?
- What identities do I quietly long for, but push away because they feel “too much” or “not for people like me”?
- If my Me Gate could change one rule about who is allowed to belong inside my sense of self...
what might that rule be?

You don’t have to slam the gate open or shut overnight.

Just beginning to notice who’s being waved through and who’s being turned away is profound work.

In the next chapter, we’ll look at the final link in the chain: **Memory**—where moments become part of your ongoing story and your expectations of the future. That’s where old recipes can fossilize... and where new ones can be reinforced.

Chapter 8 – Memory & Story

How Moments Become “This Is Just Who I Am”

By the time a single moment reaches the end of the chain, a lot has happened.

- The world came **in through your senses**, imperfect and filtered.
- Your **imagination** filled in the gaps.
- Your **Mood Ring** colored the whole scene with your current weather.
- The stream passed through the **Well of the Self**, picking up ancestral and cultural flavor.
- Your **body** turned it into chemistry and readiness.
- Your **Recipe Card** named it and suggested what to do.
- The **Horn of Feeling** sounded.
- The **Me Gate** decided what this meant about *you*.

Now one last question remains:

“What happens to this moment after it’s over?”

Does it vanish?

Does it sink into the background?

Does it become another piece of proof in a long-running story about who you are and what the world is like?

This is the work of **Memory & Story**—the final link in the chain.

The Library at the End of the Hall

Imagine that at the far end of your inner kingdom, there’s a **library**.

The shelves are full of:

- vivid scenes you can replay in full color
- faint impressions you barely recall
- stories you’ve told so often they feel like carved runes
- stories you’ve tried never to think about again

Every time something happens and the Me Gate makes its ruling, a **scribe** in that library takes notes.

They don’t capture every detail. No scribe could.

Instead, they write down what they think matters most:

- what happened
- how you felt
- what you did
- what you decided it meant

Over time, similar notes get bundled together.

A handful of experiences become:

- “People always leave me.”
- “I always mess things up.”
- “No one ever really shows up.”
- “I can’t trust anyone.”
- “I always bounce back.”
- “I figure things out eventually.”

This library doesn’t just hold your past. It **shapes your future**:

- It tells your imagination what to expect next.
- It whispers to your Well of the Self: “This is who we are.”
- It primes your body to react as if old pains are just around the corner.

You don’t remember every page consciously...
but you live inside the stories they’ve woven.

The Brain’s Shortcuts: Patterns and Proof

Your system loves **patterns**.

Patterns help you predict. Prediction helps you survive.

So the scribe in your inner library tends to look for:

- repeated themes
- familiar roles
- confirmation that your existing beliefs are “right”

If you already believe:

- “I’m too much,” you’ll remember the times you were told you were overreacting—and forget the times people appreciated your intensity.
- “I’m not enough,” you’ll remember the missed shots and mistakes—and discount the wins as flukes.

- “People always leave,” you’ll remember the endings—and blur out the years of real presence.

This isn’t because you’re lying to yourself on purpose.
It’s because the scribe is trying to keep the story **consistent**.

A consistent story feels safer than a true one.

Velcro and Teflon

In psychology, people sometimes describe the mind as:

- **Velcro for threat** – it sticks to negative, scary, shaming experiences.
- **Teflon for safety** – positives slide off quickly unless you really take them in.

From an evolutionary standpoint, this makes sense:

- Forgetting a nice compliment was never life-threatening.
- Forgetting where the danger lives could be.

So your library tends to:

- file negative experiences in heavy folders with bright labels
- file positive experiences in thin folders that get shoved in the back

That’s how whole identities take root:

- “I always…”
- “I never…”
- “People like me don’t…”
- “Nothing ever works out…”

Even if those statements aren’t objectively true, they feel *emotionally* true—because they match the pattern your scribe has been emphasizing for years.

Memory Is Not a Court Transcript

It’s tempting to think of memory as a perfect recording:

“It happened exactly like this.”

In reality, memory is more like a **story you keep rewriting**.

Every time you revisit a memory, your current:

- beliefs
- mood
- body state
- sense of self

can subtly alter:

- what you notice
- what you emphasize
- what you downplay

You don't usually invent events out of nowhere.
But you do change which parts feel central and which parts fade.

For example:

- At 15, you remember a confrontation as proof that you were humiliated and powerless.
- At 40, after some healing, you might revisit the same scene and notice: "I actually *did* stand up for myself as much as I could. The adults failed me, not the other way around."

The facts of what happened haven't changed.
But the **story you tell about it** has.

That means Memory & Story isn't just where old recipes are stored.
It's also one of the places they can be **rewritten**.

Old Recipes, Fossilized

When emotional recipes repeat often enough, they become **fossilized** in memory:

- "Every time I try to ask for what I need, it blows up."
- "Every time I trust someone, they hurt me."
- "Every time I relax, something bad happens."

The scribe in your library highlights every instance that matches these beliefs—and quietly ignores or minimizes the ones that don't.

So when a new opportunity appears:

- a person who might actually be safe

- a chance to rest without catastrophe
- a moment to say no and still be loved

your story might say:

“We’ve seen this movie. We know how it ends.”

And your body, Mood Ring, Well, and Me Gate all react accordingly.

The past doesn’t just live behind you.
It leans forward and wears the mask of the future.

Small, True Stories

Rewriting your emotional recipes doesn’t mean pretending the past was better than it was.

We’re not going for:

- “It was all a lesson.”
- “It all happened for a reason.”
- “Actually, it was fine.”

Some things were not fine.
Some things should never have happened.
Some harm was real, unfair, and not your fault.

What we *are* interested in is telling **truer, more complete stories**, such as:

- “I was hurt and I survived.”
- “They failed me, and I still found ways to protect myself.”
- “I did the best I could with what I knew then.”
- “It was not my fault, even if I took the blame.”
- “I wasn’t only a victim—I was also resourceful, even if no one saw it.”

These are **small, true stories**. They don’t erase the pain.
They add missing pages that your inner library needs.

When small, true stories accumulate, your recipes begin to change:

- “Every time I trust someone, they hurt me.”
might slowly become
“Some people hurt me when I trusted them. Some people haven’t. I’m learning to tell the difference.”

- “I always mess things up.”
might become
“I’ve messed things up and also fixed things, grown, and learned. I’m not just one thing.”

These are not Hallmark slogans.
They’re hard-won edits to the way your system organizes your life.

Teaching the Scribe New Questions

You don’t have to fully control what gets written in your inner library.

You can, however, **coach the scribe** a little.

Instead of automatically filing a moment under “proof that I’m the worst,” you can gently ask:

- “What else was true here?”
- “What did I do that I’m overlooking?”
- “If someone I loved lived this moment, how would I describe it?”
- “What would a kinder, more accurate headline for this story be?”

For example, after a hard conversation where you feel ashamed, the old headline might be:

“I screwed up again. I can’t do relationships.”

A slightly updated headline might be:

“I said some things I regret, and I also caught myself and tried to repair.”

or

“I got triggered, and now I know where I still need support.”

Same event.

Different framing.

New material for future recipes.

Remembering Forward

Memory doesn’t just look back. It leans forward into what’s coming.

Your library influences:

- how much risk you'll tolerate
- what kind of love you'll accept or reject
- what kind of work you'll believe you're capable of
- how you'll read the next silence, the next tone of voice, the next slammed door or open hand

If your story is:

- “I always get abandoned,”
you may subconsciously pull back or test people in ways that make leaving more likely.

If your story becomes:

- “Being left has happened to me, but it's not the only thing that can happen,”
you might show up differently—more honestly, with clearer boundaries—and create different outcomes.

Rewriting your emotional recipes means allowing your story of “what happens to me” to become more spacious and less fatalistic.

Not naive.

Not “everything will always work out.”

Just less trapped in “it can only ever go this one awful way.”

You Are the Living Page

One more thing about memory:

Not all of it is in words or images.

Some of it is in:

- the way your shoulders brace when someone walks into the room
- the way your voice changes around authority
- the way you take up or shrink your physical space
- the way you instinctively care for others, or vanish, or scan for exits

Your body is a **living page** that remembers even when your mind doesn't.

When you practice new recipes—new responses, new ways of holding yourself, new ways of speaking and staying—you're not just thinking differently.

You're literally writing new muscle memories, new nervous system patterns, new embodied stories.

Over time, these become part of what Memory & Story has to work with:

- “Sometimes, I set a boundary and survive.”
- “Sometimes, I ask for help and people respond with care.”
- “Sometimes, I feel afraid and move forward anyway.”

The more pages like that you create, the more your future experiences land in a different narrative.

Questions to Carry Forward

As you think about your own memory and story, see what gently rises when you ask:

- What are the **headlines** my mind tends to put on my life?
 (“I always...,” “I never...,” “People like me...”)
- Which of those headlines feel:
 - painfully *true*
 - and also maybe *too absolute* to be the whole story?
- Can I think of even one small example that slightly contradicts my most negative story about myself or the world?
- If the scribe in my inner library were taking dictation from my harshest inner critic...
what might I want to say back?

You don't have to force new stories or pretend the past was kind when it wasn't.

Just beginning to see your memories as **stories that can be updated**, rather than fixed verdicts, opens a door.

Through that door, new emotional recipes can begin to form—recipes that honor what you've lived through **and** make room for something different to happen next.

At this point, you've walked the full chain:

- Out There, In Here (Senses & Imagination)
- The Mood Ring
- The Well of the Self
- The Body's Alchemy
- The Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling

- The Me Gate
- Memory & Story

The map is on the table.

From here, the work becomes using it—slowly, gently, in real situations—to notice your current recipes and begin writing the ones you actually want to live by.

PART II – THE FORGE

How to Use This Workbook

You've walked the map.

In Part I, you met the full chain:

1. Out There, In Here – Sensory Input & Imagination
2. The Mood Ring – Your emotional weather
3. The Well of the Self – Ancestry, culture, and identity
4. The Body's Alchemy – When story becomes chemistry
5. The Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling – How you name and play emotions
6. The Me Gate – Who gets to belong inside you
7. Memory & Story – How moments become “this is who I am”

You've seen how a single moment can move through all of that in seconds.

Now we shift from map to **movement**.

This part of the book is your **forge**—a place to bring real pieces of your life and gently work them, one small heat and one small hammer strike at a time.

You don't need to do every page.

You don't need to do it in order.

You do need to bring honesty and a little bit of courage.

That's enough.

What This Section Is (and Isn't)

This workbook section is:

- a set of **guided pages** to help you walk your own situations through the chain
- a way to see your **actual recipes**, not just understand the idea
- space to try out small, concrete **rewrite experiments**

It is **not**:

- a test you can fail
- something you “have to finish” to deserve healing
- a demand that you revisit your worst memories alone and ungrounded

You get to choose:

- what you work with
 - how deep you go
 - when to pause, skip, or come back later
-

How to Use These Pages

You can use this section in a few different ways.

Option 1 – The Full Journey

If you want to see one situation all the way through the chain:

1. Pick a **real incident** – not your biggest trauma, just something that bothers you or repeats often.
2. Start with the **Everyday Incident Log** and follow the pages in order:
 - Sensory Input & Imagination
 - Mood Ring
 - Well of the Self
 - Body’s Alchemy
 - Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling
 - Me Gate
 - Memory & Story
3. When you reach the end, write a small “**new recipe**” for that kind of situation.

This is like doing a full diagnostic on one pattern.

Option 2 – Spot Work

If you already know where your trouble spot lives:

- Jump straight to that section:
 - If your problem is always “I blow up / shut down out of nowhere,” you might go to **Mood Ring** or **Body’s Alchemy**.
 - If your problem is “I don’t know who I am without this role,” head to the **Me Gate**.
 - If your problem is “I’m stuck in old stories,” go to **Memory & Story**.

Use that section’s pages as a focused practice for a week or two. Then, if you like, widen out and connect it to the rest of the chain.

Option 3 – Ongoing Journal

You can also treat these pages as templates.

- Print the ones you like most.
- Or copy the questions into a notebook or notes app.
- Use them whenever a particular kind of moment hits and you want to understand it better.

Over time, you'll build your own **“recipe journal”**—a record of how your patterns actually show up and how you're changing them.

A Word About Safety and Support

Some of the questions in this section can stir up old feelings, especially when you start touching the Well of the Self, the body, and long-held stories.

Please remember:

- You do **not** have to start with the hardest thing that ever happened to you.
- You're allowed to keep things **mild** at first—annoyances, small conflicts, recurring little patterns.
- If you feel yourself getting overwhelmed:
 - pause
 - ground yourself (feel your feet, look around the room, breathe slowly)
 - come back later or bring the material to someone you trust

These pages are not a replacement for therapy, community, or spiritual care. They are tools you can bring *into* those spaces if you want to.

How the Sections Are Organized

Each part of the chain has its own mini-section here:

- **Section A – Everyday Incident Log**
- **Section B – Out There, In Here (Senses & Imagination)**
- **Section C – The Mood Ring**
- **Section D – The Well of the Self**
- **Section E – The Body's Alchemy**
- **Section F – Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling**
- **Section G – The Me Gate**
- **Section H – Memory & Story & New Recipes**

Each section begins with a **short reminder** of the concept, then offers you questions and spaces to write.

You can move through them like chapters, or treat them like different stations in a training hall—visit the one you need when you need it.

One More Blessing for the Work

If the Nornir have indeed woven you to this point—book open, pen ready, some part of you willing to look—then you already have a win.

Every page you touch here is a tiny act of rebellion against the old, unchosen recipes.

You don't have to rewrite your whole life tonight.

One honest page is enough.

One named pattern is enough.

One slightly kinder story is enough.

This is your forge.

This is your kingdom within.

Let's step into the work.

Section A – Everyday Incident Log

Collecting Real-World Moments for the Forge

Before we can rewrite any emotional recipe, we need **real ingredients**.

This section is where you'll collect them.

You're not hunting for your worst memories or biggest traumas. You're gathering **everyday incidents**—small, real moments from your life that stirred something in you:

- a text that landed wrong
- a look that tightened your chest
- a tone of voice that stuck with you
- a moment you went quiet when you wanted to speak
- a time you reached for distraction instead of staying present

These incidents will become the raw material you carry through the rest of the workbook.

Think of this section as your **field notebook**: quick notes taken close to real life, so you're not working only from vague impressions later.

What Counts as an "Everyday Incident"?

You're looking for situations that:

- actually happened (recently is best)
- have at least a little emotional charge
- you're willing to look at with curiosity

They do **not** need to be:

- dramatic
- life-altering
- fully understood

Sometimes the best material comes from moments like:

- a friend doesn't reply as fast as you hoped
- a coworker sighs in a meeting and you feel a hit of shame or anger
- someone pays you a compliment and you instantly deflect it
- you find yourself scrolling or snacking or cleaning instead of doing the thing you meant to do

If it pinged you—even a little—it’s worth logging.

How to Use This Log

You can use this section in two main ways:

1. **As a short-term collection tool**
 - Over a week or two, jot down 3–10 incidents that feel representative of your patterns.
 - Later, pick one or two to carry through the full chain in the other sections.
2. **As an ongoing journal**
 - Keep coming back to these pages whenever something catches your attention.
 - Over time, you’ll see themes in your triggers, responses, and stories.

Don’t worry about writing beautifully or completely.
Think **honest and sketchy**, not perfect and polished.

Everyday Incident Log – Quick Instructions

For each incident, capture just enough that **future you** can remember what happened.

You’ll see a repeated structure like this:

1. **Date / Time**
2. **Where I was / Who I was with**
3. **What happened (just the facts)**
4. **What I noticed in my body**
5. **What I did next**
6. **What story my mind told about it**
7. *(Optional)* **Anything I notice now, looking back**

You can use the prompts below each time, or adapt them into your own shorthand.

Incident Log Template (1)

Date / Time:

Where I was / Who I was with:

1. What happened? (Just the facts)

Try to write this like a camera or microphone would record it—no interpretation yet.

What was said or done?

What was the situation?

2. What did I notice in my body?

Think: heart, breath, stomach, muscles, skin, energy.

Tight? Heavy? Hot? Numb? Buzzing?

Any urge to move, freeze, hide, or fix?

3. What did I do next?

Out loud or in action—what was my first response?

4. What story did my mind tell about it?

“They’re mad at me.”

“Here we go again.”

“I shouldn’t have...”

“Of course, this always happens.”

5. (Optional) What do I notice now, looking back?

You don't have to analyze this deeply yet. Just note anything that stands out:

“I was already stressed before this.”

“My reaction felt bigger than the situation.”

“This reminds me of other times when...”

Incident Log Template (2)

Use this second page for another incident. You can duplicate this layout as many times as you like.

Date / Time:

Where I was / Who I was with:

1. What happened? (Just the facts)

2. What did I notice in my body?

3. What did I do next?

4. What story did my mind tell about it?

5. (Optional) What do I notice now, looking back?

A Few Tips as You Go

- **Keep it small.**
Everyday moments are enough. You don't have to start with your biggest wound.
- **Be kind to yourself.**
The goal is understanding, not self-attack. If you feel yourself slipping into shame, pause and breathe.
- **Aim for "good enough," not perfect.**
One or two honest sentences in each box is plenty.
- **Trust that these notes will matter later.**
The more real material you have here, the easier it will be to see your recipes clearly in the later sections.

Once you have a handful of incidents logged, you'll be ready to carry one of them through **Section B – Out There, In Here (Senses & Imagination)** and begin walking the full chain with something from your actual life.

Section B – Out There, In Here

Separating What Happened from What You Made of It

In Part I, you saw how every moment has to cross a long bridge between “**out there**” and “**in here**”:

- Your senses (eyes, ears, skin, nose, tongue) grab what they can.
- Conditions like fog, noise, lighting, tech, fatigue, and pain all distort the signal.
- Your imagination rushes in to fill the gaps, assign motives, and predict outcomes.

This section helps you **pull those pieces apart** for one real incident at a time:

- What did my **body** actually pick up?
- What did my **imagination** add on top?
- What might I be treating as “fact” that’s really a **story**?

You’ll need:

- 1–3 incidents from **Section A – Everyday Incident Log**
- A little honesty and curiosity

How to Use This Section

For each worksheet:

1. Pick **one incident** from Section A.
2. Write the incident title or a short label at the top (e.g., “Silent phone after vulnerable text”).
3. Work through the questions without worrying about being perfect.
4. If you get stuck, remind yourself:

“I’m not trying to blame myself. I’m just separating signals from stories.”

You can repeat these pages for as many incidents as you like.

Worksheet B1 – Sensory Snapshot

Incident Title / Label:

Date / Approx Time (from Section A):

1. What did my senses actually register? (Just the raw input)

Think like a camera or microphone, with an extra nod to your body:

- What did I **see**? (shapes, movements, facial expressions, screen text, colors, environment)
- What did I **hear**? (actual words, volume, tone as best I can recall)
- What did I **feel physically**? (temperature, contact, posture, space between people)
- Any **smells or tastes** that stand out?

Try to stay with what your body could directly pick up, before any interpretation.

2. What were the conditions of my “hardware”?

Consider anything that might have affected the quality of the input:

- lighting, fog, glare, shadows
- background noise, music, wind, bad connection / microphone
- my own body state:
 - tired / wired / in pain
 - hungry / full / caffeinated
 - sick / on meds / overstimulated

In other words: what might have made it harder for my senses to get a clean read?

3. What was truly *uncertain* or *unknown* in that moment?

List things you **couldn't** actually know from the sensory data alone:

For example:

- “I didn’t actually know why they were quiet.”
- “I didn’t know what they were thinking, only the words I heard.”
- “I couldn’t see their whole face clearly.”

4. If a neutral camera had recorded this, what would it have captured?

Describe the scene as if you were reviewing security footage—no inner states, just observable behavior:

Worksheet B2 – Imagination Overlay

Incident Title / Label (same as B1):

1. What did my imagination add on top of the raw input?

Now name the **assumptions, guesses, and automatic interpretations** that showed up:

- “They’re mad at me.”
- “They’re bored / done with me.”
- “I messed up.”
- “This always happens.”
- “They don’t care.”

Write the exact sentences or images your mind produced, as best you remember.

2. Where did my mind jump to a *story* about motives or the future?

Look for places you went beyond the sensory facts:

- “They *must* think...”
- “This *means* that...”
- “Now *X* is going to happen...”

3. What else might also have been possible?

You are not trying to deny your first impression—you’re just making room for alternatives.

For example:

- “They were quiet” could also mean: tired, distracted, in pain, stressed about something else, socially anxious, or carefully thinking.
- “No reply yet” could also mean: busy, battery dead, driving, writing a longer response, or emotionally flooded themselves.

List at least **2–3 other explanations**, even if you don’t fully believe them yet.

4. What past experiences might have influenced the story my mind chose?

Think about:

- similar incidents from earlier in life
- patterns with this person or this type of person
- family or cultural messages about situations like this

“This reminded me of...”

“In my family, this meant...”

“In my past relationships, this usually led to...”

5. If I label the sensory facts as ‘draft reality’ and my story as ‘version 1,’ what changes?

Complete these sentences:

“The **sensory facts** were:

My **version 1 story** was:

Right now, I’m willing to hold this story as:

- absolutely true
- possibly true
- one of several options”

Check one box and add any comment:

Worksheet B3 – A Gentler Draft

Use this page if you want to end the “Out There, In Here” work with a **slightly updated take** on the incident.

Incident Title / Label:

1. Old headline my brain gave this incident:

What’s the harsh or automatic title my mind put on this?

“ _____ ”

2. A more accurate / spacious headline I could try instead:

Something that includes how it felt *and* the limits of what I know.

“ _____ ”

Examples:

- Old: “I embarrassed myself again.”
New: “I felt exposed in that moment and now my nervous system is replaying it.”
- Old: “They don’t care about me.”
New: “I didn’t get the response I hoped for, and I don’t yet know why.”

Write your own:

3. One sentence I want to remember next time something like this happens:

A small reminder about sensory limits and imagination, in your own words.

As You Move On

You don't have to do Worksheet B1–B3 for every incident.

Even doing this process **once or twice** can:

- show you how much your senses have to work with imperfect input
- reveal how fast imagination fills in the blanks
- make it easier to treat your first reaction as a **draft**, not a final verdict

When you're ready, you'll carry this same incident (or another) into **Section C – The Mood Ring**, where you'll look at the emotional weather you were already bringing into the moment *before* any of this sensory-and-story dance began.

Section C – The Mood Ring

Checking Your Emotional Weather

Before anything happens “out there,” you’re already bringing a certain **emotional weather** into every moment:

- wired, flat, or foggy
- quietly hopeful or quietly dreading
- heavy, numb, or “mostly okay”

That background climate is your **Mood Ring**.

In Part I, you saw that your reactions often make a lot more sense when you remember:

“I didn’t start this moment at zero.”

This section helps you:

- notice your **baseline** more clearly
- connect that baseline to specific incidents
- start seeing **patterns** in when and where your weather tends to storm

You’ll be using:

- simple 0–10 intensity checks
- a few words for weather
- short reflections tied to real situations

How to Use This Section

There are two main ways to work these pages:

1. **Daily baseline checks** (even if nothing big happens)
2. **Incident-focused checks**, linked to your logs from Section A

You can:

- do a **quick Mood Ring check** once or twice a day for a week (Worksheet C1)
- pick 2–3 logged incidents and explore what your Mood Ring was doing *before* and *during* them (Worksheet C2)
- use Worksheet C3 to spot patterns after you’ve collected a few entries

Don't try to "fix" your mood here.
We're just telling the truth about the weather.

Worksheet C1 – Daily Mood Ring Check

Use this page format once per day (or as often as you like) just to track your **baseline**, whether or not anything dramatic happens.

Date: _____

Time: _____

Where I am / What I'm doing:

1. If I had to name my Mood Ring right now in a few words, it would be:

(Examples: "foggy but okay," "tight and wired," "mostly calm," "flat and checked out," "quietly hopeful," "heavy in my chest," etc.)

2. On a 0–10 scale, my intensity right now is:

0 = neutral / blank

10 = completely overwhelmed

Right now I'm about a ____ / 10.

3. What might be contributing to this weather?

Check or circle anything that fits, and add your own:

- sleep (too little / broken / okay / very rested)
- food / blood sugar (hungry / overfull / steady)
- physical state (pain / illness / meds / hormones / caffeine)
- recent events (conflict / good news / bad news / big change)
- ongoing stress (money / work / family / health / world events)
- social stuff (too alone / too peopled / recent loss or distance)

- something else: _____

Jot any quick notes:

4. Given this weather, what's one kind thing I can adjust or expect of myself today?

Not a huge life change—just one small adjustment that respects the weather.

Worksheet C2 – Mood Ring + One Incident

Now we'll connect the dots between your baseline and a specific situation from **Section A – Everyday Incident Log**.

Incident Title / Label (from Section A):

Date / Time of Incident:

1. What was my Mood Ring like *before* this incident?

Think about that day or that hour **before** the moment happened.

- a few words for the weather:

- intensity (0–10):
Before this happened, I was about a ____ / 10.
- anything that was already going on in my body or life:

2. When the incident happened, how did my Mood Ring change (if at all)?

Did the mood spike, drop, or stay about the same?

- right *after* the incident, my weather felt:

- intensity (0–10) right after:
Right after, I was about a ____ / 10.
- what I noticed in my body (heart, breath, muscles, stomach, energy):

3. If I write this as a simple equation, it might look like:

“I was already at a ____ / 10 because _____.
Then _____ happened, and I went to ____ / 10.”

Fill it in:

“I was already at a ____ / 10 because

Then

happened, and I went to ____ / 10.”

4. Does my reaction make more sense when I factor in my Mood Ring? How?

Be honest, not polite. What changes when you remember you weren't starting at 0?

5. If I had known my weather more clearly *before* this happened, what might I have done differently (if anything)?

Example: delayed a conversation, taken a short break, asked for a pause, not checked my phone in bed, etc.

Worksheet C3 – Mood Ring Patterns

Use this after you've done **at least 3–5 Mood Ring checks (C1)** and a couple of incident-focused pages (C2).

1. When I look over my Mood Ring notes, what patterns do I notice?

Times of day, days of the week, specific places, certain people, situations, or tasks.

- Times of day that tend to be stormy:

- Times of day that tend to be clearer:

- People / roles that change my weather (for better or worse):

- Places that affect my weather (home, work, car, online spaces, etc.):

2. Are there common “loaders” that push my intensity up before anything even happens?

Things that consistently raise your baseline.

Check or name any that apply:

- lack of sleep
- certain types of work days
- specific recurring conversations

- conflict (even if it's not about me)
- news / social media
- alcohol / caffeine / other substances
- being around certain people
- being alone too long
- something else: _____

Notes:

3. Are there things that reliably lower my baseline or steady my weather (even a little)?

Not miracle cures—just things that tend to help.

- _____
- _____
- _____

4. How does remembering my Mood Ring change the way I tell the story of my reactions?

Complete one or more of these:

- “Instead of ‘I blew up out of nowhere,’ I can say: _____”
- “Instead of ‘I shut down over nothing,’ I can say: _____”
- “Instead of ‘I’m just too sensitive,’ I can say: _____”

5. One small way I want to respect my Mood Ring in the coming week is:

Examples: not starting hard talks when I’m above 7/10, building in recovery time after certain days, being gentler with my self-talk when I’m clearly loaded.

Before You Move to Section D

You don't have to transform your entire emotional climate to move on.

If all you get from this section is:

- a clearer sense that you **rarely** start at zero
- some language for your inner weather
- one or two ideas about how to adjust when you're already loaded

...that's more than enough.

Next, in **Section D – The Well of the Self**, you'll explore what all this weather is *falling into*: the deeper beliefs, ancestral currents, and cultural messages that give meaning to your moods and reactions.

Section D – The Well of the Self

Seeing the Water You’ve Been Swimming In

In Part I, you met the **Well of the Self**—that deep inner place where:

- family messages
- cultural stories
- spiritual beliefs
- personal wounds and gifts

all collect into a single body of water.

Every moment that comes through your senses, Mood Ring, and body flows down into this well and picks up its flavor:

- “I’m safe here.” vs. “I’m always on thin ice.”
- “I matter.” vs. “I’m a burden.”
- “We survive by speaking.” vs. “We survive by staying quiet.”

This section helps you begin to:

- name some of the **messages** that live in your well
- see which ones are **gifts** and which ones are **hurting you now**
- choose a few small, truer messages to start pouring back in

You’re not judging your ancestors or culture.

You’re seeing the **water** you’ve been swimming in, so you can decide how you want to tend it.

How to Use This Section

You can work Section D in a few ways:

- **D1 – Messages in the Well**
Map out what you were taught (directly or indirectly) about feelings, needs, worth, and belonging.
- **D2 – Inherited Waters**
Focus more explicitly on ancestors, culture, and survival strategies you grew up around.
- **D3 – One Pattern in the Well**
Take a real incident (from Section A) and ask: “What messages in my well were active here?”

- *(Optional)* **D4 – Tending the Well**
Begin drafting one or two small, truer messages you’d like to practice.

You don’t have to do every worksheet.
Start where you feel the most curiosity.

Worksheet D1 – Messages in the Well

1. What was I shown about feelings?

Think about **how people around you handled emotions** when you were growing up—family, caregivers, community.

Complete any that fit, in your own words:

- In my home, feelings were:
 - talked about directly
 - joked about
 - ignored
 - punished
 - fixed quickly
 - spiritualized (“pray it away,” “have more faith”)
 - something else: _____

Examples / memories:

- The unspoken rules about feelings were:

“We don’t talk about _____.”
“It’s okay to feel _____ but not
_____.”
“If you cry, _____.”
“If you get angry, _____.”

Write your own:

2. What was I shown about needs?

Think about what happened when you needed help, comfort, support, attention, or rest.

- The message about needing help was:

- The message about needing comfort was:

- The message about needing rest or slowing down was:

- The message about wanting to be seen / noticed was:

If it helps, complete a few of these:

- “If you need something, you should _____.”
- “Asking for help means you are _____.”
- “Strong people _____.”

3. What was I shown about my worth?

Look for repeated vibes or phrases:

- “You’re important because _____.”
- “You’re loved when _____.”
- “You’re too much when _____.”
- “You’re not enough when _____.”

Write what feels true—even if it’s messy or conflicted:

4. What was I shown about belonging?

- “People like *us* are _____.”
- “People like us are **not** _____.”
- “We survive by _____.”
- “We absolutely do **not** _____.”

How did your family / culture talk (or not talk) about:

- being different
- leaving or changing paths
- mental health, addiction, grief
- gender roles, race, faith, money, class, bodies

Notes:

5. Looking at the answers above, what do I suspect is floating in my well?

List **3–5 messages** that seem to show up again and again in different forms.

Examples:

- “My needs are a problem.”
- “I’m only safe when I’m useful.”
- “We don’t rock the boat.”
- “People will leave if I’m honest.”

My list:

1. _____

- 2. _____
 - 3. _____
 - 4. _____
 - 5. _____
-

Worksheet D2 – Inherited Waters

This page focuses explicitly on **ancestors, culture, and survival**.

1. When I think of “my people,” who comes to mind?

You can think in terms of:

- family line(s)
- chosen family
- community / neighborhood
- culture(s) / country / tribe
- faith / spiritual lineage

Write what comes up first, without worrying about completeness:

2. What did my people survive?

List some of the big forces they’ve been through, as far as you know:

- poverty / financial instability
- migration / displacement
- war / violence
- addiction
- incarceration / legal systems
- racism / sexism / homophobia / transphobia / other oppression
- illness / disability
- religious or community control
- something else: _____

Add any specifics you know:

3. What survival strategies did they use?

How did your people cope, endure, hold together?

Examples: staying quiet, working constantly, hustling, obeying, rebelling, joking, numbing, praying, fighting, disappearing.

- “In my family / community, we survived by...”

- “We absolutely did **not**...”

4. Which of those strategies still feel protective or wise in my life now?

These are **gifts** from the well:

- _____
- _____
- _____

5. Which strategies feel like they’re hurting me now, even if they made sense then?

These are patterns you might want to **update**, not erase the people who used them:

- _____
- _____
- _____

Worksheet D3 – One Pattern in the Well

Now take **one real incident** (from Section A) and look at it through the lens of the well.

Incident Title / Label (from Section A):

1. What happened, in one or two sentences (just a reminder):

2. When I reacted the way I did, what message(s) from my well might have been active?

Look back at your D1/D2 pages. Circle or rewrite any that fit.

For example:

“I’m only loved when I’m useful.”

“We don’t upset people.”

“My needs are too much.”

“People always leave.”

Messages I suspect were active:

-
-
-

3. How did those messages shape:

- the way I read the situation?

- the way I felt about myself in that moment?

- the options I believed I had?

4. If I imagine someone with a *different* well—different messages—living the same incident, how might they see it?

For example, if their message was “I’m allowed to ask for clarity,” or “Conflict doesn’t erase my worth.”

Possible alternative perspectives:

5. What small, truer message would I *like* to have in my well for moments like this?

We’re not trying to jump to “everything is great.” Just something a little more accurate and kind.

Examples:

“My needs may not always be met, but they are not a burden by definition.”

“I can upset someone and still be worthy.”

“Their mood is about them as well as me.”

“I’m allowed to ask for what I need and hear ‘no’ without collapsing.”

My small, truer message:

“
_____”

6. If I repeated that message to myself after similar incidents for a while, how might that slowly change my recipes?

Worksheet D4 – Tending the Well (Optional)

Use this when you’re ready to think about how to **pour new water** into the well over time.

1. One message from my well I want to honor and keep is:

A belief or value that still feels right and life-giving.

“ _____ ”

How can I consciously draw from this more often?

2. One message from my well I want to soften or update is:

Something that once protected me but now holds me back.

“Old message: _____”

“Updated message: _____”

3. What environments, people, or practices help reinforce the updated message?

Communities, friends, authors, spiritual practices, spaces where the new message is normal.

4. One very small way I can tend my well this week is:

Think tiny: a phrase on your phone lock screen, a journal line you repeat, choosing to be around someone who treats you as worthy, etc.

You don't have to “purify” your whole well.

If all this section does is help you:

- name a few of the messages you inherited
- recognize which ones help and which ones harm

- choose one or two small, truer messages to practice

...you've already begun the work of changing the water your recipes are made in.

Next up, in **Section E – The Body's Alchemy**, you'll carry your incidents forward into the realm of chemistry and sensation—how your body joins the conversation once meaning has started to form.

Section E – The Body’s Alchemy

Noticing How Your Body Joins the Story

By the time you reach this part of the chain, a lot has already happened:

- Your senses and imagination have built a version of “what’s happening.”
- Your Mood Ring has colored it with your current emotional weather.
- The Well of the Self has flavored it with deep beliefs, ancestry, and culture.

Now your **body** responds.

This is the **alchemy** stage—where meaning turns into chemistry:

- heart rate
- breath
- muscle tension
- gut sensations
- hot, cold, numb, buzzing
- urges to move, freeze, fix, flee, or please

This section helps you:

- map your **personal signs** of activation
- see how your body responded in **specific incidents**
- identify a few **small ways to support your body** instead of fighting it

You’re not trying to stop your body from reacting.

You’re learning how to **notice it sooner** and work *with* it.

How to Use This Section

You can move through Section E like this:

- **E1 – My Body’s Activation Map**
Get to know your general patterns: where activation shows up, and whether you tend toward fight, flight, freeze, or fawn.
- **E2 – One Incident in My Body**
Take an incident (from Section A) and walk through exactly what your body did before, during, and after.
- **E3 – Completing the Stress Cycle (Small Supports)**
Identify a few simple, realistic ways to help your body discharge some of the energy.

You can come back to these pages anytime your body feels like “too much” or “not enough.”

Worksheet E1 – My Body’s Activation Map

1. Where does activation usually show up in my body?

Check or circle any that fit, and add your own:

- chest (tight, heavy, pressure, burning)
- throat (lump, tight, hard to speak)
- jaw (clenched, sore)
- shoulders / neck (tight, hunched)
- stomach (knots, nausea, emptiness, cramps)
- head (pressure, dizziness, buzzing)
- arms / hands (shaky, restless, numb, tingling)
- legs / feet (restless, weak, heavy, twitchy)
- skin (hot, cold, prickly, flushed, numb)
- overall energy (wired, drained, floaty, “not here”)
- something else: _____

Notes / details in my own words:

2. When I’m “activated,” my body tends to feel more like:

Circle or underline any that resonate:

- “Too much energy in my system”
- “No energy at all”
- “Buzzing / wired”
- “Numb / checked out”
- “Tight / braced / armored”
- “Leaky / tearful / shaky”
- “Like I want to jump out of my own skin”
- “Like I’m watching from outside my body”

Anything else?

3. If I had to guess, which survival pattern(s) do I lean toward most?

You can have more than one, but usually one or two are familiar:

- **Fight** – I feel amped up, irritated, ready to argue, criticize, or push back.
- **Flight** – I feel like escaping, avoiding, leaving, distracting, busying myself.
- **Freeze** – I feel stuck, blank, paralyzed, foggy, “shut down.”
- **Fawn** – I feel an urgent need to fix, appease, patch things up, be “good,” or keep the peace.

Write your version:

“When I’m triggered, I usually lean toward:

”

Give an example or two from real life:

4. What are my “early warning signs” vs. “I’m already deep in it” signs?

Early signs (first clues my body is getting activated):

Late signs (I’m already in full fight/flight/freeze/fawn):

If I could catch myself at the **early** stage more often, what might that make possible?

Worksheet E2 – One Incident in My Body

Pick one incident from **Section A** that had a noticeable body reaction.

Incident Title / Label:

Date / Time:

1. Before anything happened, what was my body like?

Think back to the minutes or hours **before** this incident:

- energy level (wired, slow, okay):

- any pain, tension, or discomfort that was already there:

- any substances that might have influenced me (caffeine, meds, alcohol, etc.):

2. When the incident started, what was the first thing I noticed in my body?

Be specific:

- heart (speed, heaviness):

- breath (held, shallow, fast, deep):

- muscles (tight, loose, shaking, frozen):

- stomach / gut (knots, drop, flip, numb):

- skin / temperature (flush, sweat, cold, tingle):

- overall feeling (jolt, slow dread, sudden numbness, etc.):

3. If I map this onto fight / flight / freeze / fawn, what seems closest?

There's no perfect answer; pick what fits *best* for this moment.

- Fight – I felt ready to confront, argue, push, or lash out.
- Flight – I wanted to get away, avoid, leave, or distract myself.
- Freeze – I felt stuck, blank, shut down, unable to act.
- Fawn – I felt a rush to fix, appease, smooth things over, or be “good.”

In my own words, this felt like:

4. What did I actually do with all that energy (or lack of energy)?

Think about what your body did, even if your outer behavior looked calm.

- Did I move (pace, fidget, slam doors, clean, exercise)?
- Did I go still (stare, freeze, shut down, go quiet)?
- Did I comfort myself somehow (eat, scroll, drink, smoke, pray, text someone, etc.)?

Write it out:

5. How long did my body stay activated after the incident?

Minutes, hours, overnight, days?

Approximate length: _____

What signs let me know my body was *still* carrying it?

6. Looking at all this, what do I notice about how my body tried to protect me?

Even if it was clumsy or over-the-top, what was it *trying* to do?

Examples:

- “It was trying to make me big enough to not be hurt again.”
- “It was trying to keep me from making things worse.”
- “It was trying to disappear so I didn’t attract more danger.”
- “It was trying to please them so they wouldn’t leave.”

My answer:

Worksheet E3 – Completing the Stress Cycle (Small Supports)

Your body isn’t wrong for reacting.
But it often doesn’t get enough **help** to come back down.

This page is about identifying a few simple ways to **support** your body when it's activated, instead of demanding it "just calm down."

1. What *already* tends to help my body settle (even a little)?

Think about what has worked in the past, even briefly:

- movement (walk, stretch, shake, dance, chores)
- breath (slow exhale, sighing, breathing exercises)
- sound (music, humming, singing, white noise)
- connection (texting a safe person, sitting with someone, petting an animal)
- grounding (cold water on hands, feeling feet on the floor, naming objects in the room)
- change of environment (step outside, different room, shower)
- stillness / rest (lying down, curling up, being under a blanket)
- something else: _____

Which 2–3 feel most realistic and accessible **in your actual life**?

2. Based on my patterns, what might help each survival response?

Fill in with ideas that feel like they could *actually* happen for you.

- When I'm in **fight** (amped up, angry, ready to clash), it might help to:

- When I'm in **flight** (anxious, restless, wanting to escape), it might help to:

- When I'm in **freeze** (numb, shut down, foggy), it might help to:

- When I'm in **fawn** (panicky-people-pleasing, over-apologizing, over-fixing), it might help to:

You are not committing to do all of these.
You're just giving future-you a menu to pick from.

3. One small experiment: supporting my body next time

Pick **one** type of situation (for now) and imagine trying something slightly different for your body.

“Next time I notice my heart racing and my chest tightening in a conversation, instead of pushing through like nothing is happening, I will try:

- taking three slow breaths
- naming out loud that I need a brief pause
- or stepping away for 2 minutes if I can.”

Write your own:

- The kind of situation:

- My body's usual response:

- The small support I'm willing to try at least once:

4. How might my recipes slowly change if my body felt a little more supported?

Imagine—not perfectly regulated, just a **bit less alone**.

Complete any that fit:

- “If my body trusted that I would listen earlier, it might not need to yell so loudly with panic / pain / numbness.”
- “If I had a couple of go-to ways to discharge energy, I might not need to blow up or disappear as often.”
- “If I could treat activation as information instead of proof that I’m broken, I might feel less ashamed and more curious.”

Write a sentence or two in your own words:

You don’t have to master your nervous system.

If all you do with this section is:

- learn a few of your **early signs** of activation
- name your typical **fight / flight / freeze / fawn** lean
- identify one or two **small supports** you’ll *consider* trying

...you’ve already begun updating the body-level part of your recipes.

Next, in **Section F – Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling**, you’ll bring mind and body together and look at how you **name** your emotional states and what you’ve been taught to *do* with them once the feelings are loud enough to hear.

Section F – Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling

How You Learned to Name and Play Your Emotions

By now, your moment has:

- come through **senses & imagination**
- been colored by your **Mood Ring**
- passed through the **Well of the Self**
- stirred up the **body's alchemy**

Now we reach the place where you:

1. **Name** what you're feeling (or don't), and
2. **Do** something based on that name.

That's your:

- **Recipe Card** – “When it feels like this, we call it this and we do that.”
- **Horn of Feeling** – the moment the feeling is loud enough that you consciously notice, “Now I feel ____.”

This section helps you:

- see what **names** you actually use for your feelings
- notice what **actions** are tied to those names
- explore how you might **rename or respond differently**, even a little

You're not trying to have “perfect emotions.”

You're just getting clearer on what recipes are already running.

How to Use This Section

You can use Section F in a few ways:

- **F1 – My Emotional Vocabulary & Rules**
Map which feelings are allowed, which are disguised, and what you're “supposed” to do with them.
- **F2 – One Incident: Recipe Card in Action**
Take a real situation and ask: “What did I call this, and what did that name make me do?”
- **F3 – Renaming & New Moves**
Gently experiment with new names and options for familiar emotional states.

Start with F1 to see your overall patterns, then try F2/F3 with one of your logged incidents.

Worksheet F1 – My Emotional Vocabulary & Rules

1. What words do I *actually* use for my feelings?

Don't write what you think you *should* say—write what you actually say out loud or in your head.

Common go-tos (circle or copy any that fit, and add your own):

- “fine”
- “tired”
- “stressed”
- “pissed”
- “annoyed”
- “sad”
- “overwhelmed”
- “numb”
- “okay”
- “anxious”
- “depressed”
- “whatever”

My usual words:

2. Which emotions did I *see* growing up—and what were they called?

Think about family / community:

- Anger was usually called:

- Sadness was usually called:

- Fear / worry was usually called:

-
- Shame / embarrassment was usually called:

-
- Joy / excitement was usually called:

-
- Tenderness / vulnerability was usually called:
-

If something wasn't allowed, how did it show up anyway?

3. What were the “rules” about certain feelings?

Complete any that fit, in your own words:

- “If you’re angry, you must _____.”
- “If you’re sad, you should _____.”
- “If you’re afraid, you better _____.”
- “If you’re happy, be sure to _____.”
- “If you’re proud of yourself, you must not _____.”

Write the rules you actually absorbed:

4. Which feelings are *easy* for me to admit to? Which are *hard*?

Easy for me to say (out loud or to myself):

- _____

• _____

Hard or almost impossible to say:

• _____

• _____

Sometimes I turn _____ into _____ instead.

For example: “I turn hurt into anger,” or “I turn fear into jokes.”

5. One of my core “recipe lines” might be:

“When it feels like this, I call it _____ and I usually _____.”

Fill this in a few times:

- When it feels like _____, I call it _____ and I usually _____.
- When it feels like _____, I call it _____ and I usually _____.
- When it feels like _____, I call it _____ and I usually _____.

These are glimpses of your current **Recipe Card**.

Worksheet F2 – One Incident: Recipe Card in Action

Pick one incident from **Section A** that had a noticeable emotional wave.

Incident Title / Label:

Date / Time:

1. In that moment, what did I say I was feeling (if anything)?

Words I used out loud or in my head:

If I didn't name it at the time, what would I say now?

2. If I slow it down, what might have been *underneath* that label?

Look at your body notes (Section E) and your well notes (Section D):

Could it also have been: hurt, fear, shame, jealousy, loneliness, disappointment, grief, relief, love, hope, etc.?

Possible underlying feelings:

Which one(s) feel most accurate now, even if I don't like them?

3. What did my emotional "recipe" tell me to do next?

"When I feel _____, I _____."

In that incident:

- When I felt _____, I _____.
- My behavior looked like:

Did I:

- snap / argue / attack?

- go quiet / shut down?
- over-explain / apologize?
- leave / avoid / block / ghost?
- numb out (scroll, eat, drink, etc.)?
- reach out / ask for reassurance?
- something else?

Write what actually happened:

4. From the outside, what would someone *see* and guess I was feeling?

Imagine a neutral observer watching, not reading your mind.

They might say:

- “It looked like you felt _____.”
- “It looked like you were _____.”

My guess:

Does that match what I was actually feeling inside?

5. How does this recipe *help* me? How does it *hurt* me?

Even painful recipes usually have some protective logic.

- This recipe helps me by:

(e.g., avoids conflict, keeps me from crying in front of people, makes me seem strong, gets problems solved fast, etc.)

- This recipe hurts me by:

(e.g., damages trust, leaves me alone, burns me out, keeps me misunderstood, buries my real needs, etc.)

6. If I had named the feeling slightly differently, what other options might have existed?

For example: If instead of “I’m stupid,” it was “I’m embarrassed,” maybe you could ask for clarification instead of shutting down.

“If I had called this feeling _____ instead of _____,
I might have considered:”

- _____
- _____
- _____

Worksheet F3 – Renaming & New Moves

This is where you gently experiment with **tiny rewrites**.

1. Pick one emotional state you’d like to work with.

Something that shows up often, not your most overwhelming one.

When I feel: _____

It usually shows up as (body + thoughts):

I usually say it is: _____

And my usual reaction is to:

2. What might be a more precise or honest *name* for this feeling?

You're not lying to yourself; you're getting closer to the truth.

Some options (circle or write your own):

- hurt
- sad
- afraid
- ashamed
- embarrassed
- disappointed
- lonely
- overwhelmed
- powerless
- confused
- hopeful
- relieved

The name I want to try is:

Complete the line:

“When my body feels like this, instead of calling it _____, I’m willing to admit it might actually be _____.”

3. What is one *different* move I could try next time this feeling shows up?

We're not planning a total overhaul—just a tiny experiment.

Usual move:

“When I feel this, I usually _____.”

New possible move (choose only one to try):

- I will **pause and name it** (even just to myself) before acting.
- I will **take 3 slow breaths** before replying.

- I will **say a simple sentence out loud**, like “I’m feeling really _____ right now.”
- I will **ask for a small need** (time, clarity, reassurance) instead of pretending I’m fine.
- I will **not send the first draft of the text / email**.
- I will **let myself feel it for 60 seconds** without jumping to fix or numb.

My experiment:

“Next time I notice this feeling, I will *consider* trying:

_____”

4. If that new move feels too big, what is the *smallest version* of it I could try?

For example, if saying “I’m hurt” aloud feels impossible, maybe you start with writing it in a note on your phone.

Smallest possible version:

5. How might my life change if I practiced this tiny new recipe 10–20 times over the next year?

Be realistic and generous with yourself—small shifts over time matter.

You’re not trying to erase your old Recipe Card overnight.

If all this section does is help you:

- notice what you *actually* call your feelings
- see what actions are glued to those labels
- try **one slightly different name and one slightly different move**

...you've already started forging new recipes.

Next, in **Section G – The Me Gate**, you'll explore how these feelings and labels interact with your sense of identity—who you believe yourself to be, which roles you're "allowed" to inhabit, and which parts of you get left outside the gate.

Section G – The Me Gate

Who (and What) You Let Count as “Me”

By the time a moment reaches this part of the chain, you’ve:

- interpreted the world through **senses & imagination**
- brought your **Mood Ring** into it
- filtered it through the **Well of the Self**
- felt the **body’s alchemy**
- named it via your **Recipe Card** and heard the **Horn of Feeling**

Now comes a deeper question:

“Given all of that... what does this mean about *me*?”

This is the **Me Gate**:

- the inner bouncer who decides which feelings “fit your identity”
- the roles you’re allowed to inhabit
- the labels you accept or reject
- the parts of you that get shown, hidden, or exiled

This section helps you:

- see the **roles** you keep getting cast in
- notice which feelings / identities are “allowed” vs. “forbidden”
- explore how one real incident got filtered through this gate
- begin to gently **update** one rule at the gate

How to Use This Section

You can work Section G like this:

- **G1 – Roles, Rules, and Identities**
Map the roles you play and what “counts” as you.
- **G2 – Allowed vs. Forbidden**
Look at which feelings and identities your gate lets in or kicks out.
- **G3 – One Incident at the Me Gate**
Take a real moment and see how the gate shaped your story of yourself.
- **G4 – Updating One Gate Rule (Optional)**
Choose one small rule you’d like to soften or rewrite.

As always, you don’t have to do every page. Start where you feel the most resonance.

Worksheet G1 – Roles, Rules, and Identities

1. What roles do I tend to play in most spaces?

Think about family, friendships, work, community, online life.

Common roles (circle any that fit, add your own):

- the strong one
- the fixer
- the caretaker
- the responsible one
- the clown
- the quiet one
- the overachiever
- the black sheep / scapegoat
- the peacemaker
- the one who always has it together
- the one who always struggles
- something else: _____

My main roles:

2. What does each role *require* me to be—and not be?

Pick 2–3 of your main roles and fill this in.

Role: _____

To stay in this role, I must be:

- _____
- _____

To stay in this role, I must **not** be:

- _____
- _____

Repeat if you like:

Role: _____

Must be: _____ / Must not be: _____

3. What do I say after “I am...”—especially when I’m not being kind to myself?

Finish a few of these with what actually shows up in your head:

- “I am always _____.”
- “I am never _____.”
- “I am the one who _____.”
- “I am too _____.”
- “I am not _____ enough.”

Write what feels honest (not what you wish you thought):

4. Are there identities I cling to, even if they hurt?

Example: “I’m the one people leave,” “I’m the only one who can handle things,” “I’m the screw-up,” “I’m the rock.”

Identities I hold onto:

What do these identities *give* me? (Familiarity, a script, a sense of place, an excuse, etc.)

What do they *cost* me?

Worksheet G2 – Allowed vs. Forbidden

1. What feelings are “allowed” to be part of “me”?

These are feelings you can admit without too much inner argument.

“Yeah, that’s me.”

Allowed feelings (for me):

- _____
- _____
- _____

2. What feelings are “not like me,” even when I clearly feel them?

These are feelings your Me Gate tries to kick out or rename.

“I’m not that kind of person.”

“I don’t do that.”

“That’s weak / selfish / mean / dramatic.”

Forbidden or hard-to-accept feelings:

- _____
- _____
- _____

How do they show up anyway (sideways)?

e.g., hurt shows as sarcasm, fear shows as anger, sadness shows as “tired.”

3. What identities does my gate reject, even if part of me longs for them?

Examples: “someone who can rest,” “someone who is worthy even when they’re not useful,” “someone people stay with,” “someone who sets boundaries.”

Identities that feel “not for people like me,” but I secretly want:

What stories / voices argue against them?

“That’s arrogant.”
“That’s not realistic.”
“People like us don’t get that.”

4. If I imagine my Me Gate as a bouncer, what’s on the door sign?

“Only _____ allowed.”
“No _____.”
“Must always _____.”

Write a few:

- “Only people who _____ are allowed.”
- “No one who _____ is allowed.”
- “You must always _____ to stay in here.”

This is what your gate has likely been enforcing.

Worksheet G3 – One Incident at the Me Gate

Now take **one incident** (from Section A) and see what the Me Gate did with it.

Incident Title / Label:

Date / Time:

1. In one sentence, what happened?

2. After it happened, what did I say about *myself*?

Not about them or the situation—about *you*.

Complete any that fit:

- “This proves I am _____.”
- “Of course, I’m just _____.”
- “I knew I was _____.”
- “I’ll always be _____.”

Write the actual phrases that came up:

3. Which role or identity did my Me Gate choose in that moment?

From G1: strong one, screw-up, burden, fixer, etc.

In that moment, my Me Gate basically said:

“Right. I’m the _____ again.”

Does that identity feel familiar from other situations?

- Yes
- No / Not sure

If yes, where else do I see it?

4. Were there any feelings or truths my Me Gate *wouldn't* let me own?

e.g., “I was actually hurt,” “I was scared,” “I needed help,” “I did something well there.”

What did I *not* let myself be?

- “I wasn’t allowed to be _____.”
- “I wasn’t allowed to admit _____.”

What did I do with those exiled parts instead?

5. If someone I loved lived this exact incident, how would I describe *them*?

Pretend a friend or younger version of you told this story.

I would probably say:

- “You are _____.”
- “This shows that you _____.”
- “It makes sense that you felt _____ because _____.”

Write it as if to them, not you:

Now: how does that version differ from what you told yourself at your Me Gate?

6. What might be a slightly kinder, more accurate identity to allow in—just for this one moment?

We're not jumping to "I'm amazing." We're looking for something truer than "I'm garbage / always the problem."

Examples:

"I'm someone who struggled there and is learning."

"I'm someone who got triggered, not a total failure."

"I'm someone who cares deeply and sometimes gets overwhelmed."

My updated identity **for this incident**:

"In this moment, I was someone who _____
and that does not erase the rest of me."

Worksheet G4 – Updating One Gate Rule (Optional)

Now we'll pick **one** rule at the Me Gate to experiment with.

1. One gate rule that is wearing me out is:

e.g., "I must always be the strong one," "I'm not allowed to need help," "I'm always the problem."

Old rule:

“ _____ ”

How does this rule *protect* me?

How does it *harm* me?

2. What could a softened or updated version of this rule be?

Aim for a rule that feels **slightly** more humane, not fake-positive.

Examples:

Old: “I must always be the strong one.”

New: “I am often strong, and I’m allowed to not have it together sometimes.”

Old: “I’m always the problem.”

New: “Sometimes I contribute to problems, and sometimes I don’t. I’m willing to look honestly, not automatically blame myself.”

My updated rule:

“ _____ ”

Does it feel:

- completely unbelievable
- shaky but possible
- surprisingly okay

3. What is one tiny way I could act *as if* this new rule might be true?

Tiny = something you could actually try once in the next week.

For example:

- letting myself say “I’m not okay” to one safe person
- not jumping in to fix everything immediately
- pausing before automatically apologizing for existing
- saying “I need a minute” instead of powering through

My experiment:

“In the next week, I’ll *consider* trying this small act that matches my new rule:

”

4. If I practiced this new rule 20–50 times over the next few years, who might I start to believe I am?

Let yourself imagine, just a little:

You don’t have to throw the Me Gate wide open overnight.

If all this section does is help you:

- recognize the roles and identities you’ve been enforcing
- see which feelings / identities you exile or over-accept
- try one slightly kinder, truer rule at the gate

...you’ve already started changing who is allowed to live inside your sense of self.

Next, in **Section H – Memory, Story & New Recipes**, you’ll look at how moments get written into your inner library—and how you can start updating those stories so your future recipes have different material to work with.

Section H – Memory, Story & New Recipes

How You Tell the Story (and What You Do Next)

This is the last link in the chain.

By the time a moment gets here, you've:

- interpreted it through **senses & imagination**
- filtered it through your **Mood Ring**
- tasted it in the **Well of the Self**
- felt it in your **body**
- named it with your **Recipe Card** and heard the **Horn of Feeling**
- run it through the **Me Gate** and decided what it means about *you*

Now your inner **scribe** in the library at the end of the hall decides:

- what gets written down
- what headline it gets
- what lesson it proves about you and the world

This section helps you:

- notice your **default headlines** and core stories
- walk one real moment through a **story rewrite**
- pull it all together into **new recipes** you want to practice

We're not erasing the past.

We're updating how you carry it—and how it shapes your next chapters.

How to Use This Section

You can work Section H like this:

- **H1 – Headlines & Core Stories**
See the big stories your mind tends to write about you and your life.
- **H2 – One Incident: Old Story, New Story**
Take a single incident and practice writing a more complete, honest version.
- **H3 – New Recipes Summary**
Pull everything together: one pattern, one old recipe, one new recipe to practice.

Pick one pattern or incident you've been circling in earlier sections and bring it here.

Worksheet H1 – Headlines & Core Stories

1. When something goes wrong, what headline does my mind slap on it?

Think of your usual “of course” thoughts. Complete as many as fit:

- “This proves that I am _____.”
- “This shows that people are _____.”
- “This always happens to me: _____.”
- “The story of my life is: _____.”

Write your actual phrases, even if they sound harsh or dramatic:

2. What are my go-to “always / never” scripts?

List a few:

- “I always _____.”
- “I never _____.”
- “People always _____ to me.”
- “People never _____ for me.”
- “Things always end up _____.”

My scripts:

Which of these feel:

- emotionally true? _____
- literally, 100% always true? _____

3. If my inner scribe were a slightly dramatic storyteller, what kind of genre would they be writing?

Circle or write what fits:

- tragedy
- dark comedy
- survival epic
- “I’m the problem” story
- “everyone else is the problem” story
- “almost but not quite” story
- something else: _____

What themes keep showing up?

(e.g., abandonment, failure, betrayal, over-responsibility, being unseen, being the rescuer, etc.)

4. Are there *positive* or resilient stories that I tend to forget or downplay?

Complete any that fit:

- “Times I got through something hard include _____.”
- “Times someone showed up for me include _____.”
- “Things I’ve done that past-me would be proud of include _____.”

List a few, even if part of you wants to shrug them off:

5. Putting it together: a few of my core stories might be...

Try writing 2–4 sentences that capture the stories your scribe keeps repeating:

“Life is _____ for me.”
“I am _____.”
“People are _____.”

You don’t have to decide yet which stories you’ll keep or change.
We just want them visible on the page.

Worksheet H2 – One Incident: Old Story, New Story

Now we’ll pick **one incident** (from Section A) and look at how your inner library filed it—and how else it could be written.

Incident Title / Label:

Date / Time:

1. Old version: how did I originally tell this story (to myself or others)?

Write it the way you’d usually recount it:

“This happened, then this, then this...”

Then, write the old **headline** your brain put on it:

“The quick takeaway was:

_____.”

2. What did the scribe highlight—and what did they leave out?

From your old version:

- Things I **highlighted** (what I focused on most):

- Things I **minimized or skipped** (actions, feelings, context):

Think about:

- Did I leave out anything I did well or reasonably?
- Did I leave out ways the situation was hard, unfair, or stacked against me?
- Did I leave out support, attempts, boundaries, or growth?

3. What link(s) in the chain might have influenced how I stored this story?

Glance back at earlier sections and check any that clearly played a part:

- Senses & Imagination – I didn't have full information, but filled in the gaps.
- Mood Ring – I was already loaded before it happened.
- Well of the Self – Old messages (e.g., "I'm a burden," "We don't rock the boat") were loud.
- Body's Alchemy – I was highly activated or numb.
- Recipe Card – I named the feeling harshly or inaccurately.
- Me Gate – I used it to confirm a painful identity about myself.

Anything specific you notice?

4. If I were the scribe *and* my own ally, what else would I include?

Imagine writing this story for someone you care about.

Add missing pieces:

- context that made it harder
- efforts you made
- ways you coped as best you could
- limits of your power
- any growth or learning that came later

“A fuller version might say:”

5. Write a new, more complete headline for this incident.

Not sugar-coated. Just more accurate and kind.

Old headline (from 1):

“ _____ ”

New headline I want to practice instead:

“ _____ ”

Examples, to get your brain in the zone:

- Old: “I humiliated myself.”
New: “I took a risk, felt exposed, and my system is still embarrassed.”
- Old: “I ruined everything.”
New: “I made mistakes in a hard moment; I’m learning how to handle those better.”

- Old: “They proved I’m unlovable.”
New: “They chose to leave / lash out. That hurts, and it doesn’t tell the whole story of my worth.”
-

6. If I re-read this incident in the future with the *new* headline, how might that change what it teaches me?

Think about future you looking back from a distance.

- About **me**:

- About **other people**:

- About **what’s possible next time**:

Worksheet H3 – New Recipes Summary

Now we’ll pull the whole chain together for **one pattern** and sketch a new recipe.

1. Pick a recurring pattern you’ve been seeing.

e.g., “I panic when people are quiet,” “I shut down in conflict,” “I over-apologize,” “I numb out when I feel lonely.”

My pattern in a sentence:

“Often, when _____, I _____.”

2. Old recipe (as honestly as you can write it):

Use the chain as a scaffold. Fill in what fits; skip what doesn't.

- **Out There, In Here (B):**
“Something like _____ happens, and my senses / imagination tell me it means _____.”
- **Mood Ring (C):**
“I’m usually already at about ___ / 10 and feeling _____.”
- **Well of the Self (D):**
“Deep down, there’s a message like: _____.”
- **Body’s Alchemy (E):**
“My body reacts with _____ (signs of fight/flight/freeze/fawn).”
- **Recipe Card & Horn (F):**
“I call it _____ and then I usually _____.”
- **Me Gate (G):**
“I decide this means I’m _____.”
- **Memory & Story (H):**
“My inner scribe files it under: _____.”

Take your time writing this out:

This is your **old recipe**.

3. New recipe (small version):

We’re not rewriting everything at once. We’re naming a few specific shifts you’re open to trying.

For the same kind of situation:

- **Senses & Imagination (B):**
“I will *try* to remember that my first take is a draft, and consider at least one other possible explanation.”

New statement I'll try:

"I don't have the full story yet; one other possibility is _____."

- **Mood Ring (C):**

"I will notice my baseline and, if I'm above ___ / 10, lower my expectations or delay big choices."

My line:

"I'm at a ___ / 10. Given that, I will / won't _____."

- **Well of the Self (D):**

"I'm willing to experiment with a slightly truer message like: _____."

- **Body (E):**

"When my body does _____, I will try this support: _____."

- **Recipe Card (F):**

"Instead of calling this feeling _____, I'll try the more honest word _____."

- **Me Gate (G):**

"Instead of 'This proves I'm _____,' I'll practice: 'In this moment, I'm someone who _____ and that does not erase the rest of me.'"

Write it all out in your own words:

4. One concrete "New Recipe Statement" to carry with you:

Boil it down into something short enough to remember in the wild.

"When _____ happens, instead of automatically _____,
I will *consider* _____ and remind myself _____."

Fill it in:

You're not promising you'll nail it every time.
You're giving your future self a **different script** to at least try.

5. How I'll know this recipe is slowly changing:

Signs might be tiny:

- a half-second pause you didn't used to have
- one less apology
- one less explosion
- one more honest "I feel _____"
- a slightly softer story afterward

Write a few possible signs of progress:

You've reached the end of the chain.

If all you do in Section H is:

- see your default **headlines & core stories**
- rewrite **one incident** with a fuller, kinder truth
- sketch **one new recipe** you're willing to practice imperfectly

...you've done real work.

From here, the rest is repetition, gentleness, and time—walking your actual life through this model again and again, until the new recipes start to feel less like theory and more like home.

Closing the Circle

The Gift, the Chain, and Your Way Forward

If you've come this far, you and I are already in a kind of quiet conversation across time.

Between us stand the ones who came before:

- the ancestors who survived enough storms that you could exist
- the old gods and goddesses, whether you meet them as beings, as symbols, or as stories that refuse to die
- the Nornir at the Well, who tend the roots and weave possibilities into the fabric of our lives

Somewhere along the way, they handed down more than eye color and last names. They handed down **patterns**.

This whole book has been my attempt to lay those patterns out so you can see them, hold them, and—where needed—change them.

To me, that clarity feels like a gift from the gods and our ancestors: a revealed blueprint of how emotion, story, and body are braided together in a living human being.

Not because you are weak.
Because you are worthy of understanding.

The Chain You've Been Walking All Along

You didn't need this book to *have* the chain.

You've always had it.

From the very beginning, every moment in your life has been traveling the same inner path:

1. **Out There, In Here** – Your senses grab what they can; your imagination fills the gaps.
2. **The Mood Ring** – Your current emotional weather tints everything before a word is spoken.
3. **The Well of the Self** – Ancestry, culture, and core beliefs flavor what this moment *means*.
4. **The Body's Alchemy** – Story turns into chemistry: heart, breath, muscles, gut, skin.

5. **Recipe Card & Horn of Feeling** – You name it (or don't) and the emotion sounds loud enough to notice.
6. **The Me Gate** – You decide who this makes you: which roles and identities are allowed in.
7. **Memory & Story** – The scribe in your inner library files it and uses it to predict the future.

The gods didn't give you this chain to punish you.
Your ancestors didn't pass down their habits to trap you on purpose.

All of it—every shortcut, every overreaction, every numbness—began as some kind of **survival strategy**.

The “gift” is that you're now able to **see the whole mechanism** instead of just blaming yourself for the end result.

You can point at specific links and say:

- “Ah. My imagination ran off right there.”
- “I was already at an 8/10 on my Mood Ring.”
- “My well is still full of ‘I'm a burden.’ That colored this whole thing.”
- “My body was doing its best with what it believed.”
- “My Recipe Card is outdated.”
- “My Me Gate keeps letting in identities that hurt me.”
- “My stories about myself need updating.”

Seeing that is not a small thing.

That is the beginning of power.

Mental Well-Being Is Not Just “Think Better Thoughts”

Modern life often reduces mental health to a slogan:

- “Just be more positive.”
- “Manifest better.”
- “Fix your mindset.”

The chain you've just walked shows you something truer and more demanding:

- Mental well-being is not just in your *thoughts*.
- It lives in your **body**, in your **ancestry**, in your **culture**, in the **stories** you've carried since before you had words.

- It's affected by sleep and food and money and oppression and luck and chemistry and grief.

You can't control every link.

You're not meant to.

But when you understand how they interrelate, you can:

- stop calling yourself broken for reactions that actually make sense
- lower shame and increase curiosity
- notice where you *do* have room to move:
 - choosing a kinder name for a feeling
 - taking care of your body as part of your emotional life
 - questioning a message in your well
 - telling the story of an event with more truth and less cruelty
 - letting a new identity stand at your Me Gate, even if it feels strange at first

Mental well-being becomes less about “fixing yourself” and more about **tending the whole system**:

- adjusting the environment where you can
- honoring your body's signals
- recognizing inherited patterns without bowing to them
- practicing stories that are both honest and life-giving

That is not a quick hack.

That is a path worthy of a lifetime.

The Gods, the Ancestors, and This Map

When I call this model a gift from gods and ancestors, I don't mean bolts of lightning and trumpets in the sky.

I mean the way:

- old myths keep hinting that there is a structure beneath our chaos
- stories of wells, roots, fate, and memory mirror what we now see in psychology and neuroscience
- your own life has been nudging you—through breakdowns, breakthroughs, dreams, and patterns you couldn't ignore—toward seeing that “something deeper is going on here”

There is an old story of a god who hung on a tree to win the runes—symbols of knowledge and power that could shape reality.

You have not hung on a tree for nine nights.

But you have survived things. You have paid costs. You've earned the right to understand what's happening inside you, instead of living at the mercy of unnamed forces.

This book is my attempt to lay the “runes” of your inner process out in front of you:

- not as commands
- not as dogma
- but as symbols you can work with, rearrange, and make your own

The gods and ancestors, as I feel them, are less interested in you performing old pain forever and more interested in you **learning from it, transforming it, and choosing what you pass forward.**

The chain gives you a way to do that consciously.

You Are Not Starting from Scratch

One temptation at the end of a book like this is to think:

“Okay. Now I'm supposed to go become a completely different person.”

That's not the assignment.

Remember:

- You already carry **strength** in your well.
- You already have some **healthy recipes** that have kept you alive and kind.
- You already sometimes pause, choose, and tell truer stories—this book just gave you names for what you were doing.

This is not about erasing you and starting over.

It's about **keeping what's wise, updating what hurts, and owning that process as your right.**

You are the current edge of a long line.

You are not the first to struggle, and you will not be the last.

But you might be one of the first in your line to say:

- “This message ends with me.”
- “This shame does not get to rule my descendants.”

- “This silence, this overwork, this self-erasure—I understand why we did it. And I’m choosing something different now.”

That choice is not made once.
It’s made repeatedly, in many small moments.

What Success Actually Looks Like

Let’s be clear about “success” with this work.

It does **not** mean:

- you never get triggered
- you never have a meltdown
- you never fall back into old recipes
- you’re always calm, wise, and compassionate

Success looks more like:

- catching yourself **one link earlier** in the chain than you used to
- realizing “Oh, my Mood Ring was already stormy” and giving yourself a little mercy
- noticing a message in your well and whispering back, “I hear you, but I’m trying something else now”
- recognizing your body’s activation and offering it support instead of contempt
- renaming one feeling more accurately, even if your behavior hasn’t fully changed yet
- letting a slightly kinder identity stand at the Me Gate—for ten seconds longer than last time
- telling the story of an incident with more context and less self-damnation

Success is **using the map**, not walking it perfectly.

It is **experiment**, not perfection.

It is you, reshaping your inner kingdom with whatever tools and time you have, in the middle of a very real life.

Take What Works, Leave What Doesn’t

None of this is meant to become a new religion you beat yourself up with.

You're invited to:

- take the metaphors (Mood Ring, Well, Horn, Gate, Library) that resonate, and ignore the rest
- adapt the exercises into your own language, your own spiritual or cultural frame
- bring pages from this workbook into therapy, spiritual direction, a recovery group, a trusted friendship
- return to this material in cycles—when you're in a new season, a new relationship, a new layer of your healing

If some parts of this book land in you like **clear water**, drink deeply.

If other parts land like **stones**, set them gently on the ground and walk on.

You are not here to impress me, the gods, the ancestors, or anyone else with how perfectly you follow another set of rules.

You are here to live more truly as yourself.

A Blessing for Your Recipes

As you close these pages and go back to your life—your texts, your work, your family, your solitude—I want to leave you with a blessing:

May you see your reactions not as proof that you are broken,
but as messages from a system that has been trying to protect you for a very long time.

May you feel the backing of your ancestors,
not just in the wounds they passed down,
but in the stubborn will to live that brought you here.

May the gods, however you know them,
lend you the courage to look honestly at your patterns
and the gentleness to change them slowly.

May your Mood Ring have more days of clear sky.
May your Well grow a little cleaner.
May your body feel a little less alone.
May your Recipe Card gain a few new, kinder lines.
May your Me Gate make room for identities that honor your worth.
May your inner library learn to write headlines that match the full truth of who you are.

And when you falter—as all humans do—
may you remember:

You have a map now.
You have a forge.
You have a kingdom within.

And you are not walking it alone.



You're not broken. You're carrying a line of stories.

Before you ever learned your name, people were already writing scrips into your nervous system— family, culture, faith, and sheer survival. They handed down more than eye color and last names. They handed down *emotional recipes*: what to do with anger and fear, how to handle shame and need, whether you're allowed to take up space or meant to stay small.

Some of those recipes still protect you. Some quietly wreck your relationships, recovery, and sense of self.

Rewriting Your Emotional Recipes gives you a clear, myth-infused map of what's happening inside when something happens out there and you suddenly find yourself overwhelmed, numb, or reacting in ways you don't even like. Instead of calling yourself broken, you'll learn to see the chain of ancestry, chemistry, story, and choice that runs through every emotional storm— and how to change it.

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