



# Caring for Your Internal Needs

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Developing a healthy routine  
that promotes healing.

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**This book is dedicated to each person who desires to set boundaries and live their best life in spite of their past.**

# Why Can't I Live in Today

## What's So Great About Today?

For many who have experienced trauma and abuse, it can feel overwhelming to live in the present. Listening to thoughts about pain, safety concerns, and fears of the future can seem daunting and unpleasant. It can feel better when retreating to a fantasy world, distracting with addictive behaviors, or even just completing dissociating or “zoning out.”

The truth is, today was meant for you! You are meant to live in the present moment. You are designed to be able to experience the highs and lows of today and to be able to move through the different experiences and emotions of today. When we are able to do this, we are able to truly live and enjoy our lives. We will be able to enjoy the dance recitals, birthday parties, friendships, and successes in our own lives and those around us.

## The Past Holds Me Back

For some, thoughts of the past keep them from living in the present. Thoughts and emotions from trauma and abuse suffered in the past can seem to always be looming nearby. It can be difficult to pull away from them and be fully in the present. Working through past abuse is so important to find peace in today.

## The Future Stresses me Out

Often when thoughts are pulled into the present, it can feel as if they are immediately sling-shotted into the future. Fear of the “what ifs” and the “when will the bad things happen again” can keep some from being fully in the present. This is normal with a history of trauma, but with some work, it can be resolved.

## Self-Regulation

When you are dealing with dissociation, it can be difficult to know when you are actually in the present and responding to the present. Thankfully, your own nervous system can be a good clue to help you

determine where you are living in each moment. As you develop your ability to recognize when you have a need, and as you learn how to best meet those needs, you will be able to live in the present more and more.

Strategic pauses is a term introduced by Juliet Funt in her book *A Minute To Think*. These pauses are intention breaks in the day that can be seconds, minutes, hours, or longer to reflect and recuperate from what we are feeling internally. She applies this concept to the business world, but in this booklet, we are adapting the concept to our own internal and emotional world.

In the book, [Building Bounce](#), the authors describe how to do this in great detail. As we pay attention to our breathing, how our body feels, and the tension in our muscles, we can recognize quickly when we are experiencing stress and fatigue. As we recognize these symptoms, we can use proven self-regulation techniques to calm our bodies and take a strategic pause to allow our frontal lobe to recharge. The more we practice the steps of self-regulation and strategic pauses, the quicker we will be able to implement the process into our regular workday.

The small steps of self-regulation and strategic pauses will lead to healthy habits which can then transform your ability to heal and greatly improve your capacity to feel. Your recovery from intense emotions will be quicker and the results will last longer. In addition, when we take time for these steps, we will be able to better prioritize our tasks, reframe our current situation when needed, and continue to heal from any wounds in the past or the present. Overall, this can reduce your anxiety from the past, it can build your confidence for the future, and I can help you live more in the present!

### How Grounding Works

For the purpose of this booklet, we will focus on Funt's first recommendation for strategic pauses: recuperation. Being able to recuperate from stressful activities involves learning how the brain and body work, and incorporating regular strategies into your routine to foster the strength of your brain and body so they can function at their highest level.

## When to use Self-Regulation and Grounding Techniques<sup>1</sup>

<b>Intrusive Thoughts</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Thoughts and images associated with client’s trauma experiences</li><li>• Obsessive and compulsive desire to help certain clients</li><li>• Client/work issues encroaching upon personal time</li><li>• Inability to “let go” of work-related matters</li><li>• Perception of survivors as fragile and needing the assistance of caregiver (“savior”)</li><li>• Thoughts and feelings of inadequacy as a caregiver</li><li>• Sense of entitlement or special-ness</li><li>• Perception of the world in terms of victims and perpetrators</li></ul>
<b>Avoidance Symptoms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Silencing Response (avoiding hearing/witnessing client’s traumatic material)</li><li>• Loss of enjoyment in activities/cessation of self-care activities</li><li>• Loss of energy</li><li>• Loss of hope/sense of dread working with certain clients</li><li>• Loss of sense of competence/potency</li><li>• Isolation</li><li>• Secretive self-medication/addiction (alcohol, drugs, work, sex, food, spending, etc.)</li><li>• Relational dysfunction</li></ul>
<b>Arousal Symptoms</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increased anxiety</li><li>• Impulsivity/reactivity</li><li>• Increased perception of demand/threat (in both job and environment)</li><li>• Increased frustration/anger</li><li>• Sleep disturbance</li><li>• Difficulty concentrating</li><li>• Change in weight/appetite</li><li>• Somatic symptoms</li></ul>

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<sup>1</sup> [Compassion Fatigue & Burnout: Prevention and Resilience for the Workforce](#)  
by J.Eric Gentry, PHD, LMHC

## Symptoms To Watch For\*

### Physical Symptoms

	I have had increased absenteeism "sick days"
	I have been feeling physically ill
	I have been feeling fatigued
	I have been feeling keyed-up and nervous
	I am doing less rather than more exercise
	Normal sleep has been more difficult for me
	I have lost enjoyment in intimate and sexual activities

### Psychological Symptoms

	I have noticed myself being more cynical and pessimistic
	I noticed that I was trying to avoid feelings by numbing or shutting down
	I have had work-related nightmares/bad dreams
	I have lost interest and enjoyment in activities
	I have difficulty in making decisions or making poor decisions
	I feel like I have lost some of my self esteem

### Emotional Symptoms

	I have anger directed toward my supervisors or co-workers
	I have been feeling flat, depressed, and hopeless more than I used to
	I have been more angry and irritable than normal
	I have moments of dread when thinking about going to work
	I am having trouble finding hope
	I am less connected to my spiritual and religious beliefs than I used to be
	I have felt overwhelmed more than three times the past week

## Symptoms To Watch For (con't)

### Spiritual Symptoms

<input type="checkbox"/>	I have been avoiding spending time with my friends and family
<input type="checkbox"/>	I fear for the safety of myself and my loved ones
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have engaged less rather than more in activities that used to bring me pleasure
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have a lack of time for self
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find it difficult to trust others
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have feelings of despair and hopelessness

### Professional Symptoms

<input type="checkbox"/>	I have been unable to get work or something specific to work out of my head
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have had unwanted memories pop up in my head of past events from work
<input type="checkbox"/>	My productivity at work has been reduced
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have felt like quitting my job more than once
<input type="checkbox"/>	I find paperwork and menial tasks getting in the way of my enjoyment of work

\*This is the same list we use for assessing Compassion Fatigue in professionals. I have found those who are dissociative often suffer from Compassion Fatigue internally, so we are applying the list in this context. Five or more checked could indicate that you are needing to offer yourself additional self-care.



## Internal Self-Care

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As you utilize internal resources for self-care, you will find a sense of strength and safety that you have never known before. As this develops, you may find it easier to access memories of trauma that need healing. Over time, you may also find that you lose less time and feel more self-aware each day.

- Be curious
- Speak kindly
- Try to understand
- Allow to cry
- Honor noes
- Celebrate mistakes and successes
- Listen well
- Reading children's books
- Grounding or re-orienting techniques
- Distraction techniques
- Creative visualizations
- Create a schedule

## External Self-Care

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Often dissociative systems remain shut down because the external world feels unsafe. Sometimes this is true, sometimes it is a reflection of the fears of the past and emotional overwhelm. Begin the process of developing a sense of external safety by:

- Eliminating or setting strong boundaries in toxic relationships
- Establishing at least one healthy relationship
- Minimizing exposure to triggers
- Creating safety and comfort in home
- Learning things you like and dislike
- Finding your voice
- Acknowledging and validating feelings

## Build Routines of Self-Care

**We DO NOT recommend you attempt ALL of these suggestions. Pick one or two from each list to begin developing.**

### DAILY / WEEKLY

- Practice appreciation
- Utilize internal communication skills
- Engage in an enjoyable activity – use a self-care box
- Read a child’s story or watch a child’s show
- Exercise: minimum walk 20 mins 2-3 times a week
- Sleep: 7-8 hours per night
- Develop a healthy eating routine

### REGULARLY SCHEDULE

- Set aside regular weekends for rest, fun, and self-care
  - Reflect on the many blessings you have had in life.
  - Reflect on the things you have overcome and the ways you have grown.
  - Create space to process and feel the overwhelming memories and emotions.
  - Assess your current need for healing and growth and take steps towards those goals.
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### **To Learn More Consider Reading:**

Building Bounce: How to Grow Emotional Resilience by Marcus Warner and Stefanie Hinman

A Minute to Think: Reclaim Creativity, Conquer Busyness, and Do Your Best Work by Juliet Funt

The Power to Change: Mastering the Habits that Matter Most by Craig Groeschel



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