

INNER CHILD JOURNALING GUIDE

NATE POSTLETHWAIT

Welcome to my inner child journaling guide! I want to share several points with the hopes that you feel empowered and connected as you begin this practice of connecting to your inner child in the pages ahead.

First, I am not a therapist or mental health professional. I share that because trauma therapy has played a significant role in my healing and must be noted, that the words ahead come from personal experiences, rather than training. I am a fellow survivor who after years of EMDR, IFS and talk therapy needed more in between my sessions and wanted to do some of the work privately, on my own. I created a framework that helped me have a better connection with myself. This is what I'm sharing with you with the hopes it resonates. The guide is based on my experiences, so it may be limited in reaching your exact circumstances.

Inner child work has been a key resource for me that taught me about understanding trauma and my mind-body connection. I practice this on a regular basis. When I tap into this work I find significant peace and sacred connections with myself.

With that, if at any moment you feel this work is too much or it creates anxiety, please take a break or put it down. Part of this work (or any healing work) is you feeling safe and empowered. That does not mean you are weak. It does not mean you aren't trying hard enough. It means that now is not the right time or there is a different type of connection that's going to work better for you. Make it your goal to find that safe resource.

A PIECE OF MY STORY:

I am a trauma survivor who has spent most of my life assuming I was at fault for the trauma that took place growing up. The sexual abuse started at five. There were different chapters and different abusers until I was 14. In between were stays in foster care due to my father's abuse and layers of other trauma. Like most of us, my interpretation of my childhood was that I was unlovable. I created a life where I attempted to never think about that narrative. I became the adult who overextended himself in work, relationships and anything that gave me space away from myself. I had a difficult time embracing the idea that I could ever feel whole.

The first time my therapist explained inner child work, I refused to participate. I did not understand the concept of an innocent kid inside of me who still felt the impacts of trauma. It took some time to warm up to the idea, but once I got to know him and saw what he was carrying, I made it my mission to let him know that I am here and I will always protect him.

I have felt alone and out of place most of my life. The connection with my inner child has offered me the most in-depth and powerful sense of wholeness. For me, it has been the sacred process of feeling at home inside my body and offering my inner child space to rest.

I am sending you all the brave applause for being willing to look back at the places that hurt in order to invite a better understanding of and connection to, yourself.

I'M GLAD YOU'RE HERE!



FRAMEWORK 1

WHO IS THE INNER CHILD?

The inner child is a subconscious version of us. They are the carriers of old experiences. That means the specific experiences that made a significant impact in your life. This is what your inner child is made of. They exist out of not having proper support and validation. They are stuck in those experiences and remain on high alert to warn us of red flags that remind them of their prior pain. They exist because they were not prepared for what took place and they have remained in survival mode ever since.

A FEW THINGS TO NOTE:

- Our inner child is spoken of as an individual in order to create a being (and more specific attention) that experienced hardship. Acknowledging their age (my five-year-old self) helps us put proper framework around how a child experienced those painful memories. We often believe we are far removed from our experiences (forgive and forget), not realizing they are showing up in our new experiences-impacting our ability to remain present due to their past pain.
- It is very normal to have a wide range of emotional responses to your inner child. That includes fear, anger, indifference, pity, compassion. We are talking about a part of us who carries specific memories that we've worked overtime to forget. Our work is in offering that younger version of us relief from living inside those memories.
- Our inner child's main role is attempting to keep us safe when they detect harm. They have no idea that we are now grown. They live in old experiences that have put them in survival mode. That survival mode is what applies pressure for them to be hyper-vigilant and always reminding us of what they perceive as danger.

FRAMEWORK 2

YOUR INNER CHILD:

AGE	Year:	AGE	Year:	AGE	Year:	AGE	Year:
Memory:		Memory:		Memory:		Memory:	
Experience:		Experience:		Experience:		Experience:	

TIMELINE: BIRTH TO 18

Write out a few specific memories that had life changing impact on you. Write your age at the time and what happened in the timeline above. If you do not know your age, simply write an age range.



From the experience above, can you write the age of your inner child on the shape, and how they understood their experience? (It was my fault, I felt alone, I was scared.)

How might these experiences show up in your life now? (I can't trust. I am bad.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

FRAMEWORK 2 (CONTINUED)

YOUR INNER CHILD:

You've just created an understanding of what lives inside of you. This is your inner child. This is a narrative that goes on now, when your inner child is triggered by events that feel similar to their experiences long ago.

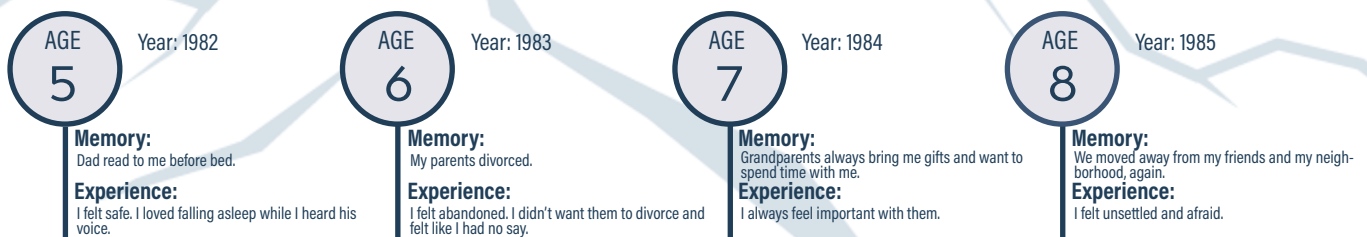
Examples: (this is not suggesting these scenarios would play out this way for all kids. It is an example only.)

If as a child you experienced a parent leaving, a parent passing away, or sudden role changes in your caretakers, you may struggle with abandonment.

For example: As an adult, this can show up in relationships where an argument with your partner, for your partner is just an argument. For you, it is a fear that they are going to leave for good. You may feel an intense level of anxiety as the conversation escalates. That intensity comes from your inner child. They perceive threat in a childlike way. This is a young kid's wounds showing up in your adult relationship. The inner child is terrified of further pain from their prior experiences and does not have the capacity to navigate adult relationships.

This is your inner child reacting out of survival mode. It is their best attempt to stay safe and not feel further harm.

EXAMPLE TIMELINE



HOW TO ADDRESS THIS WILL FOLLOW IN THE PAGES AHEAD.

FRAMEWORK 3

YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR INNER CHILD (REPARENTING):

As we begin understanding what our inner child has carried, we often feel afraid that we can't give them what they need. You have two specific (and very important) resources to offer your inner child immediately.

- 1** You know they survive what scared them then. They don't know that. They're still in survival mode, waiting to let go.
- 2** No matter where you are in your life, you have a better understanding of what a child needs than your inner child did.

THE FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR INNER CHILD:

Imagine the safest possible room or space you can think of. Put pillars in each corner of that space. In each corner is one of the pillars of communication below:

PATIENCE | KINDNESS | CURIOSITY | COMPASSION

PATIENCE:

Your inner child may not recognize who you are. They may not see an offering to connect as relief. They may see it as a threat. Choosing patience will create breathing room for you and the inner child to build a lasting connection over time.

KINDNESS:

Your inner child has had enough hard experiences. The likelihood of them knowing how to be kind to themselves is very low. You choosing kindness as one of the pillars will also create additional safe space.

CURIOSITY:

This is an extremely important part of communicating with your inner child. Your inner child is doing their best to keep themselves safe and not experience further harm. They will show up the best way they know how, but it will always be childlike. Be curious about their intensity. Be curious about their attempts and how they show up in your life.

COMPASSION:

Your inner child does not know how to offer themselves compassion. It's not part of their vocabulary. Compassion eventually gives them the freedom to know they are safe and can properly hand over what they've been carrying, trusting you see and understand their pain and how tired they are.

FRAMEWORK 3 (CONTINUED)

YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR INNER CHILD (REPARENTING):



COMMUNICATION TO STAY AWAY FROM:

- "You should have ..."
- "I wish you would have..."
- "You just need to..."

The inner child lives in previous experiences. While you can do guided visualization of you rescuing them (more on that later in the guide), they cannot change their circumstances. It is very important that we never blame the inner child for their circumstances, no matter how much we may have been taught that it was their fault.

FRAMEWORK 4

WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR INNER CHILD:

These have been the most effective ways I have been able to create and understand my inner child and what they need. Take note of which of these come easiest to you and also feel free to make up your own avenue of connecting.

PHOTO TIMELINE:

Several years ago in a dark place in my life, I took a box of photos and made three rows on my living room wall of photos of myself from five years old to my early 30s. I printed out every quote that meant something to me and surrounded all of those photos with those quotes. Every night I would close the curtains, light candles, and put one hand on a quote while placing my other hand on the photo of me I felt needed it most. I did this for a month. This is what cracked open much of my desire to give freedom to myself and stop allowing my inner child to hurt. It was the most practical way to start applying new narratives while witnessing old narratives through the pain in the pictures. This has been one of the most helpful processes I've done.

CANDLELIGHT CEREMONIES:

This process has continually brought such pleasure and peace, no matter what is going on around me. This entails turning off all the lights and illuminating a small space by candlelight. In this space, I invite the younger version of myself to show me how they feel. I immediately visualize how they are responding to my world at the moment. If my world is chaotic, they feel chaotic. If my world has a lot of pleasure, they feel at ease. These parts of us are deeply impacted by our day-to-day. Sitting by candlelight and talking with them and inviting them to share is a calm way to understand what needs attention. I often visualize caring for my inner child in this space. I imagine them feeling close to me and when they reveal memories to me I remind them that I am here now and my role is to protect them.

FRAMEWORK 4 (CONTINUED)

WAYS TO CONNECT WITH YOUR INNER CHILD:

DRIVES:

This visualization exercise has also been incredibly helpful. I visualize my inner child safely buckled in the passenger side when I go for rides. I talk with him and ask him how he feels. Once you tap into these parts of you, you will have much clarity and quick connection as they adapt to the long-overdue safety that we are bringing to them. I will often see him leaning up against me, which shows that he feels safe.

WRITING LETTERS:

This is one of the most commonly used practices for inner child work. You can write a letter to different ages of yourself ("Dear 7-year-old Nate..."). This is a great opportunity to use the four pillars of communication in written form.

- Tell them how you feel about what they went through.
- Tell them what you would like to do for them to help them feel safe.

Switch hands (use your non-writing hand) and write a letter back from the inner child to you.

JOURNALING PROMPTS TO MY INNER CHILD:

PRINT THIS PAGE

What happened today that made you feel uncomfortable?

What support did you need in that moment to feel safe?

Is there a specific memory that comes up for you that is triggered by my experience today?

Memory:	Memory:	Memory:	Memory:
Experience:	Experience:	Experience:	Experience:
AGE	AGE	AGE	AGE
Year:	Year:	Year:	Year:

TIMELINE: 18 TO NOW

NEXT STEPS:

WRITE OUT ANY PRIOR MEMORIES THAT ARE TRIGGERING YOUR INNER CHILD:

Affirm their experience. ➡ Thank them for reminding you of why they are afraid. ➡ Ask them if they are comfortable with letting you manage that for them (Meaning they do not have to carry that anymore as a kid, and you will help them find relief). ➡ Ask them what they need from you to feel safe.

This is a great opportunity to use one of the connecting techniques from above.

What did your inner child love as a kid (being outside, reading, laughing with friends)?

In what ways can you honor that for them today?

JOURNALING PROMPTS TO MY INNER CHILD: TIMELINE



- This is how we begin to recognize how old memories are showing up in our lives now.
- This is where we apply the framework to offer relief to our inner child.
- This is where we invite them to rest so they no longer feel they need to alert us because we are seeing them and safely offering them rest.
- This process is ongoing and will take time to grow accustomed to. I don't do this everyday, but I have created a routine where it's a regular part of my self-care. Go at the pace that helps you feel connected to the process and, most importantly, safe. The more relief you are able to offer your inner child, the less they will need to attempt to guard you from circumstances they do not understand. I have found in this work, the inner child has become a powerful instinctual guide for me. The connection to the inner child is also a connection to what we have experienced, how it has shaped us and the best ways to provide safety in connection with ourselves and others going forward.
- Again, your safety is key. Your connection to your inner child is a process. Add, edit, take away anything you need to from this guide to use it in a way that suits you best.

Tag me in your stories and posts when you have breakthroughs from this journaling guide. I'd love to share that with our community! @nate_postlethwait