

THRIVE WELL THERAPY · A SELF-GUIDED JOURNAL

Beyond Insight

*A phase-based journaling companion for the space
between understanding your story and feeling it settle
in your body.*

Rachel Hansen, LCSW | Thrive Well Therapy PLLC

EMDRIA Certified Trauma Therapist · Somatic-Informed Approaches · Las Vegas, Nevada

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How This Journal Works

Understanding what happened to you and feeling it resolve in your body are two different processes. This journal is built for the second one.

Good trauma work does more than give you language, it gives your nervous system real, repeated experience of safety, contact, and release, not just insight into what happened. This journal is not a replacement for that work. It is built to work alongside it, giving your nervous system more chances to practice that same experience in the space between sessions.

This journal is organized into four phases. They are not days on a calendar. They are stages of capacity, and you move through them at the pace your nervous system can actually hold.

Prompts are paired with an exercise designed to go with them, marked right on the prompt itself with the page it is on. These are meant to be done together.

1 Stabilization and Resourcing

Building the felt sense of safety and steadiness that everything after this depends on. No trauma content here, on purpose.

2 Titrated Approach

Moving toward the edge of what is difficult, without stepping fully into it. You are teaching your body that approach does not mean danger.

3 Processing

Direct contact with what happened. This phase is intended to be used alongside your therapist, not alone.

4 Reconnection and Meaning

Rebuilding identity, relationship, and future orientation once the earlier work has somewhere stable to stand on.

A Few Things to Know

A short list of what this journal is for, and what it is not for.

How to know when to move forward: you are ready for the next phase when the current one feels steady, not finished. If a prompt brings up more than you can hold, that is information, not failure. Return to Phase 1 and use it as often as you need to.

This journal does not replace therapy. It is designed to be used in the space between sessions, alongside your work with a licensed clinician. Phase 3 in particular is not intended for use without therapeutic support, especially if you are working through a specific traumatic memory.

A note on the exercises: this journal reflects countless hours over years of individual and group sessions that I created. The exercises in this journal are personal versions of techniques I use often in clinical treatment. Many of them have been modified for self-guided use and are not identical to how they are practiced in session where content can be personalized and deeper with direct support. Out of the 60 exercises in this journal, you are bound not to resonate with a few, or maybe even to hate some of them, and that is okay. If something does not fit for you, substitute your own way of doing it, or just do the journal prompt without the exercise. There is enough here for you to hold onto.

If something gets hard: hitting a hard spot or noticing distress increase during an exercise is information, not a sign to push through. Pushing through alone is not the same as sitting with someone who has a regulated nervous system and can help you titrate as you personally need. Bring what comes up to your therapist rather than working past it by yourself.

If you are in crisis or feel unsafe, this journal is not the right tool for that moment. Contact your therapist, call or text 988, or go to your nearest emergency room.

Wet Noodle

Your body sends your brain information about how much danger you are actually in. A tense body can keep your fight, flight, freeze, or fawn response running, which partly takes your prefrontal cortex offline, the section of your brain responsible for clear thinking, emotional regulation, and good judgment. Relaxing your body sends the opposite signal. It tells your brain that this much energy is not needed for survival right now, which lets your prefrontal cortex come back online.

Materials: none required, can be done anywhere, even while doing something else

- 1 Starting at the top of your head, scan slowly down through your body, noticing where you are holding tension.
- 2 Wherever you find tension, let that part of your body go as loose and limp as you can, like a wet noodle.
- 3 Continue scanning down through your shoulders, arms, chest, stomach, hips, legs, and feet, relaxing each area as you go.
- 4 You do not need to stop what you are doing to do this. It works just as well in a meeting, on the bus, or in the middle of your day.
- 5 Repeat the scan anytime you notice tension building again.

What this is doing: a tense body tells your nervous system to keep running fight, flight, freeze, or fawn, which partly takes your prefrontal cortex offline. Relaxing your body sends the opposite signal, freeing up that energy and letting your prefrontal cortex come back online.

This can be done as often as you like, and works well as a regular check-in throughout your day, not just when something feels hard.

Present in Motion

Some activities heal simply by requiring you to be fully present to do them safely or well, a sport, a workout, a walk somewhere uneven, anything physical that will not tolerate a wandering mind. The presence itself is often what does the work, not the activity's other benefits.

Materials: none required, just an activity that asks for your real attention

- 1 Choose an activity that requires real attention, something your body cannot do well on autopilot (kickboxing, rock climbing, dancing, running on an uneven trail, swimming).
- 2 As you begin, notice what naturally pulls your focus into the present moment, where your feet land, how your breath moves, the position of your body.
- 3 When you notice your mind drift toward the past or the future, do not judge it, just bring your attention back to what your body is actually doing right now.
- 4 Notice how staying present changes the activity itself. It may feel different, sharper, more alive, than doing it on autopilot.
- 5 When you are done, notice how you feel compared to when you started. Presence during movement can be its own form of settling, separate from anything you accomplished.

What this is doing: an activity that demands real attention gives your mind fewer places to wander, which can make presence easier to access through movement than through stillness. The healing is not incidental to the activity, staying present is the actual mechanism.

If you do not have an activity like this available, a walk works well too, notice your feet, your pace, and your surroundings deliberately as you go. Choose an activity you already know how to do safely, this is not about attempting something risky in the name of presence.

Before You Go

This is a small taste of a much longer path. The rest of it is still here, waiting for you, built so you don't have to walk it alone.

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About the Author



Rachel Hansen is a licensed clinical social worker and EMDRIA Certified Trauma Therapist based in Las Vegas, Nevada, where she runs Thrive Well Therapy PLLC. She specializes in trauma, religious trauma, and cult exit recovery, working with clients across Nevada, New Jersey, Colorado, and Utah, in person and by telehealth.

Her approach is somatic-informed, drawing on EMDR and nervous system education, built for people whose bodies learned to survive long before they had words for what they survived. She knows what healing actually feels like, not as a concept, but as something she lived herself.

This journal reflects countless hours of individual and group work, built from what actually helps, not what sounds good on paper. Sixty exercises, four phases, one honest attempt to give you somewhere to practice between sessions, or somewhere to start.

You do not have to prove anything here. Your story deserves to be taken seriously, including by you.

Find Rachel at thrivewelltherapy.com, or on TikTok and Instagram @exhalewithrachel.