

A lush green forest with tall trees and dense undergrowth. The trees are mostly deciduous with vibrant green leaves, and the ground is covered in thick, green vegetation. The sky is visible through the canopy, appearing overcast.

Inward Vision

A TRAUMA RECOVERY WORKBOOK

MIKELLA MILLEN, MA, LCAT, ATR-BC

Introduction	3
How to use this workbook	4
Part 1: The Mind, Thought Patterns, and Beliefs	6
Our minds are shaped by our experiences.....	6
Connecting to your core self, and identifying your beliefs	8
Belief systems	11
Beliefs create patterns, patterns hold a story	14
Transforming patterns and establishing your own values	16
Differentiating emotions and thoughts/ideas	17
Emotions and emotional states	18
Feeling your emotions instead of analyzing them	20
Part 2: the Body, Fears, & Younger Selves	24
Tolerating feelings in the body	24
Fears and younger parts of ourselves	25
Confronting perfectionism and ambition	30
Confronting the false belief of failure.....	33
Energy is held in the body, energy is moved in the body	35
Sensory & body practices	37
Part 3: Nurturing the Spirit	43
You: self-love, self-worth, joy, pleasure.....	44
Other people: self-parenting, compassion, transforming resentments	52
Beyond: connecting with the earth and the elements	58
Suggested Reading and Resources	63

INTRODUCTION

This workbook is for you. Maybe you already know definitively that you have experienced trauma. Maybe the title resonated, or you read an excerpt from this workbook and felt that the exercises could be helpful. Maybe someone suggested it or gave you a copy. Whatever the reason, I'm glad you're here.

This is not a book *about trauma*. **This is a book about recovery.** When we experience highly stressful, dangerous, painful experiences, particularly when we are very young, we develop ways of coping that often create a sense of disconnection to our core sense of self—the deepest part of our being, where we find refuge and anchoring in who we are. It's the foundation of self-worth and our belief that we deserve to be here, that we deserve to be happy and loved, that *we are still deserving even when we make mistakes*. Some experiences can injure our spirit and fracture this knowing. I wrote this workbook with childhood trauma in mind, but much of what I will share can be applied to other experiences of trauma (and recovery) as well.

Inward Vision is about remembering who you were, before whatever happened happened. It is about rebuilding and repairing the foundation. It is partly a psychological exercise, but it's also a spiritual exercise. Spiritual doesn't mean religious. For some of you, spiritual will be an extension of religious practice and for some of you it will be the opposite, creating a venue for confronting religious trauma and redefining your beliefs and core values.

This workbook is a beginning. Which doesn't mean that healing has no end, or recovery isn't possible. It means what that looks like changes over time, and is impacted by our ability to access supports personally, in our communities, and in our society. My philosophy is rooted in the belief that **all healing is self-healing**. While we can benefit tremendously from an anchored, wise, and compassionate other holding space for us, it ultimately comes down to the work we will do for ourselves. No one else holds that power over you, there is no gatekeeper between you and your own knowing. In many ways I believe healing is reclaiming that power, a return to wholeness—reconnecting with *who you really are*, and expanding into who you can become.

In addition to personal histories, our families, and childhoods, our trauma response and recovery is also impacted by societal and community harm. Oppressive systems that are inherently exploitative and violent create different challenges in trauma recovery depending on your intersection of identities. This workbook does not have the ability to alleviate those problems, nor do any of us *individually*. Our nervous systems are wired to meet the needs of our experiences, including that not all of us can access safety in the same ways. My hope is that this workbook can help you *minimize the psychological and physiological strain* of a highly active nervous system response that serves a benefit to safety, and learn how to shift into restorative rest states *when in supportive and safe environments*. This will look different for everyone.

HOW TO USE THIS WORKBOOK

The following is informed by trauma theory, attachment theory, internal family systems, somatic practice, energy psychology and energy healing, esoteric and mindfulness practices, addiction recovery, and my general experience gleaned from over 10 years of providing trauma-focused therapy. There is a list of suggested reading and resources at the end of this workbook. However this endeavor is not intended to diagnose, or simplify, or help you analyze your “symptoms” or even label your experience. In-depth analysis and processing of trauma benefits from working with another person who can hear and reflect, and who can work with the specifics of your individual experience.

You’ll notice throughout that I am deliberately avoiding overly clinical jargon, medicalizing and pathologizing terms, or assessing the exact nature of your trauma response. The process presented here is about finding the solutions within yourself **because you are wise and you know yourself better than anyone**. I encourage you to use *descriptive, plain language* in your journaling and reflections so that you can capture the nuance of what you are experiencing. Witnessing your process of *describing* is another way that you honor your self-worth. You can take all the words you need, you can revisit sections or skip sections. And when it is beyond words, you can utilize other forms of expression.

The exercises and prompts presented here are not a substitute for therapy. That is not just a disclaimer. A benefit and a limitation of this workbook is that it is a self-lead, intuitive, “choose your own adventure” type of healing process. Reading and independent journaling cannot replace the need for community, for relationships, and for experiences that reflect a whole and vibrant version of you. You can use this workbook while working with a therapist, or before starting therapy, or after concluding a course of therapy. You can also use this if you aren’t interested in therapy. You will find many resources here that don’t require the high depth of analysis and trauma processing that often comes with trauma-focused therapy. The prompts will help you develop better insight and understanding into how experiences have effected you.

This book is roughly divided into three parts: **Mind, Body, and Spirit**. The first two address the cognitive or conscious mind, and the emotional or sub/unconscious experience (including somatic awareness). These deal more directly with **concepts** and developing self-awareness through journaling and reflection, as well as reconnecting to the energy body and intuition. The third part is more experiential and contemplative, and includes strategies and exercises to bridge the intellectual understanding with the existential skills we need to thrive and heal. You might be familiar with some of the information, feel free to skip ahead if you know it already and are motivated to get started with the practices, but please at least skim through and complete some of the journaling exercises. The flow of this is designed to pace the work and build on itself, however I defer to you to use it in the way that way supports you where you are!

You may also notice that indeed, these three sections overlap and connect to each other; they aren’t really separate, but have been divided for structure and for ease in learning and applying the concepts. I would strongly suggest keeping your responses to prompts in their

own separate journal or file: this creates some ritual and formality to approaching sensitive topics and allows you to “close the book” when you are ready to step away. It also gives you the flexibility to revisit these topics in the future and see what has changed.

*Sometimes trauma can feel like being haunted by the past, a deep well of pain that you can fall into if you get too close. I hope this workbook can help you befriend your ghosts and learn to acknowledge that well from a safe distance. **Nothing erases trauma, or cancels it out. But I do believe that we can heal.***

Healing has many endings and many beginnings— moments of closure and catharsis, followed by new turns around the spiral as we revisit experiences from a new vantage point.

*Not everything will resonate for you, try not to worry about the parts that don't apply to you. It's impossible to write a book that meets every person in the exact place they are, but my hope is that somehow it will meet you well enough to **create a beginning...***

PART 1: THE MIND, THOUGHT PATTERNS, AND BELIEFS

As important as it is to work with the body, emotions, and energy, we can't discount the role of the mind. The mind is an expression of our energy. We cannot shift energy in the body, or effectively move through and metabolize emotions if our minds are in a repeating pattern that is left unaddressed. Awareness of the mind is one way that we can begin to distinguish it from other aspects of our energy.

When we change our minds, we can begin to influence how we express ourselves.

OUR MINDS ARE SHAPED BY OUR EXPERIENCES

This part of the workbook is maybe the most challenging part to do by yourself. There is a tendency to believe that how we think about ourselves is a direct extension of the "truth." Sometimes these ideas are so old, we have never even asked ourselves if they were true or just something we were told or heard repeatedly. If you've been in psychotherapy before, chances are you've heard some of this already. But even if you have, consider moving through these journaling prompts anyway. They are informed by attachment theory, concepts around family systems and roles, and they invite you to bring curiosity to the line between *inherent temperament* and *traits of your core self*, and elements of personality that are not static.

Our minds are incredibly skilled at observing patterns, cause and effect, and creating thought/behavior patterns in response to our environments. Learning to identify patterns is a survival skill that quickly allows us to be more prepared and able to navigate an uncertain world. On the level of the Mind, **predictability and familiarity feels safer than the unknown.** The more we are exposed to an environmental or relational experience the more *familiar* it becomes, and we take less time we take to observe it in detail.

We start to fill in the blank after just a couple observations. We then create thought patterns, or *schemas*, or belief systems that help us understand and identify what's happening and initiate a response.

When someone approaches us on the street, holding a map, and says "excuse me" some of us may recognize this experience and expect the person to ask for directions. Chances are we would be right. If we have had an experience where we are asked for directions and then mugged or assaulted, we might quickly create a new pattern completion of suspicion and fear (along with physiological responses such as hairs on

end, rapid pulse, or feeling frozen in place). This new completion process may persist until interrupted.

Patterns help us react more quickly, and they also can prevent *wanted change*. Patterns can exist on the levels of mind, body, and spirit, and the most stubborn patterns often are present on all three.

Sometimes what we would consider our personality traits, that we might frame as “this is just who I am,” are actually patterns of thinking, feeling, believing, and expressing, which means they are changeable. The level of Mind is most closely associated with the element of Air: it is invisible but can be powerful, it can change direction in an instant, it can become heavily entrained into a particular pattern of movement, and with too much movement our vision can become impaired. *And yet*, the mind is the only level of energy that we can change simply by choice. *We can choose how to think*. Every thought you have, you are presented with a choice of whether to follow that thread or change it. Changing a belief on the level of thought might be instantaneous, but it’s very difficult to do. Because a well-reinforced pattern completion process tends to keep happening, and we will need to interrupt it over and over again. The root feelings that drive pattern completion take a long time to change. *Sometimes a very, very long time*. And we will need to keep choosing a new way of thinking, and a new way of being. It’s not easy!

Our minds are the place where we have the most control, and without addressing this layer we will keep repeating the same mistakes and the same patterns, even if they are no longer helpful or better suited to a situation that has long since passed. It’s useful to begin by identifying your thought patterns, beliefs, and ideas that comprise “who you are.”

Let’s explore...