

RECOVERY FOUNDATIONS

chapter one

LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

A Self-Care Triage Chapter

The beginning of a simple, self-caring, recovery building programme, inspired by the personal experiences of Ana Maria Santuario. There is a time when you may not be ready for treatment, or perhaps you're on the waiting list, maybe in your country (including the UK) you cannot gain access to a reliable and consistent national health service. During these times it is paramount that you keep your own head above water.

Decline is easy, especially when your uninterrupted trajectory is predictably downward, into the pits and hells of mental health struggles. This simple regime-building programme starts at the very beginning... from the day you cannot get out of bed. Start from there, it's okay to start from where you're at.

Life can throw some really challenging experiences in anybody's way. Sometimes these experiences change us, so much so that we cannot recognise ourselves. It can be very scary when a person becomes unable to take good care of themselves, be it because of active PTSD, residual shock, debilitating anxiety, crippling depression, or as a result of more complex psychological and neurological changes, the kind that require inpatient treatment and care.

In the darkest of times, even the simplest of routines can feel unattainable, such as taking care of your teeth (remember, you only get one good set), or getting dressed everyday and eating food that is not over 50% chemicals. This package of self-care guidance has been designed to support the development of basic self-caring routines, as well as self-compassion, which may very will lead to slow and steady progress in one's recovery.

I want people to know that if I can make it through Hell, so can they.

Every page, when coupled with *action,* integrates and scaffolds the rebuilding of the basics, those that are essential to stability and long-term progress in recovery. There is no quick-fire way out of hell, the journey in was likely longer and slower for most than they are yet aware of, and the way out may take just as long, but *there is a way out...* And that journey must be taken *a step at a time.* Not a day at a time, *a step at a time.*

Recovery comes with no set timeline, there is no end-game, no finish line, just the rebuilding of a life that was smashed to bits by experience itself; then comes the maintaining of the new life that you fought so hard to reclaim. Preservation of said recovery comes later, for now, take it a page at a time, spend ten weeks on one page if you need to. Recovery does not work in a straight line either, there will be ebbs and flows, regressions and pit stops, allowing them is your only job while this body and mind of yours focus on getting well enough to stay well indefinitely.

Good luck to you, you've got this;

you've got to have it,

nobody else can do this for you!

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START WITH SAFETY



A closed door changes lives. You are allowed to claim ONE ROOM in a property that is *all yours.*



You can put a lock on the door, or buy a door wedge.
Just be safe!



Wrap up, be cosy and safe.
Let your body be safe
until *it knows* that it is.



Just chill out, watch good vibes television, or listen to safe music, just *choose wisely* the energy you absorb right now. Stick with the predictable, *with the known.* You need no surprises right now.



Should you choose to go out, make it a safe outing. Nature is *always* safe, if you know where to go... and people can be safe too... should you choose the right ones.

I am an advocate for therapy, it has worked wonders for me... the safety of the therapeutic space is so very sacred. It gifted me back my life, and although my world looked different, there I was, waiting on the other side, glad to have been brave enough to keep going...

DOWN-REGULATE YOUR DISTRESS SIGNALS



JUST BREATHE and keep breathing. There are lots of videos to support this practice in the T.L.C. Playlist Library.



Weighted blankets can feel like a hug. The best thing is that for this to help, all you need to do is lay under one.



Place a long, heavy-set pillow along your spine and rest until your nervous system has calmed down a bit. Make sure to breathe. In trauma recovery especially, the human mind and body feel safer when the back has support and there can be no 'surprises'. This seemed to resolve any subconscious fear of threats fairly swiftly, especially once practiced for a time. My body came to know that this back pillow meant safety was in the here and now.



Travel inwards, into a memory or dream that was utterly safe and wonderful. My safe space was a tropical island, one I'd actually visited. I created collage posters, I drew the island, I wrote poetry about it and swam in the seas that I imagined. Healing can come from such a practice, but the first ambition here is to return to a felt sense of safety. This takes time to develop, my book, *Safer Shores of Me*, may help you establish such an inwards haven for yourself.

SHIFT INTO SELF-CARE BASICS



Brush your teeth at night, no matter what. Forget flossing, use mouthwash instead. *Then* brush in the morning too. Use an alarm if you need to.



Use a wash cloth to clean your delicate areas, even baby wipes on a bad day. Just do this one thing for yourself to feel fresher.



Forget the hair if you need to. If you prefer, put some castor oil on it, you can dilute it in water for a less weighted treatment. This will help prevent hair loss in trying times. Consider taking biotin too if hair loss is a struggle.



Now rest again, you are allowed to need this right now...

Now really, *rest again.* You did so great even if you tried nothing on this page and only read it through once. Recovery is long, complicated and tiring, I like to call it, 'The Invisible Work'. Trust me, you deserve to rest when you need to... *and you must do what you need*, it's the best thing you can do right now. You may wish to be further ahead, but hey, you're not there yet, but you can be. Just a day at a time... now breathe...

TIME WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU...



The only sure thing you have, is time... gift yourself with patience and the knowing that with every passing day this too, will be over.

Time wills you onwards, it will take you to where you need to be. Try not to worry about the how and when, *change will come,* whether you work towards it, or not. Time really is required right now, try to be thankful for it, and value it in a new way. Although life may be hard for you, *this really is temporary.* You just have to ride the waves of The Self, and find somewhere to float.

Taking your time is never easy, especially in this world of the next social media challenge, or celebration of someone else's happy days. Witnessing another's joy may sting for a while... but there'll be happier days for you too, even if that is in five years. We really do have to widen our perception of time and make it work *for us.* I challenge you to slow down and breathe, that's all...

ENJOY SOMETHING SMALL, AT LEAST ONCE IN A WHILE



Enjoy a facial, a store bought one works, or perhaps smother honey on your face, or mix clay with yogurt, the options are endless.



Light some candles, enjoy the ambiance. Scented would be kind to the nose. Enjoy filling up your environment with love and light.



Hop in the bath tub, add 7 drops of lavender essential oil, one drop for each chakra, that's my ritual anyway, you can develop your own. Maybe consider adding Epsom or magnesium salts.



Have a night in with a film, let yourself enjoy it, buy your favourite snacks, and rest.

Recovery can be *so long,* but as long as you are kind and gentle with yourself you will come to experience something different.

Give it time...



If you used to enjoy painting your own nails, do enjoy this ritual of self-care. Be you, choose your favorite colour and enjoy your own femininity.

HOMEMADE HONEY-BASED FACE MASKS



1 teaspoon lemon
1 tablespoon organic raw honey
1 teaspoon baking soda



1/2 ripe banana
1 teaspoon honey
1 teaspoon lemon juice



1 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon organic raw honey
1 tablespoon yogurt
¼ teaspoon turmeric powder



1 teaspoon organic raw honey
1 teaspoon natural clay
1 teaspoon organic,
raw apple cider vinegar

*all of these face masks are safe to leave on for 10-15 minutes. Do remove anything from the skin that causes irritation. It does take time to get to know oneself in this way.



1 tablespoon organic raw honey
1 egg white
2 drops essential oil

While you may not be able to go out into the natural world, you can enjoy smothering your skin with the richness of Mother Earth.

HOMEMADE YOGURT-BASED FACE MASKS



2 tablespoons of plain yogurt
1 teaspoon of turmeric powder



2 tablespoons of plain yogurt
1 tablespoon of ground oatmeal



2 tablespoons of plain yogurt
1 teaspoon of extra virgin olive oil



2 tablespoons of plain yogurt
1 tablespoon of fresh lemon juice



2 tablespoons of plain yogurt
1 tablespoon of brewed green or chamomile tea (cooled)

*all of these face masks are safe to leave on for 10-15 minutes. Do remove anything from the skin that causes irritation. It does take time to get to know oneself in this way.

Life can be really hard and you deserve such indulgences as mixing up a face mask and then resting in it. In this way you soak up life-energy, the skin absorbs much that it comes into contact with. Rest in the beauty of nature, as well as your own.

LET'S THINK ABOUT FOOD, AND LET'S KEEP IT SIMPLE

Dietary requirements can be kept simple and achievable, when you are unable to commit to cooking there *are* solutions to your nutrition management, lets take a look at some recovery-life hacks:



BREAKFAST

Some call it the most important meal of the day, I say, "Eat when you're hungry". We have several 'easy' options to choose from:

- any fruit whatsoever
- smoothies
- sliced apple and 2 tablespoons of peanut butter
- bread and butter
- toast with butter
- toast, butter and jam / peanut butter and jam (the latter has protein too)
- no-low sugar cereals (no sugar is best), add honey to bran flakes if you need the sweetness
- granola and yogurt
- granola bar
- cereal / fruit or nut / protein bar





Take note of these healthy alternatives:

- use non-dairy milks - oat, soya, almond, coconut.
- sweeteners - honey, maple syrup, agave.
- chocolate - buy dark chocolate with a high cocoa or cacao percentage. Use portion control, maybe buy a pack of chocolate chips and savour the tiny morsels.
- sweets / candy - dried fruit
- crisps / chips - each dry crunchy cereal, allow whatever cereal you want; nuts and seeds with flavour; healthier dried, mixed-vegetable choices.



“I CANNOT MANAGE LUNCH AT ALL!”

In recovery, we need to eat good energy, but also to preserve what little energy we have been gifted with that day. By *choosing* what you commit to, you can create a routine to build on. Don’t try all at once, go slow...



LUNCH

Making lunch can feel like having to climb a mountain, keep it very simple and just plod on, everything will change, given time.

SANDWICHES:

- cheese - later add ins: tomato, onion, cucumber
- peanut butter and jam
- sandwich spread from a jar
- ham (and cheese)



STEPPING IT UP:

- avocado (mashed), tomatoes, spring onion (chopped), squeeze of lemon, salt and pepper
- egg mayonnaise (with salad)
- tuna, mayonnaise and sweetcorn

These can be made and kept in a tub in the fridge for the next day.



ON TOAST:

- same avocado mix on toast (see above)
- fried or scrambled eggs (add-ins: garlic, onion, tomato, seasoning)
- baked beans and tomatoes



TIPS & ADD-ONS:

- buy ready made salad in a box to add into the mix, put it in sandwiches or on the side of the plate.
- add olives, cornichons, feta cheese.
- have fruit salad on the side.
- when you really cannot face food prep, turn to an easier kind of lunch...

LIGHT AND BREEZY LUNCHES

Sometimes, we simply cannot manage even the smallest of tasks, but we've still got to eat, right? Having self-compassion is your key to relaxation. Acceptance of your own reality will help you move forward.









MEALS REQUIRING LOW INWARDS ENERGY

GRAB AND GO:

- fruit and nut mix (*love* dried cranberries)
- yogurt and granola
- granola bars
- fruit and nut bars
- cereal
- bread and butter (try throwing olives, cheese cubes, or something else on your plate)
- buttered toast
- cream cheese on toast, throw on some tomatoes if you are able to
- hummus, guacamole or salsa with crackers or pita bread, if you can, try dipping carrots, celery or cucumber
- fresh fruit
- simple smoothies

FROM THE STORE:

These days plenty is available in the supermarkets that is low in preservatives and has been made with REAL FOOD. You do not need to be Nigella Lawson or Jamie Oliver right now. Just buy the healthiest pre-packaged food when you can, and stick to fresh but simple when you cannot. Examples of what to look for include: soups, stews, noodle pots, rice dishes and more. Allow a take away once a month, make it close to pay day so you can truly enjoy it without worrying about finances.

READY TO GIVE DINNER A GO?

In my experience, lunch is easier to make consistently than dinner, usually cooked at a time when the body and mind have less vital energy left to use. Should you feel like trying to add dinner into your routine, these solutions help to manage the experience...









DINNER

SIMPLE, YET DELICIOUS:

- **fresh plates make things soooo much easier,** include on your plate, things like: pre-packaged fresh falafel, pita bread, hummus, avocado, olives, gerkins, feta cheese, tomatoes, and pre-washed side salad.
- **buy a sandwich maker, enjoy something hot:** beans and tomatoes; cheese, tomato & pesto; ham and cheese; tuna melt (tuna and cheese).
- **on toast:** bruschetta mix and melted cheese; fried eggs, cooked on top of tomatoes (*season);* avocado mix with salad on the side.
- **easy wraps:** salsa or hummus, pre-washed salad, and something 'meaty', be that falafel, a veggie burger, or, if you have the energy to cook something, chicken or beef strips, bacon, add cheese, only if you've had a low-fat intake day.

MANAGING YOUR ENERGY:

Should you feel a deep need for a wholesome dinner, perhaps do the prep in the morning so that all you have to do is cook the food later on. There are ways to handle your low-energy and need for safety in bed, and that is by micro managing tasks that feel too much. Perhaps try to make one meal a week, instead of 7 all at once. You must remember to grow slowly into your recovery, and that any over-reaching can result in relapse and regression.

NIACIN, VITAMIN B3, LET'S CONTEMPLATE IT...



Niacin deficiency is a real thing. A low intake can lead to depression and psychiatric disorders. Dr Abram Hoffer designed a Niacin Treatment Pathway alongside AA (Alcoholics Anonymous). Progress was made. Yet no mainstream movement took hold. *Food matters,* a documentary, notes how niacin 'cured', or 'balanced', a women in total psychotic relapse.

Go to YouTube, type, 'Food Matters Niacin', and absorb the information freely available. There is also a book by Dr Abram Hoffer, I haven't read it in its entirety yet, but when I'm well enough, I will, it is titled, 'Vitamin Cure for Alcoholism'.

Everything is worth a shot when you're unwell, there is a 'flush effect' when you take the niacin, so start at 500mg daily, then work up slowly and at a comfortable pace. In one week, review from there. You can also buy a 'no-flush' niacin, which one you take is up to you, niacin is niacin, to an extent.

With so many fans of niacin, it is hard to avoid the stare in the face that is the potential solution to our depressions and other inwards sufferings. We have options, lots of them, and Niacin treatment is one of them. I am about to begin the treatment myself, after it having been a success some years ago. I'll let you know how it goes online.

The only drawback is the aforementioned side-effect of 'flushing'. This is your blood vessels opening, so you go red, get hot, itch a bit, for at least 30 minutes to 2 hours (initially at least). However, the benefits are worth this *temporary* experience. The opening of your blood vessels also allows for improved blood flow, effective toxin drainage and your body becomes better at cleaning itself.

Vitamin B3 changes lives daily, and other health benefits include, but are not limited to, a more effective metabolism, increased energy, lowered blood pressure, and more.

LET'S TALK ABOUT ACTUALLY TAKING IT, UNPRESCRIBED BY A DOCTOR...

There's a secret no one's telling you, nature has all we ever need. It has the answers to much of our pain. So, when we allow ourselves to rely more on natural, pure, so called 'clean' and 'organic', in other words, *real, true food*, we align too, with our body's natural way of functioning. Your body is tired when you abuse it, and you need all of your vital, life force energy to guide you along this path towards recovery maintenance. So, a devotion to healthy choices is always pivotal and you must trust that every stone laid will build a new way of life, one with *you* as the only focus and centre.

BE CAUTIOUS AS TO WHAT YOU ABSORB



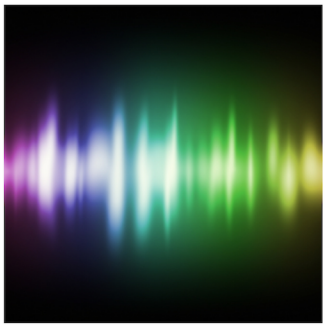
Watch your favourite television, the stuff that makes you smile at least a bit... Take in healing images and create uplifting feelings. Avoid too much violence, war, gruesome imagery, it's not good for you.



Create a 'good vibes' only space for yourself. A room where nothing ever 'comes for you', unless you choose for it to. Shutting yourself away from the world can be good for you.



Some people are good for us, others are not. We can only get well when we choose to be in good company... or none at all. Sometimes our sensory systems are overwhelmed and triggered into outdated responses by the world around us. It's okay to be safe and not see those who may be causing your recovery to stall.



Listen to music that is safe. romantic love songs are out, perhaps even your favourite dance tunes, those that make you remember your old self. They may be back yet, just keep stepping, and surround yourself with safety.

SOUND BATHS CAN HEAL YOU EFFORTLESSLY.

Recovery is delicate. Go slow, and be mindful of the choices you make each day. All 'small' choices build your entire life, your environment too. What you watch, listen to, who you speak to, *all matter*. Choose wisely. Be cautious. Be safe.

MOVEMENT - WHEN IS THE RIGHT TIME FOR MORE OF IT? (likely answer is... not yet!)



Movement can be great for us, but so can staying still. For some people in recovery movement is not yet possible, it might lead to crying or rage. Does trapped energy start to flow because we move? Perhaps. Try letting your body decide, when the time is right your progression will become quite natural.

When the body resists moving, allow it to. The body knows best what it needs. There will be many stories about weight, stamina, cardio-training, strength training and toning living inside of you. *Let these stories go,* they will not serve you during this chapter of your life.

Making movement your priority will come at a cost if you try to move too soon. It will likely borrow energy from the small, but important activities: taking your vitamins, cooking one meal a week, or even brushing your hair before bed. When you are ready, your foundations will be more than strong enough to hold up whatever practice it is that you choose. You can explore recovery supporting movements in the T.L.C. playlists that I have created for you.

WHY IS RESTING IMPORTANT?



I prefer to label it as *resting,* the time when I am doing, 'The Invisible Work'. When you have been through things that are shocking and terrifying, when you have lived through events that are relentlessly abusive to the body and mind, this requires your compassion and attention. It also requires you rest and allow the mind-body to calm the heck down and find safety again. To have an awareness that trauma, in a variety of manifestations, can live in your body for a *really* long time, you may come to understand that compassion is your only true requirement during this period of your life.

You want to be better, but you cannot be tomorrow or the next day. Rebuilding health, as well as a felt sense of safety, is the key to reclaiming the life you are truly deserving of. Time will go slowly, painfully so, you will believe change will not come for you, *you WILL think these thoughts.* You will lose hope, give up almost weekly, until you finally see a sliver of light at the end of the tunnel. That light is you, the future version of you, waiting in time and space for you to take all of the steps required before you can sit basking in the glory of your own triumph, that being your very long, arduous, and challenging recovery forming chapter of life.

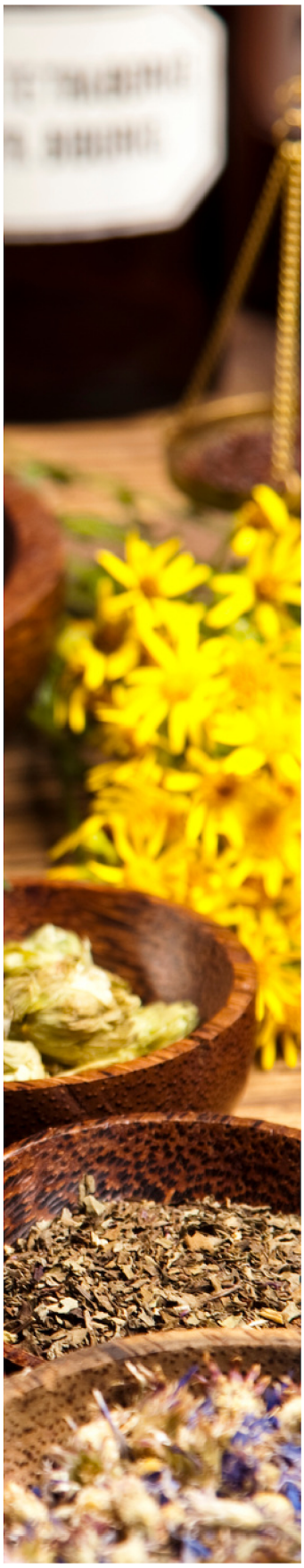
REST UP! YOU DESERVE TO REST,

YOU'VE SIMPLY BEEN THROUGH HELL.

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THE RIGHT VITAMINS MAY HELP TOO

So, we covered Vitamin B3 (niacin) quite thoroughly already, here is a list of what has served me or people I know and care for...



EVERYTHING IS WORTH YOUR CONSIDERATION

Trouble sleeping?

- try taking **melatonin** before bed.

Trouble thinking clearly?

- **cucumin** can aid the repairing of the brain, supports new neuron formation, improves memory and lowers neuroinflammation.

Low mood?

- high dosage **Vitamin D** intake.

Recovering from alcoholism?

- **thiamine** (vitamin B1) deficiency likely ails you, by taking it you improve your cognitive functioning and reduce other risks associated with high volumes of alcohol intake.

Mobility struggles?

- **n**atural **collagen** supplements
- natural **protein** substitutes (such as those added to smoothies)
- **cod-liver oil**

Hair loss?

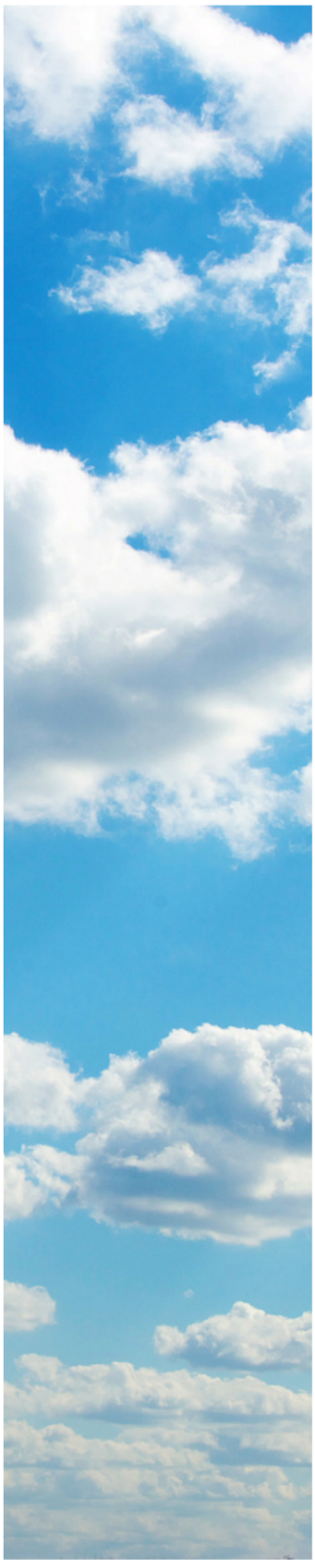
- **biotin** in the right form can restore hair growth patterns.
- **collagen** supplements
- **amla oil, caster-oil** (latter needs watering down)

Looking for a general well-being supplement?

- taking a **multivitamin** only benefits you when it is non-synthetic. **iherb** is a great online shop to explore, there are many reviews to inform your choices. Do look to the ingredients in your multivitamins (as well as all other vitamins) to safeguard yourself against wasted money and time.

THE SELF HELP LIBRARY IS THERE FOR YOU

By helping yourself you can move forward knowing you need not rely on the world to keep you steady, and there can be no better recovery mindset than this. Self-reliance is your strongest tool of resilience.



EMBRACE A LIFE-LONG DISCOVERY OF YOURSELF

In the Self-Help Library you will find collections I have curated especially for you. Everything found will have been utilised as an experience during my own recovery, even if it was only a few times (every little action counts - and experimenting was the path to discovery). I now embrace my right to CHOOSE how I continue to get better because now I know what works for me.

Recovery Foundations is all about laying new life foundations, those that keep you steady, standing and well enough to enjoy life. These practices, resources, and moments of encouragement are all there to serve you in your time of need:

- Affirmations
- Breathwork
- Chair Movement Work
- Chants & Mantras
- Energy Work
- Healing Vibrations
- Lyricless Music
- Meditations
- Nature Sounds
- Posters
- Physical Health - learn more
- Prayers
- Qi Gong
- Self-Care Practices
- Sleep Support
- Sound Baths
- Stronger Movement Work
- Tapping Practice
- Vagus-Nerve Stimulation
- Yoga Practice

If you only have 10 minutes or want something short to start with, turn to the T.L.C. playlist, 'Less than 10 minutes?'

PERFECT TIMING



Although the Self-Help Library can support you towards supporting yourself, it will only help when the timing is right for you. Sometimes, we can attempt a practice and it feels like it hurts too much, try to be mindful of the reality that it is not the practice that hurts, but what it is giving space to feel and re-experience.

Painful memories live in your cognitive mind, your emotional body, and in your molecular makeup. Do not judge your pain, it's there whether you want it to be, or not. When too much pain sits in the way of an experience, just say to yourself, 'The timing must not be perfect yet.' Then get back to safety, *your form of safety.*

Your mind and body are super-intelligent, even more so than Einstein, Hawkins or Jobs. If you disagree, ask yourself, *can they create and sustain life?* The answer is a resounding, *no.*

Your body and mind know how to heal... let them.