

Introduction

The cool early morning air dances gracefully through my window, carrying the transition of the seasons. It moves with ease in an uneasy world. Gradually uplifting the scent of floral roses and dampness from the night rain, the last cry of summer.

The glistening water weighs down the grass and the leaves, stretching their muscles gently before giving into the great fall down to earth, a blanket before the winter slumber.

Welcome To My Garden



In staring out the dirty glass of my window every morning, watching the world turn and my life with it, I have pondered how to move through this broken, unstoppable world with the same ease. Can we gracefully move through a day if pieced together in uneasy bodies?

We have bodies aching with soreness and suffering. Wounds buried deep and rattling in the pit of your stomach next to your breakfast.

Tension creaks from past turmoil and in anticipation of the trials to come.

Joints laced together from anxious, intrusive thoughts and rattling breaths from the pressures and responsibilities of the human experience.

This is not lamenting.
This is living.



The awareness of grace is the realization that there is a constant battle against it, and you (the vehicle) must coexist with the opposing forces of a broken world, not rage a continuous and never-ending war against it. You are much too precious to expend your energy on that. Instead, learn to coexist with life's groans and construct your happiness.

Seeing the imperfections of your day to day gives you the power and wisdom required to heal. By ignoring this truth, you are indulging in temporary gratification. A state that usually creases into the depths of a heavy, tired heart. Leaving you to run back to bad habits, the grappling of more instant gratification in a long-term game.

Perhaps this is not the encouragement you were looking for, but the best encouragement I've received personally in the depth of my pain or lost states have been that of honesty.

About Me

I am an over-educated multi-disciplinary artist from a small cozy corner of New England. I deeply love the smallest moments of life and, most of all, my husband and family.

I have also battled immense pain, from illnesses and disabilities starting from childhood to multiple mental health conditions, including a season of intense suicidal ideations. I have known darkness and created my light source to navigate out of the depths of it through hard work, my undivided gift of acquiring both and lessons.

I spit together words and stories out of thin air, just like my intensive thoughts. I play with many paints and digital art under the title Art Director and pour my soul into every droplet of creativity as that has been called of me, but it has often led me to humor.

In this unending back-and-forth battle of juggling the responsibilities of life, love, faith, career, health, and so on, I had to pursue my biggest project of learning how to balance it all.

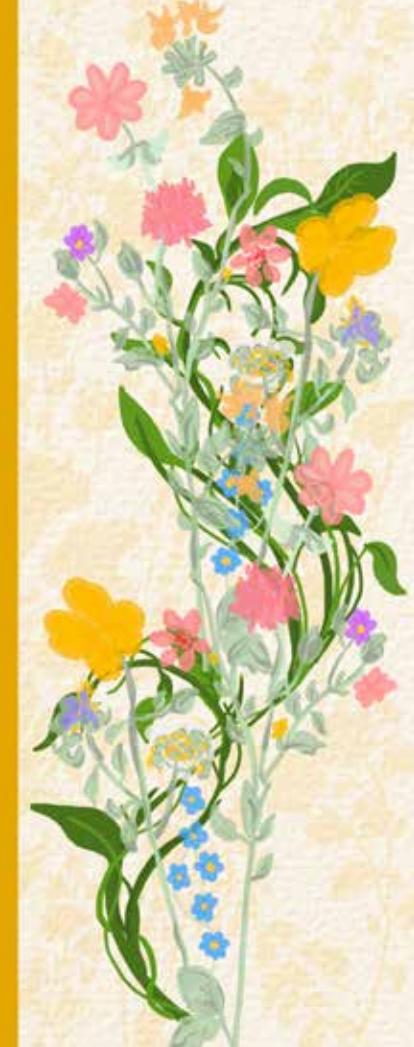
In this pursuit, I have taught this method to over 3,000 people in online classes and transformed lives through 1:1 coaching to help them find a balance in life as well.

I have overcome most of my mental health gripes, thoughts, and trials. I have healed many physical ailments that used to put me in a broken state through wisdom and consistency, and I have always created space to have growing ideas and love.

It is not perfect, but I am grateful for it, and I know I wanted to make these little pieces of organization and thought available to you!

Please note I am not a licensed mental health or medical professional. Any actions you choose to take are your own responsibility.

I hope you enjoy this journey with me.
Made with ❤ by Sarah Edwards



GARDEN ANALOGY

"When I pieced together becoming, growth, exploration, and change, I couldn't help but think of nature. Seasons, birth, flowers, sun, and everything constantly grows and changes. All are in a healthy state of becoming, as the Creator designed it."



When I was in intensive treatment for my Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) after dealing with debilitating intrusive thoughts for many years, I yearned for little bits of joy and normalcy. I had panic attacks and extreme anxiety provoked by my OCD since childhood but had only discovered that was the true culprit as I stepped into adulthood due to a late diagnosis.

As I healed, it was like I was stepping into a new me, over and over again. I would always be in a state of becoming. I realized I would endure seasons; some beautiful days and others covered in ice and gray clouds for weeks.

Productivity used to be a toxic trait for me. In the past, I would associate my worth with my output level, and I believed that my job title was the only thing I should use to determine my place in the world. I felt invisible otherwise. Therefore, I became a workaholic and abused my mental health, wellness, relationships, and time with family.

In reality, my workaholic nature was a form of self-sabotage that prevented me from doing the arduous work, digging into the uncomfortable places of my mind—things like therapy homework, eating balanced food, or taking the risk of pursuing new relationships. I used my imbalance as an excuse not to do something challenging and uncertain. I blamed a lack of discipline when it was a lack of awareness.

The medical terminology tied around my treatment and the academic-like words I saw on paper felt stale and dry. I was intimidated as I attempted to create routines and good habits, jump back into the workforce, or rebuild friendships. Interspersed with the "perfect" visuals of social media, I felt downed.

To-do lists reminded me of my old, addicted personality. My healing mind had no idea where to start, what goals to set, or what health even looked like, and that's when I knew—I had to make a change.

I decided to build my process.

A process that took into consideration my genuine, very human limitations and limiting beliefs.

A process that had safe boundaries to prevent me from falling back into workaholism, burnout, and procrastination.

A process that was not just about work and tasks but growth and exploration.

A process that had gentle words and didn't feel like I was back in school or treatment.

When I pieced together becoming, growth, exploration, and change.

I couldn't help but think of nature.

Seasons, herbs, flowers, sun, and everything constantly grows and changes.

All are in a healthy state of becoming, as the Creator designed it.

What if I designed a planner as if my mind was a garden?

You will encounter dark days no matter how careful you are, smart, or kind.

Therefore, your goal should be to coexist with these darker days, trials, or lessons, not to overcome them entirely.

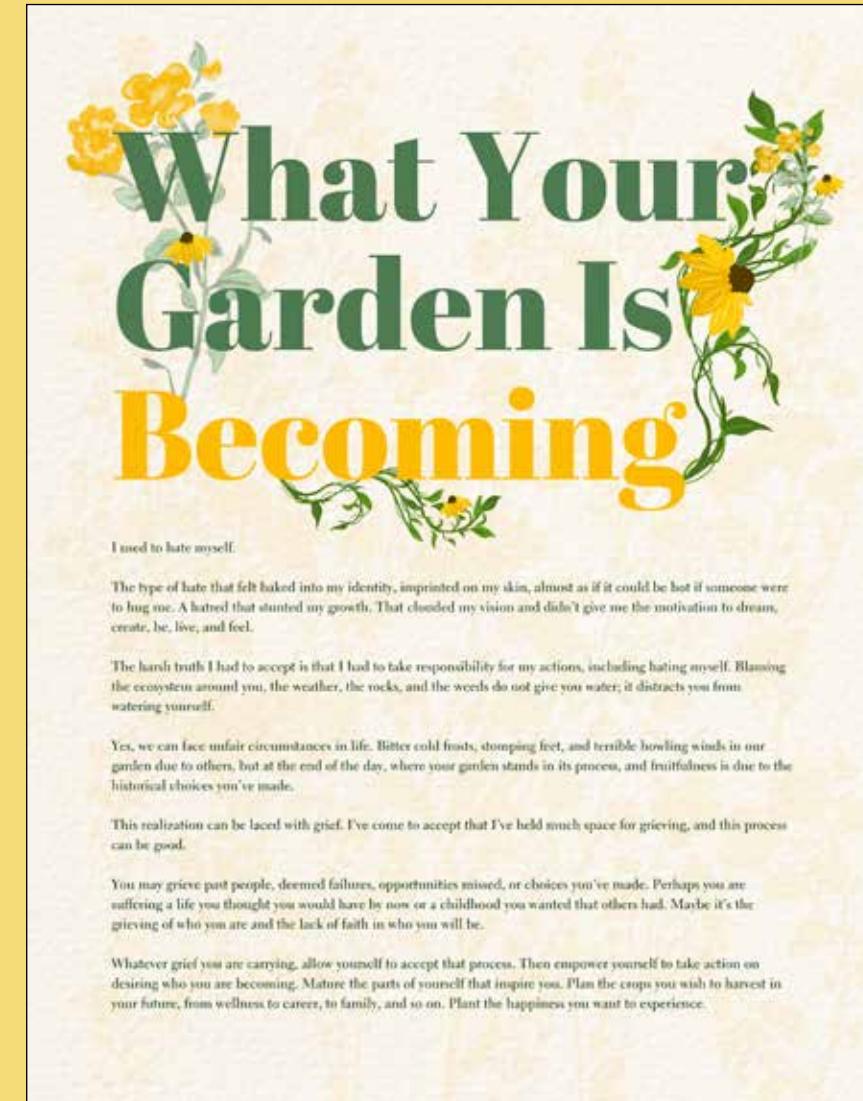
Nature has a resilience that embraces change, uncertainty and even uses the darker drought-like days to its advantage.

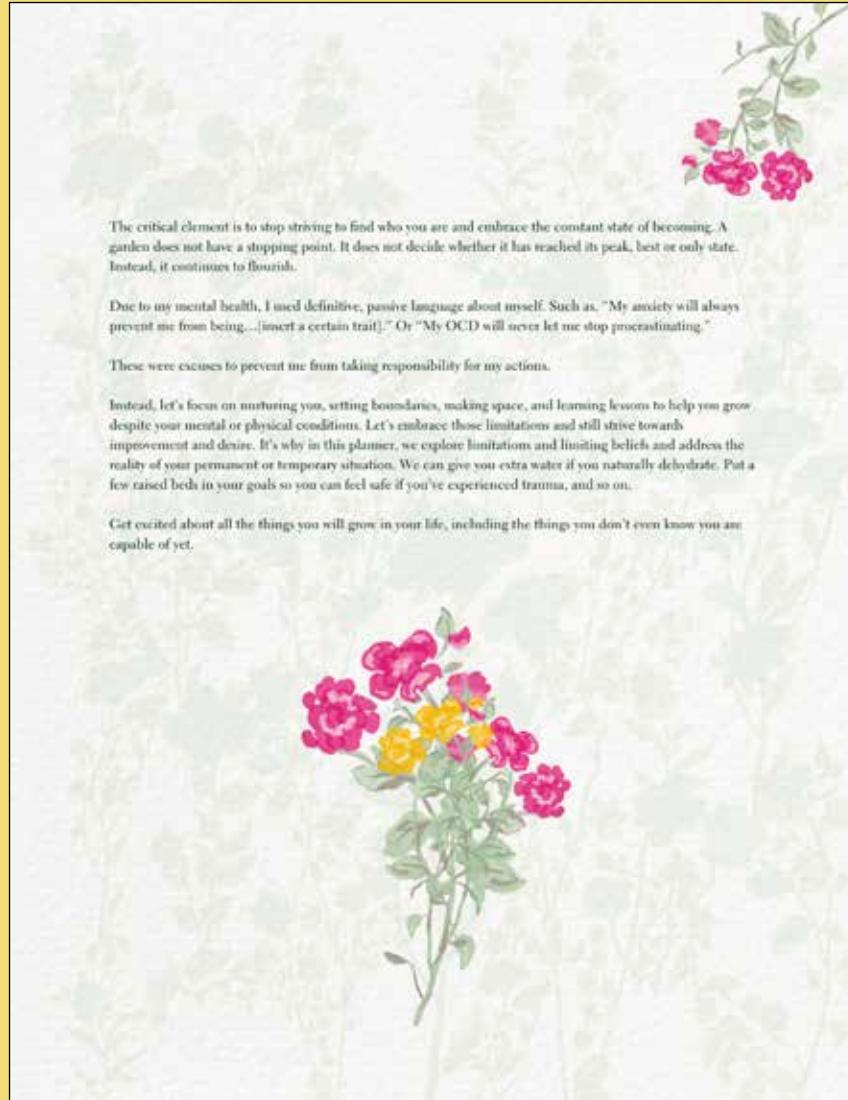
I want you to design a daily process that does the same for you. It knows the pastures where too much rock is buried in the soil...

It makes peace with the ever-spreading weeds that increase its thirst, and with the right tools, it overcomes droughts and downspouts.

Let's begin to create your garden. A method that applies to any goals, big and small, for your excellent, growing life.

How would you describe your garden presently?





The critical element is to stop striving to find who you are and embrace the constant state of becoming. A garden does not have a stopping point. It does not decide whether it has reached its peak, best or only state. Instead, it continues to flourish.

Due to my mental health, I used definitive, passive language about myself. Such as, "My anxiety will always prevent me from being...[insert a certain trait]." Or "My OCD will never let me stop procrastinating."

These were excuses to prevent me from taking responsibility for my actions.

Instead, let's focus on nurturing you, setting boundaries, making space, and learning lessons to help you grow despite your mental or physical conditions. Let's embrace those limitations and still strive towards improvement and desire. It's why in this planner, we explore limitations and limiting beliefs and address the reality of your permanent or temporary situation. We can give you extra water if you naturally dehydrate. Put a few raised beds in your goals so you can feel safe if you've experienced trauma, and so on.

Get excited about all the things you will grow in your life, including the things you don't even know you are capable of yet.

Planting Happiness

Happiness is almost always for me in small, mundane moments. I think of joy as the smallest seeds in the palm of your hand, full of potential, but also something that must be planted to enjoy. Some seeds are unseen to the human eye due to being so small, but they hold a lot of beauty if they are germinated and cared for; they can fill a space of joy, nourishment, and provision.

Seeds are the moments you will miss if you don't stop and be present for them. The smell of rain and a warm breeze on a morning walk. The laughter of your best friend, or having your favorite childhood meal.

So the question becomes, how do we have more happiness?

When I think about meaning and how to assign what something means to me, I like to parallel that with thinking about value and how value impacts the steps we take to acquire it. The small moments for me take many steps to achieve because I am not a present person. But many steps don't always have to mean challenging; it may just mean being more mindful.

Most individuals with mental health barriers struggle to be present for various and understandable reasons.

I am an anxious overthinker. I tend to be internally negative about myself and my circumstances. My fear of uncertainty tends to keep me on edge and not leaning into my five senses in the most positive way. As someone with or without mental health challenges, happiness can sometimes seem complicated to come by and precious when it does.

Honestly, I've spent a chunk of my mental conversations trying to uncomplicate the idea of happiness. I think many of us are chasing, gripping, and holding onto happiness in some way every day. I am trying to decide if happiness is a hypothetical, fantastical construct or something we have control over.

Many of us try to cram real happiness in a space in our mind compared to our fantastical satisfaction. We put it next to an unmeasurable expectation. Or a comparable time when we were different or in a different season. We set our happiness up for failure.

By choosing my happiness, and not expecting just to feel a certain way, I became actionable to implement things that made me happy. Such as taking a break in my work day, making my favorite food, calling a friend, or saying no to something I didn't want to do. Therefore, I created my happiness. It was not based on what was in my head but on the reality of what I could conjure up that day.

Saying no to something or even saying no to an emotion doesn't automatically cancel out the potential joy you can have in an experience or day!

Instead, I will do, insert activity, or be productive to assist my concerns. I tell myself I will readress those emotions after.

To be aware of where you are in a day and then create change or choices based on that and not your desirable, escapist mind (where we can get so distracted imagining the better) made such a big difference.

It's made me more observant and grateful because now I'm in the present, actively looking for good things.

So I notice beautiful flowers when driving, when the sun pops out, or when my friend says something encouraging.

Instead of chasing happiness, I am constructing happiness.

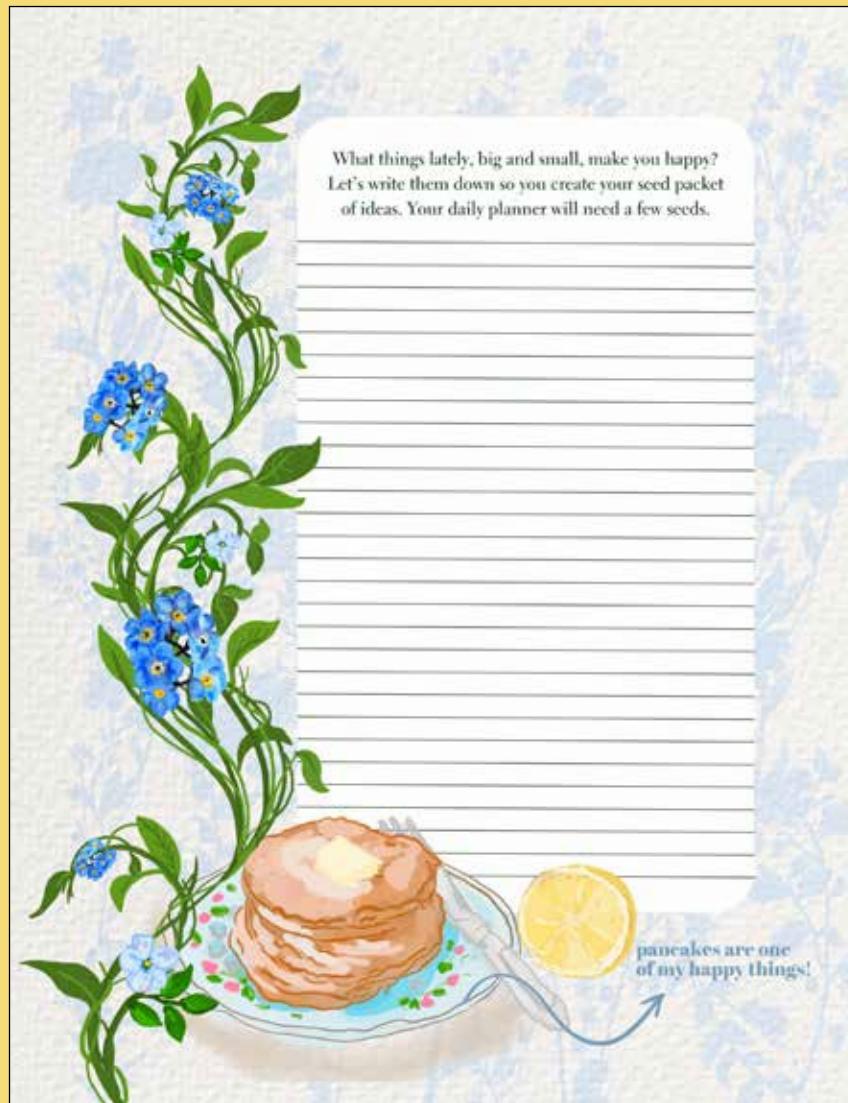
You don't need to pursue happiness; you already have it installed!

You must give it the environment, suitable soil, and water to grow it. You take a moment to see the season, the day, and the sun, and you base your choices and thinking on that and not your assumptions about what the weather will be like and how people will treat you.

If you have a fun idea or something that will bring joy to someone's heart, I encourage you to do it! Plan it, be actionable, and make friends with your happiness. You don't need to wait for what society considers an "important moment." Every moment is vital if you want it to be.

I've tried to grasp this idea of a new day. With illness, a new day used to feel genuinely useless.

I would say, "I have a chronic illness. Who cares about a new day?" I would fear sleeping and waking up, and the cycle would continue.



Having a Fearless Garden: Growth Despite Doubt

To be fearless is to understand where you've been, how you've gotten to today, and why you want to go forward.

But even more critical is to redefine the barriers holding you back.

Defining who we are and how that affects productivity is messy, complex, and thrilling. Fearlessness is to love the "why" of creating the messages we are trying to translate, and we do that before we pick up the tools and begin. We must love the why first, not the outcome.

That takes courage, and it takes fearlessness. The outcome gives us external validation of our efforts, but sometimes the most extraordinary things we do lack validation for a long time. We let go of time and fall in love with the journey.

This applies to your goals: health, money, happiness, and so on. Many people assume the opposite of fearlessness is confidence, but I disagree. Like the emotion of "motivation" or "happiness," confidence is quickly impacted by our surroundings, and it often shifts, almost fleeting at times. It's important but shouldn't be the foundation for your endeavors.

And while motivation, ideas, or thoughts can also be a fleeting emotion, it doesn't mean we can't have a system to ensure success. We will explore these past elements within ourselves, marry them with our present goals, and create our process for plans and moving past fear.

Let's get passionate about the entire you—including your faults, triggers, and sufferings. Because at the root of it all, you are growing, evolving, and working towards a stronger you and a more colorful, crafted, imaginative life.

When we know, acknowledge, and understand something, it's like putting down a bedrock or firm foundation so that we can take risks and endure failure (because failure is inevitable).

We often need to improve our productivity because we are fixated on the final product or outcome. We don't love the passion behind the message we're going after, the intention, the why, and the entire process. I want you to love your message and goal so much that it becomes more robust than the fear and weeds holding you back.

Looking for The Weeds

Knowing Your Garden's Limitations

Perhaps you've sought after a goal, an idea, or a project, and you find yourself not achieving what you set out to do. This can come from not completing something outright, losing progress, or quitting entirely.

More likely than not, you have hit a series of known or unknown obstacles or roadblocks that have created those patterns for you. Identifying them can be a massive step towards achieving your ideal life and goals. These roadblocks are like bad soil or weeds, preventing or slowing growth.

Here are two major ones to consider in your garden:

Limiting Beliefs: The Weeds

Limiting Beliefs are thoughts and beliefs that you take as truth and prevent you from doing certain things, such as habits, steps towards a goal, or setting a goal in the first place. In the garden, I consider these weeds.

Limiting beliefs can be a spectrum of thoughts varying in power and in the category of where they impact your life, but as the title suggests, they can create limitations. Like a weed sucking water or nutrients from a flower, it prevents it from experiencing growth or change.

But the good news is that limiting beliefs are like weeds; they are planted (from various scattered seeds internally by yourself or externally by others), and if you are aware of them, they can be plucked away. Uprooted and cast to the side.

It's possible to overcome limiting beliefs. That is exciting news!

Here is a significant insight I want to share with you. Your goal should not be to have a weedless garden in your growth, recovery, or healing process.

Life is full of suffering, and suffering creates fertile ground for weeds. Weeds will pop up in your life all the time.

Limiting beliefs will form and disappear as you walk down the path of becoming. But it should excite you to know that despite the growth cost, balance is achievable too.

Looking for The Weeds

Limitations: The Bad or Rocky Soil

Limitations are a variety of emotional states, physical circumstances, and resources that have historically or presently held you back but are not easily changeable or permanent.

Becoming aware of these can be your biggest tool to move you forward.

Limitations can be the most significant fuel to our doubt, anxious thoughts, or disbelief in ourselves. It can drive us to turn to jealousy or a lack of forward movement through procrastination.

Limitations can vary from financial circumstances, mental or physical health diagnoses, relationships, geographical location, historical trauma, spirituality, family values, etc. Some of these you can adjust, many may take years to change, and some are unchangeable realities.

Here are two significant things to takeaway:

1. Everyone has both limiting beliefs and limitations. No one has overcome all of these or has a perfect life.
2. Someone who appears to lack limitations or has had extreme growth and fruitfulness in their life has most likely found ways to coexist and work with their limitations, not against them.

I get it. This is annoying to recognize and maybe a bit disheartening, but I want to encourage you past this boulder in your soil.

I grew up with physical handicaps that made basic athleticism almost impossible; my average cardio, strength, and endurance movements were and are not currently as achievable as most people. I often had to sit out in the gym, injured myself quickly, and was never the top percentage in any sport.

I am partially paralyzed on my left side, have vocal chord deficiency that impacts breathing, and have minor cerebral palsy. None of these are treatable or can be alleviated with medication. While I can and have done physical therapy, my body has limitations.

However, this limitation drove me to the limiting belief that I could never be healthy. I could never strength train, run, be an active body or someone with a strong body. I became less and less healthy through the years. I would quit workouts and say, "I can't do any of this."

Mixing those choices with my food intolerances, auto-immune diseases, and severe stress-based mental conditions, I was self-sabotaging to the ninth degree. My body was hurting; my heart was hurting with it. I felt like life was never going to improve.

There are goals I can't achieve, like being a professional athlete, but that doesn't mean I can't have a healthy, athletic figure that is in my definition of success and improvement.

I learned I could modify and adapt. I do more walking than long-running. I use a lighter weight on my left side and do more reps to build my strength slowly. I modify a lot of workout movements because I have half the hamstring of an average person. I avoid most yoga but embrace stretching and breathing exercises that fit my body.

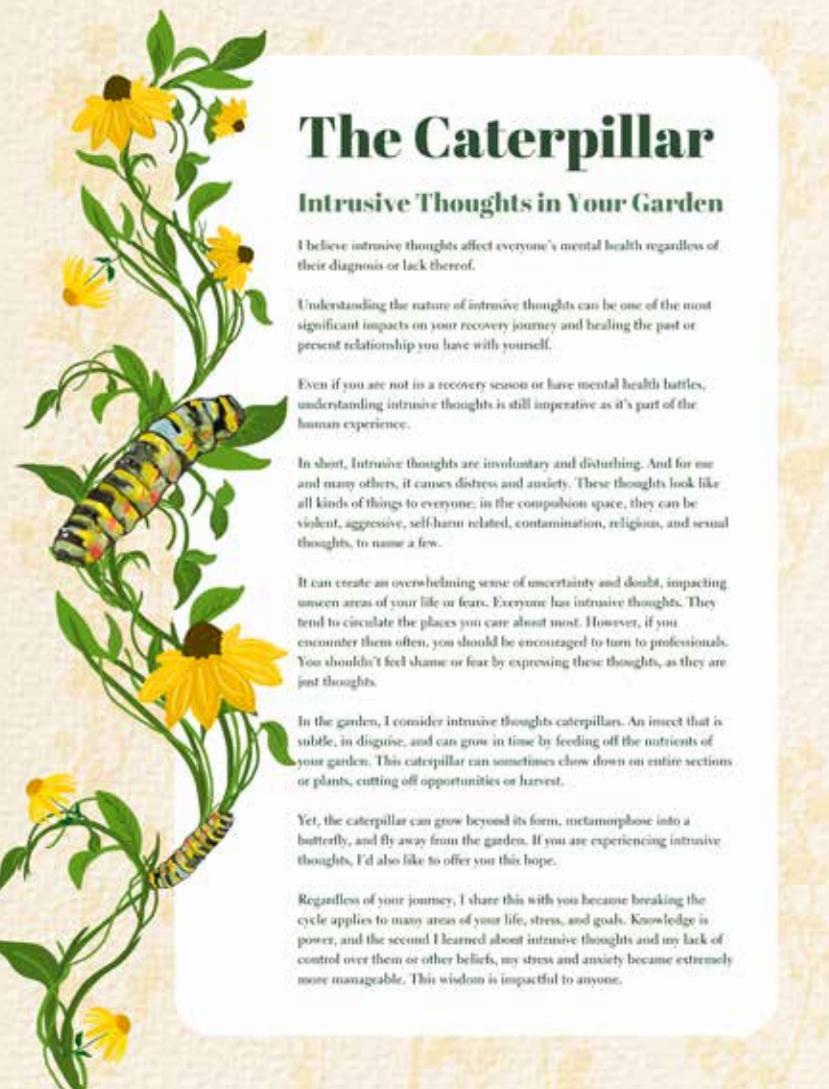
The list goes on, but it does not include quitting.

Stop using your limitations as an excuse to do what you know will water you, give you nutrients and improve your quality of life.

Start getting honest about these weeds and rocks in your garden. Don't be dishonest. Dishonesty only cheats on you. Embracing your limitations makes you a better person and will elevate your life in ways you didn't know was possible.

I am now the healthiest I've ever been and excited to encourage others on that journey. Not just of doing the work but realizing the power of being honest and loving of who we are and the garden we are planted in.

Take a few minutes to identify present or past weeds (limiting beliefs) and bad soil (limitations) in your life. Remember, the more detailed you are and honest, the more you can empower yourself with awareness. Make this section a goal-focused area of coexistence.



The Caterpillar

Intrusive Thoughts in Your Garden

I believe intrusive thoughts affect everyone's mental health regardless of their diagnosis or lack thereof.

Understanding the nature of intrusive thoughts can be one of the most significant impacts on your recovery journey and healing the past or present relationship you have with yourself.

Even if you are not in a recovery season or have mental health battles, understanding intrusive thoughts is still imperative as it's part of the human experience.

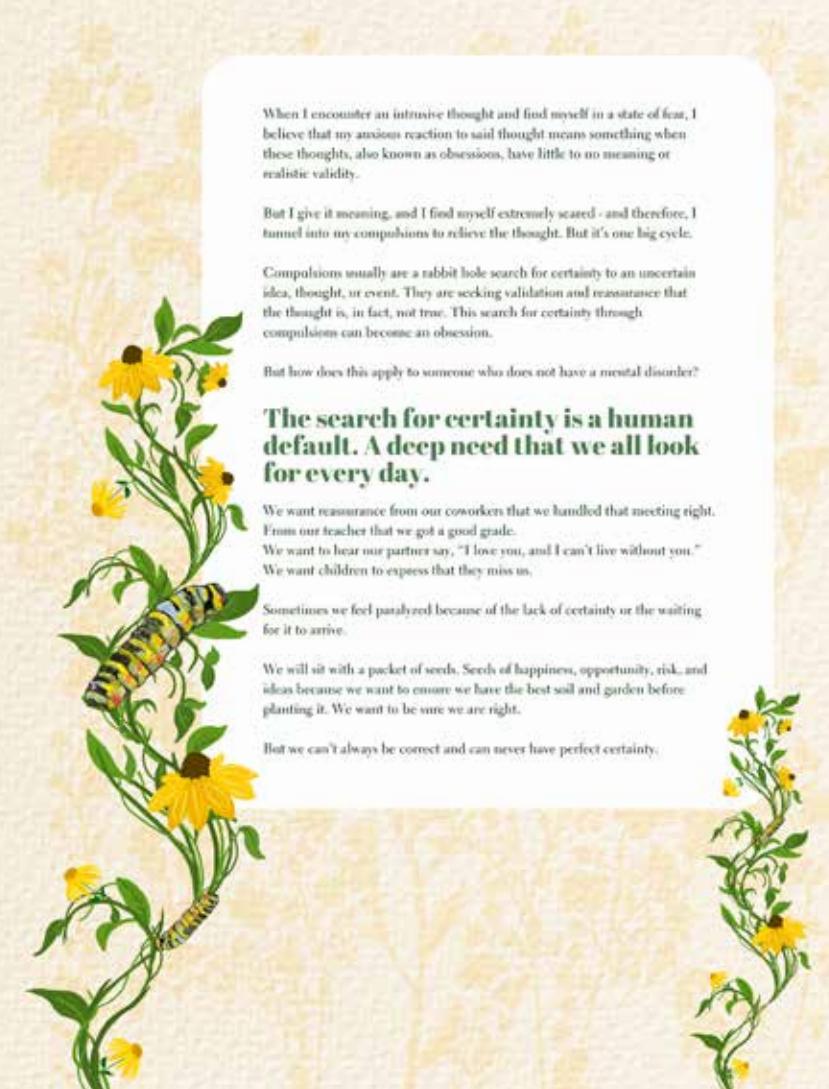
In short, intrusive thoughts are involuntary and disturbing. And for me and many others, it causes distress and anxiety. These thoughts look like all kinds of things to everyone; in the compulsion space, they can be violent, aggressive, self-harm related, contamination, religious, and sexual thoughts, to name a few.

It can create an overwhelming sense of uncertainty and doubt, impacting unseen areas of your life or fears. Everyone has intrusive thoughts. They tend to circulate the places you care about most. However, if you encounter them often, you should be encouraged to turn to professionals. You shouldn't feel shame or fear by expressing these thoughts, as they are just thoughts.

In the garden, I consider intrusive thoughts caterpillars. An insect that is subtle, in disguise, and can grow in size by feeding off the nutrients of your garden. This caterpillar can sometimes chew down on entire sections or plants, cutting off opportunities or harvest.

Yet, the caterpillar can grow beyond its form, metamorphose into a butterfly, and fly away from the garden. If you are experiencing intrusive thoughts, I'd also like to offer you this hope.

Regardless of your journey, I share this with you because breaking the cycle applies to many areas of your life, stress, and goals. Knowledge is power, and the second I learned about intrusive thoughts and my lack of control over them or other beliefs, my stress and anxiety became extremely more manageable. This wisdom is impactful to anyone.



When I encounter an intrusive thought and find myself in a state of fear, I believe that my anxious reaction to said thought means something when these thoughts, also known as obsessions, have little to no meaning or realistic validity.

But I give it meaning, and I find myself extremely scared - and therefore, I tunnel into my compulsions to relieve the thought. But it's one big cycle.

Compulsions usually are a rabbit hole search for certainty to an uncertain idea, thought, or event. They are seeking validation and reassurance that the thought is, in fact, not true. This search for certainty through compulsions can become an obsession.

But how does this apply to someone who does not have a mental disorder?

The search for certainty is a human default. A deep need that we all look for every day.

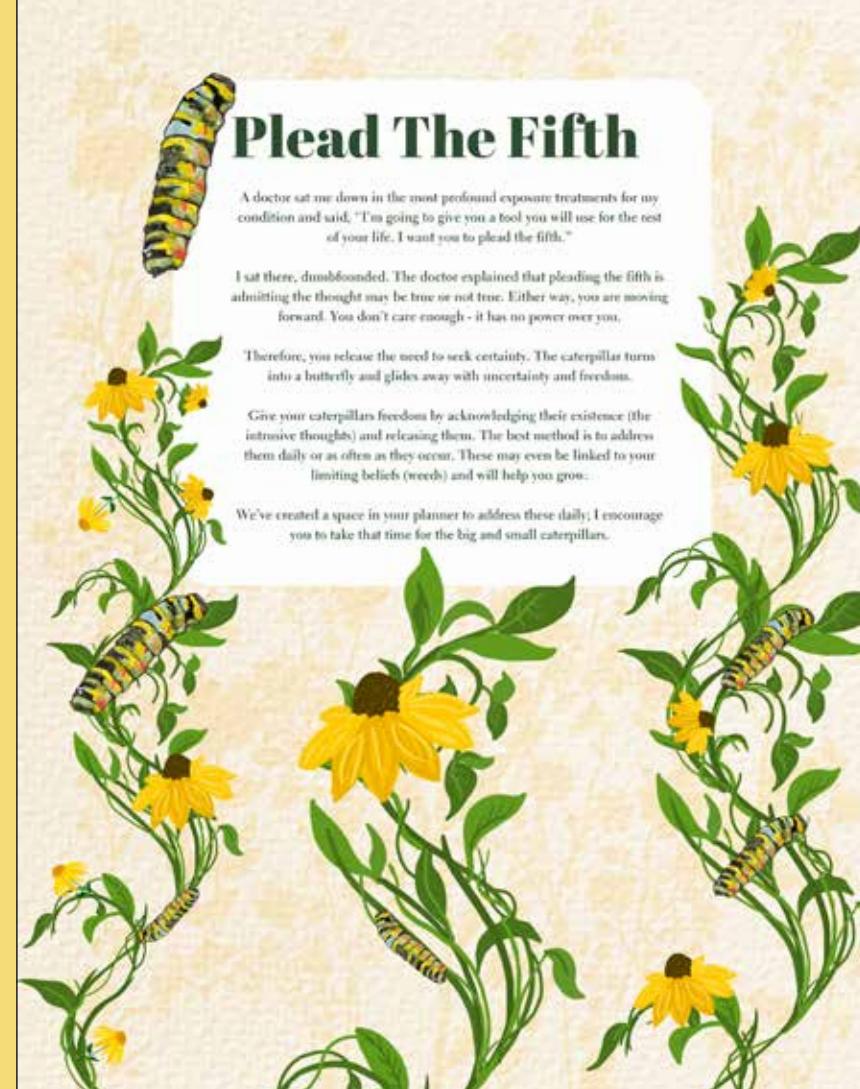
We want reassurance from our coworkers that we handled that meeting right. From our teacher that we got a good grade.

We want to hear our partner say, "I love you, and I can't live without you." We want children to express that they miss us.

Sometimes we feel paralyzed because of the lack of certainty or the waiting for it to arrive.

We will sit with a packet of seeds. Seeds of happiness, opportunity, risk, and ideas because we want to ensure we have the best soil and garden before planting it. We want to be sure we are right.

But we can't always be correct and can never have perfect certainty.



Plead The Fifth

A doctor sat me down in the most profound exposure treatments for my condition and said, "I'm going to give you a tool you will use for the rest of your life. I want you to plead the fifth."

I sat there, dumbfounded. The doctor explained that pleading the fifth is admitting the thought may be true or not true. Either way, you are moving forward. You don't care enough - it has no power over you.

Therefore, you release the need to seek certainty. The caterpillar turns into a butterfly and glides away with uncertainty and freedom.

Give your caterpillars freedom by acknowledging their existence (the intrusive thoughts) and releasing them. The best method is to address them daily or as often as they occur. These may even be linked to your limiting beliefs (reeds) and will help you grow.

We've created a space in your planner to address these daily; I encourage you to take that time for the big and small caterpillars.

Redefining Success

How do we reshape how we set our goals and redefine success?

Some of my most significant impacts were less about doing a tangible activity and more about shifting a mindset. I've done therapy, read self-help books, taken medications, journaled, and screamed into the "voof" and my pillow. Yet, still, the days occurred when I felt this pressure. So much so I could tangibly feel it on my chest, this deep, long, clinging anxiety. When I stepped back, I realized why my efforts were failing.

I would never feel or recognize progress if I didn't change how I measured their progress. It didn't matter how much I journaled or what I told my therapist.

I felt dissatisfied with all my work and hopeless about what I would eventually do. Therefore, the actions, and the result, felt powerless. It felt useless, like a hamster running on a spinning wheel.

I would always feel unsuccessful if I didn't change how I defined success and processed daily experiences.

So then, I went on a mission of redefining success. In that mission, I've come to understand that most of us were not taught the correct definitions of success, and with modern technology and media - it would stay that way. I am a fan of all kinds of media. I am a fan of education. However, it's essential to take inventory of how these tools have downsides, not upsides.

The biggest downside is we are mass exposed to millions of successes, all mixed in our faces, beautiful and loud. We aren't told these individuals' entire process of creating that reality, photo, or impression.

We are constantly measuring our process against the final product, and the output is a feeling of inadequacy. I will admit I do this every day. I look at people I admire, see jealous of, or gain inspiration from, and with every post, article, or book, I feel more like a failure. So therefore, when it's time to work, work out, write, read, and practice - half of my headspace is seeped in anxiety. The other half is baked in doubt. This makes for a challenging ecosystem and garden to create good habits.

So, how do we treat ourselves as worthy and stop comparing?

First, we need to realize we've been taught many things about success and how to measure value.

In school, success was the beacon of a student's experience. Everything was graded, even friendships/social life, participation, and speed. We use similar applications to judge ourselves when released from the school atmosphere. But this time, there isn't a single teacher grading you; it's the world.

So, of course, social media, work, yourself, and so on are the grade books. The world is also your rubric. Which for many of us is a social media feed or the promotion quarter of our jobs. You might find yourself saying: This is how I should be doing, this is how I should look, this is how my life should be at insert age, time, season, etc.

But if those "final products" don't show us the process or even the truth (i.e., editing, staging, manipulating, selecting the best outcome), how do you define success? Is using this "grade book" healthy? Do you have to do what you've always been taught?

No. You have the power to set impactful, actionable goals that will get you success. You define that success, and it considers your body, mind, lifestyle, and desires, not anyone else's.

When we decide we have a goal, what is the decision we're ultimately making?

We are making a goal to be different than who we are today, in the future, under a specific set of consistent steps and standards. Now, growing and "becoming" new isn't bad. It's expected. It's inevitable. It's designed. Your garden will grow and die; this is a known truth.

But what if we set the goal to be in a different place than today?

That's it. That's the magic nutrient for growth. You desire to achieve that goal, project, or task to grow more than you were when you woke up. To be more robust, more watered, changed.

Ask yourself, Why are you setting these goals? The answer should never be to become someone else's garden.

When we build goals and thoughts off the idea that we are not good enough today, we invalidate our present selves.

Our present self is who we live with every day. If we decide that we're goal-setting because we are unworthy today, then all we are doing is telling ourselves we will be unworthy tomorrow.

Big goals can only be achieved after a period of time. They are steps over weeks, months, and maybe even years.

If we condition ourselves that we are not successful or good until we hit that rather large benchmark, like writing a new book or losing sixty pounds, even when we get there, we will have open wounds of a lack of self-care and validation.

It will leave you starving. We will pursue our goals with a sense of vigor, leading to burnout, exhaustion, and cutting other vital things like mental wellness and social time. It will ultimately lead to us quitting.

Now I want us to think about how we define renewal.

When we want to renew something at a library, it usually means we need more time with it. We appreciate the work or want to dive deeper into the book, or maybe are even re-reading it.

We're not renewing it because we want to throw it out, tear it up, or rewrite it entirely. We renew it because we want it. We think it's valuable. Habits and repeating steps to achieve a goal are renewing something repeatedly.

When we decide to renew something, it should be to step deeper into who we already are, not redoing it entirely. Social media often makes me think I need to hit the redo button. So then I become a constant consumer. Not someone who is setting healthy goals grounded in real change.

It's okay to feel overwhelmed by goals too. Sometimes we are in seasons where many "micro" changes happen.

You need to set goals considering your limitations and growth areas that need to occur or the parts of your garden that should be tended.

How will you measure and grade your garden's growth?

[Handwriting practice lines]

You Are A Wildflower

Unique, Beautiful, and Elsewhere

When I was young, people advised my parents to keep their expectations low about my future. I was below average in tested intelligence and physical abilities and would never thrive above academic or societal standards. My parents had a simple response, "No."

The "no" did not signify that I had to rise to the bar set by others and add all the additional pressure on my growth. The "no" was that they weren't accepting that definition of success or the proposed path to get there. They wanted to take another way, so they had a different word in mind: exploration.

As a neurodivergent, I discovered quickly in childhood that I wasn't like many other people, so I've had to work differently from many others. However, it took me a long time to discover that.

I grew up with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), and Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (c-PTSD), and I am a suicide survivor, as well as have various physical handicaps and chronic illnesses.

It's taught me that despite those conditions, we all, regardless of makeup, must work in our way. We need our own process, and we need our own voice. Knowing your authentic self can be a huge advocate to keep you disciplined daily.

So, what does it mean to be authentic and know our voice?

Simply put, authenticity is the quality of being genuine in how you feel, perceive, and absorb life. It's about embracing and aligning your values and beliefs with your actions.

Authenticity is not perfect or flawless; it's about being honest and genuine to yourself, even in adversity. Adversity can come in many forms, and I don't think we talk about that often enough.



Living an authentic life can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose.

When we are true to ourselves, we are more likely to pursue our passions and live a life that aligns with our values and beliefs.

We are less likely to compare ourselves to others or seek external validation. Instead, we find confirmation within ourselves, knowing that we are living a life that is true to who we are.

However, living authentically can be challenging in a society that often values conformity and fitting in. From a young age, we are taught to behave in specific ways and follow certain norms.

As we grow older, societal pressure can lead us to suppress our true selves to fit in, meet societal expectations, and follow the majority.

But the more we hide our authentic selves, the more we feel disconnected from ourselves and our true purpose. After years of feeling like floating, I finally feel grounded; I know exactly what I am supposed to do, be, create, and even mourn.

We may begin to believe that we are not good enough or need to conform to societal norms to be accepted. This can lead to feelings of inadequacy and low self-esteem. We may also develop a fear of rejection, which can prevent us from expressing our true selves or pursuing our passions.

Breaking free from societal pressure requires consciously challenging our beliefs and values. It's about questioning the messages we receive and determining whether they align with our true selves. It's about recognizing that our worth depends not on external validation but on our intrinsic value as human beings.

Suffering and pain are inevitable parts of the human experience. We all face challenges and obstacles that can leave us feeling lost and powerless.

However, it's essential to recognize that suffering can also catalyze growth and self-discovery. We can learn more about ourselves and our inner strength when we face adversity.

We can develop resilience and a sense of empowerment to carry us through future challenges. It's about acknowledging our emotions and allowing ourselves to feel them fully without judgment or resistance.

Vulnerability can open doorways to purpose. Living an authentic life does not mean being perfect.

It's about embracing our imperfections and recognizing that they are part of what makes us unique.

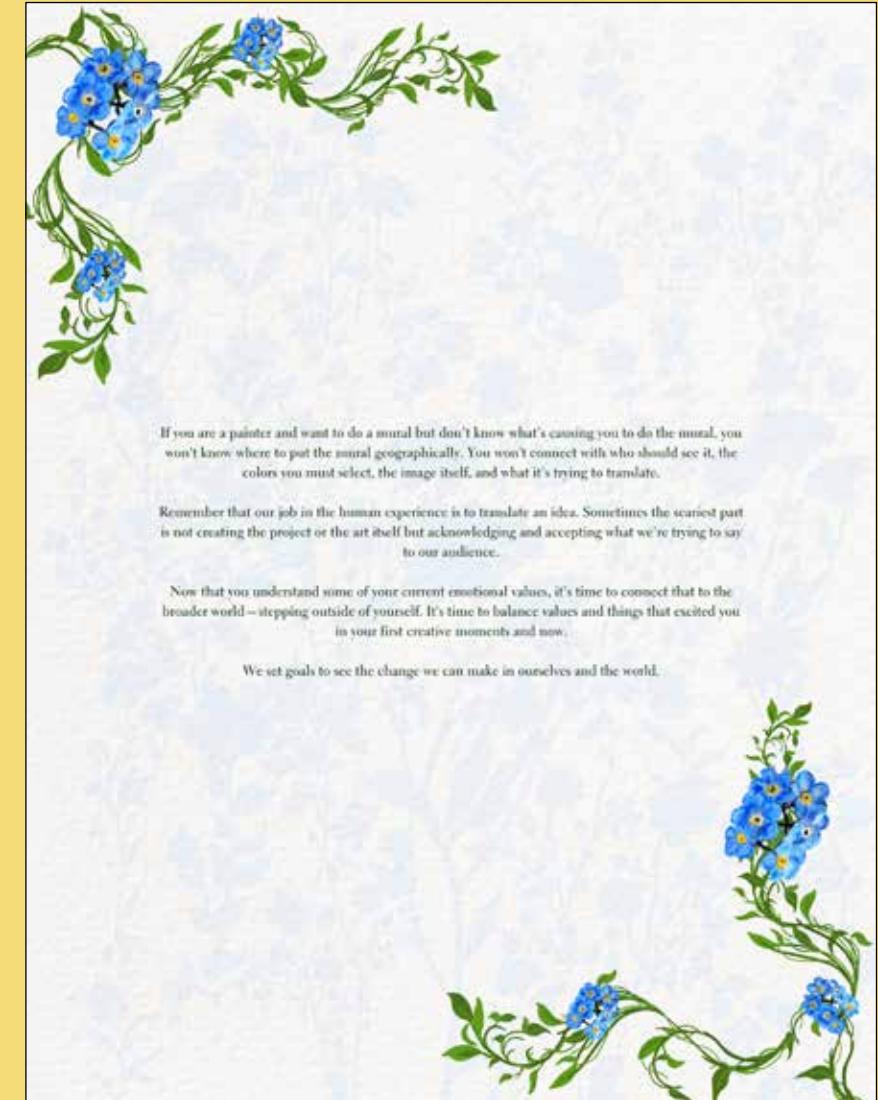
It's about being open to self-growth and learning from our experiences.

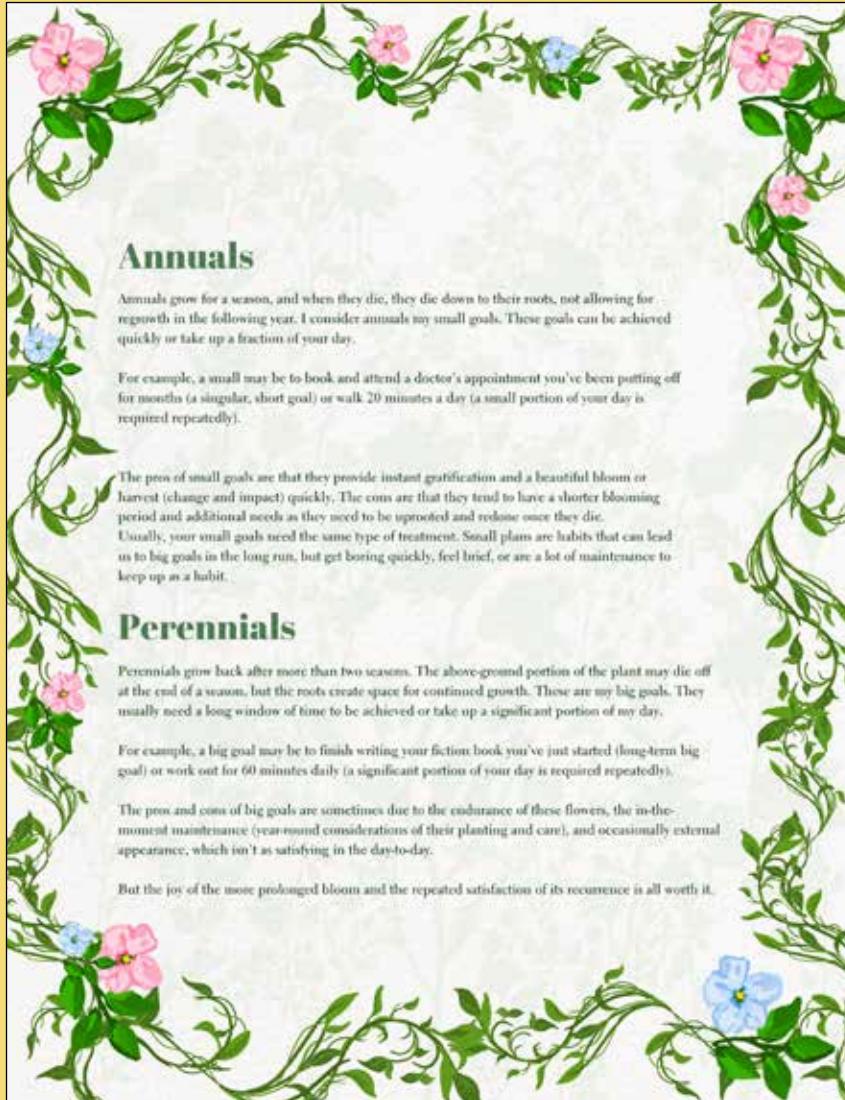
Embracing imperfection and self-growth requires a willingness to take risks and make mistakes.

It's about recognizing that failure is not a reflection of our worth but rather an opportunity to learn and grow.

It's about being open to feedback and using it to improve ourselves and our lives.







Annuals

Annuals grow for a season, and when they die, they die down to their roots, not allowing for regrowth in the following year. I consider annuals my small goals. These goals can be achieved quickly or take up a fraction of your day.

For example, a small may be to book and attend a doctor's appointment you've been putting off for months (a singular, short goal) or walk 20 minutes a day (a small portion of your day is required repeatedly).

The pros of small goals are that they provide instant gratification and a beautiful bloom or harvest (change and impact) quickly. The cons are that they tend to have a shorter blooming period and additional needs as they need to be uprooted and redone once they die.

Usually, your small goals need the same type of treatment. Small plants are habits that can lead us to big goals in the long run, but get boring quickly, feel brief, or are a lot of maintenance to keep up as a habit.

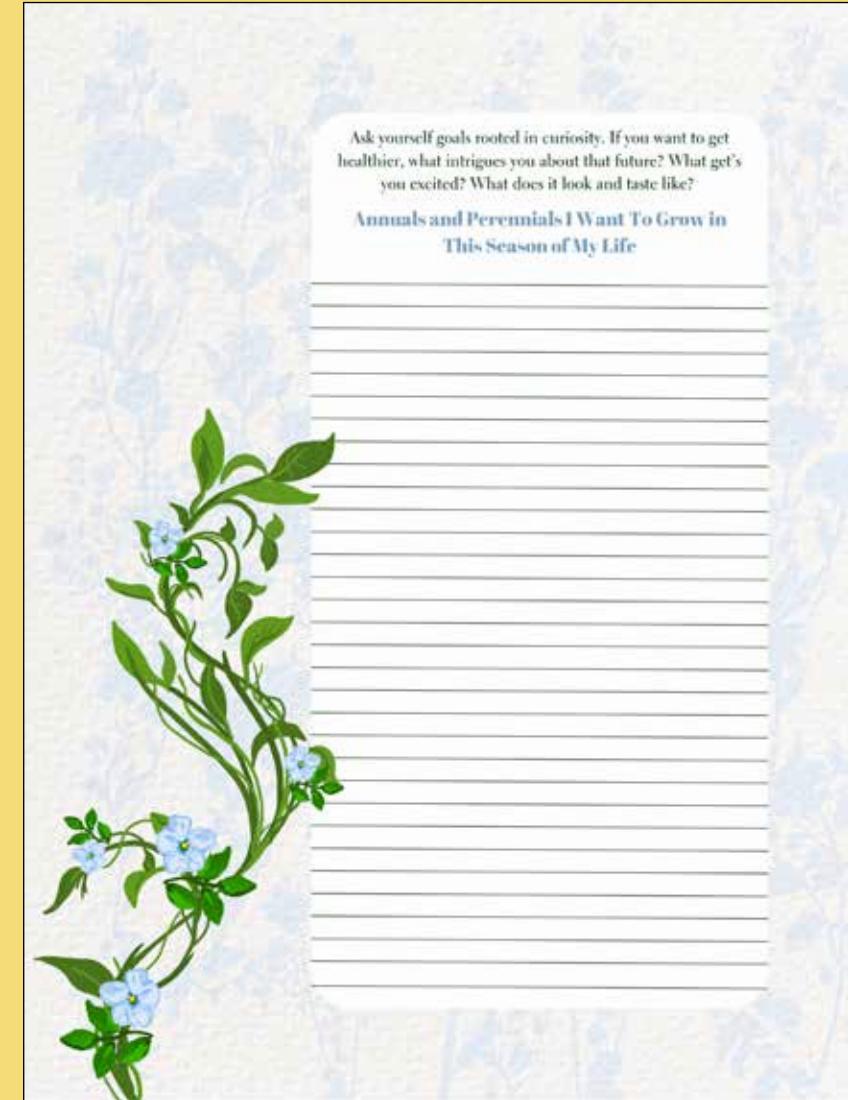
Perennials

Perennials grow back after more than two seasons. The above-ground portion of the plant may die off at the end of a season, but the roots create space for continued growth. These are my big goals. They usually need a long window of time to be achieved or take up a significant portion of my day.

For example, a big goal may be to finish writing your fiction book you've just started (long-term big goal) or work out for 60 minutes daily (a significant portion of your day is required repeatedly).

The pros and cons of big goals are sometimes due to the endurance of these flowers, the in-the-moment maintenance (year-round considerations of their planting and care), and occasionally external appearance, which isn't as satisfying in the day-to-day.

But the joy of the more prolonged bloom and the repeated satisfaction of its recurrence is all worth it.



Ask yourself goals rooted in curiosity. If you want to get healthier, what intrigues you about that future? What gets you excited? What does it look and taste like?

Annuals and Perennials I Want To Grow in This Season of My Life

Handwriting practice lines for listing goals.



Serving ourselves is a form of maintenance, not selfishness. Just as the need of serving a garden, it's nutrients and water. And when we put some time and care into ourselves, we can improve our mental health. Self-care is learning more about oneself because you are an important, amazingly complex, and loved.

When my mental health spirals out of control, it usually means I'm also neglecting other life areas: sleep, diet, exercise, and joy. It's easy to throw away time when it's about ourselves.

I used to think I was unfixable and disgustingly imperfect because I had to eliminate some clutter from my garden. Dead nuts, uncared-for beds, and weeds.

Well, in your home, I bet you take out the trash almost daily because that's life. A need to declutter and clean is a normal part of the human experience; therefore, it should be for your mental garden and plants.

Your daily interactions in and outside your control dictate your build-up and, yes, requires you to put on gloves, tie up the garbage or break out the cleaning supplies. Clutter may be health issues, overgrown weeds, mental health triggers, stresses, unregulated intrusive thoughts, or a lack of self-care needs (hygiene, appointments, and so on).

Please understand: It's not about having the clutter in the first place. It's about being aware of the mess and how much exists.

Two things can happen if left unresolved: the build-up becomes so extreme that it causes other problems in your life. Or where you're placing those thoughts, needs, and emotions are taking up a space that, if cleaned, can be a beautiful place of retreat, new opportunities, and happiness due to the ability to plant new things. Imagine, what would you grow if you didn't have that thing holding you back? What would you do, create, become, or love?

You need to water whatever your planting. I wish I could tell you there's some easy, simple thing, like water for our minds. I wish I could tell you that only the best thoughts emerge from that water. Only the best memories. But that's not the case.

You can have the best intentions and still have involuntary intrusive thoughts and weeds due to your efforts.

Water can still grow bad things or experiences, but it doesn't make you "bad." It doesn't mean you're a tarnished field. It means you're a tarnished field with immense purpose and nourishment. That's every single one of us. It was broken but in all the best, well-designed ways. So what is water for the mind?

Love; the most wondrous, fantastic thing. Sorry if you were looking for a more complicated solution. Don't be fooled. Honey is also complex and takes a lot of work. Love will grow weeds. It will create pain, cracks, and problems and be our greatest loss. Loving ourselves is hard; it's full of labor and confusion.

Mental health makes us second guess how much water we need before we drown or dehydrate; it makes us think we need water from others in abundance when we must first start with ourselves.

Sometimes you use a significant watering can with plants, but other times you use a spray bottle. Some ideas need to be gently worked on and watered, like a spray bottle, while others require an aggressive, big push.

Love is both.

Identify the delicate self-care changes you're trying to make. Some are more emotional and raw but are still worth pursuing to heal.



DATE:	MOOD FORECAST:
MY TOP 3 FRUITFUL TASKS (TOP PRIORITIES):	
1.	
2.	
3.	
KEY TO DO STEPS TO PLANT & WATER TOP PRIORITIES:	
TODAY'S EVERGREEN STATEMENT:	
WEEDS (LIMITING BELIEFS) & BAD SOIL (LIMITATIONS) TO BE AWARE OF TODAY:	
INTRUSIVE WEEDS THAT SPRANG UP TODAY: A SUNNY MOMENT (GRATITUDE):	
HAPPINESS TO HARVEST:	
GARDEN NOURISHMENT:	
BREAKFAST:	
LUNCH:	
DINNER:	
DAILY SOIL (SUPPLEMENTS/MEDS):	
SEEDLINGS (LEARNINGS OR THOUGHTS FROM TODAY):	