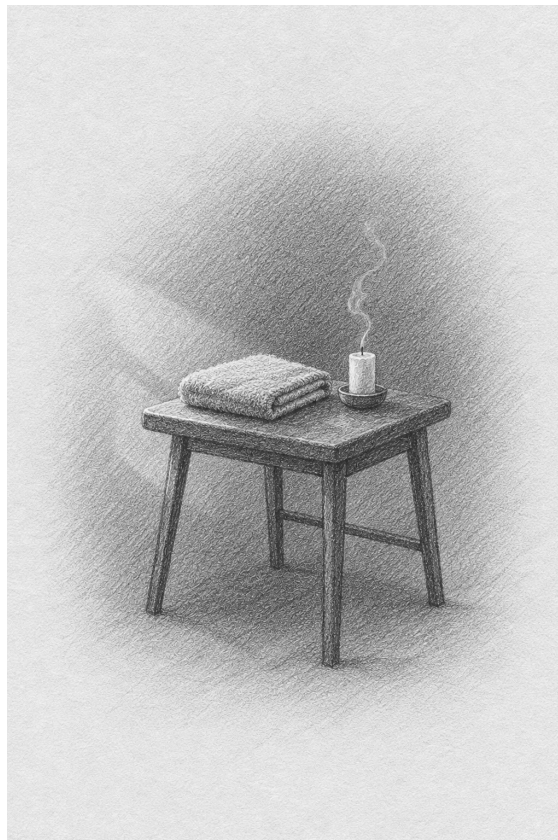


Let It Out

The Companion Workbook

A guided practice companion to
Let It Out: Finding Your Voice Without Losing Yourself



SETH EISENBERG

PAIRS Foundation

Let It Out: The Companion Workbook

A guided practice companion to *Let It Out: Finding Your Voice Without Losing Yourself*

Seth Eisenberg

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This workbook is an educational resource. It is not therapy and not a substitute for it. If you are in crisis, see the Resources page and, in the United States, call or text 988.

The scenes and conversations quoted here are reconstructed from memory in the original book. Every participant's story appears with their explicit permission. Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect privacy.

How this workbook works

Let It Out ends each chapter with a few questions under the heading “Before you turn the page.” This workbook gives those questions room: space to write, a structured practice for each chapter, and a place to decide what, if anything, you want to say to someone else.

The twenty-two sessions follow the book’s twenty-two chapters. Each session has four pages.

Begin. The chapter’s pages to read, a line from the room, the idea in a few sentences, this session’s focus, and one question to answer before you read.

Reflect. Four writing prompts drawn from the chapter’s “Before you turn the page” questions. Any of them can be left blank.

Practice. A structured exercise built for that chapter: a request builder, a four-part conversation, an apology with something after it, a plan for care afterward, and others.

Take it further. Prompts for sharing with a partner or group, a note for using the session alone, a note for facilitators, one small step for the week, and a look back a week later.

The back of the workbook holds full worksheets for the three tools in Chapter Fifteen (the page, the pause, and the request), a care-afterward plan, a planner and debrief page for group leaders, a twenty-two-week tracker, and pages for looking back.

What this workbook is not

Like the book, this is not therapy and not a substitute for it. Nothing here asks you to reproduce what happened in the room at Shuler Manor. No exercise requires you to raise your voice, and none requires you to share what you write. If an exercise leaves you increasingly distressed, stop. Session 19 and the Resources page describe care afterward and when to seek more help.

The question underneath every page

What am I feeling, and what am I asking for?

And its companion, for when someone else is speaking: What are they trying to tell me, and have I let them finish?

Using it alone, with a partner, or in a group

On your own

Most of the workbook can be done privately. Writing something down and saying it aloud are separate choices, and this workbook treats them that way. Where an exercise involves another person, the “On your own” note says honestly what can be done alone: you can name your preferences, prepare a request, and decide what you can offer. You cannot supply another person’s answer, and the workbook will not ask you to invent one.

With a partner or a friend

Agree on a few minutes, and agree that either person can pass or stop. Take turns. The listener’s task is to let the speaker finish and check what was heard before offering advice. Touch and eye contact are optional. “Not now” is an answer and can be heard as one.

In a group

The book’s appendix, “Guidance for Group Leaders and Professionals” (page 121), describes how to define the work you are offering, make the invitation credible, protect privacy, and plan a six-session series. The “For facilitators” note in each session points to the part of that guidance the chapter raises. Pages 107 to 109 of this workbook hold a series planner and a leader’s debrief page. Educational groups begin with discussion, private writing, and voluntary conversation practice. Reading about the weekend does not prepare a leader to reproduce it.

Privacy

If someone else may read these pages, you can reflect without keeping a record, keep the workbook somewhere private, or write on separate paper you can discard. What you write about another person is yours to keep. Repeating another person’s account calls for their permission.

Pace

There is no schedule. One session a week fits a group series; one chapter when a question comes up fits a reader returning to the book after a class. Taking time is a choice too.

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Choosing when to pause

You can pause while reading or leave an exercise unfinished. These are signs that it is time to stop for now, in the book's own terms (Chapters 14 and 19).

- The page keeps taking you around the same accusation.
- You feel increasingly distressed rather than clearer.
- You are about to write something you would send rather than keep.
- You are driving, at work, or somewhere a private page is not private.
- You have reached the stopping place you set, even if the exercise is not finished.

What to do instead

Get a glass of water. Turn to a familiar task. Return at a time you name, or decide later whether to return at all. If distress worsens or interferes with sleep, concentration, everyday tasks, or caring for yourself, speak with a health care professional. You can seek help without returning to the exercise that preceded the distress.

If you need support

If you have thoughts of suicide or urges to hurt yourself, seek immediate help. In the United States, call or text 988. Call 911 in a life-threatening emergency. Outside the United States, contact your local crisis or emergency service.

If disclosure in your home brings threats, coercion, or monitoring, begin with outside support. In the United States, the National Domestic Violence Hotline (thehotline.org) can help with an individualized safety plan. Responsibility for abuse belongs to the person using it.

My own stopping plan

A time, a task I will return to, or a person I will call when it is time to stop:

One person who has said yes to hearing from me, and when:

Where I am beginning

Rate each statement from 1 (rarely true) to 5 (usually true). There is no score. You will meet these statements again on page 111, after the sessions, and can compare.

	1	2	3	4	5
When someone asks how I am, my first answer is usually the whole answer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can tell the difference between what happened and what I think it meant.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can make a request someone can actually answer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can hear “no” without adding pressure.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I am offered help, I can let the other person do it their way.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I let people finish before I offer advice or my own story.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can name a loss or an unmet hope without telling the whole story.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I have let someone down, I can apologize without defending myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can state what I can offer instead of a reluctant yes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know what I need after an intense experience, and who I would call.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

One statement I would most like to be truer by the end, and why:

A few agreements

With yourself, and with anyone you work through these pages with. Agreements are what two people decide together, specific enough that both can tell whether they happened. Pass on any line that does not apply.

How often, and when, I (we) will open this workbook:

Where I will keep it, and what that means for what I write:

Either person can:

- ☐ Pass ☐ Stop ☐ Ask for a pause with a return ☐ Keep a page private
☐ Disagree

What we may repeat to others, and what we may not:

How we will end each time (what is agreed, what remains open):

One person each of us can call if a session leaves us worse rather than clearer:

Signed:

Signed (optional):

PART ONE

The Weekend

Sessions 1 to 6 · Book pages 13 to 45

Part One tells the story of the weekend at Shuler Manor, from Friday evening to Sunday morning. The sessions in this part stay close to the book's prompts: an opening check-in, an unfinished sentence, an ordinary frustration, a loss, a listening practice, and a letter from the part of you that made it through.

None of these sessions asks you to reproduce the room. Each asks what you noticed while reading and what, if anything, you want to do with it.

1. Arrival	11
2. What I Am Afraid You Will See	15
3. I Hate It When	19
4. The Tears We Swallowed	23
5. Can I Be Close Without Disappearing	27
6. I Am Still Here	31

In this part you will practice

- Notice what you feel as you begin
- Keep writing and saying aloud as separate choices
- Turn a frustration into a description, a feeling, and a request
- Name a loss without telling the whole story
- Let someone finish, then check what you heard
- Write a letter you do not have to send

Before this part

What I am feeling as I begin these sessions. “I’m not sure” is an answer.

What I want from them, and what I already know I will keep private:

If I am working with someone else: what we have agreed about passing and stopping:

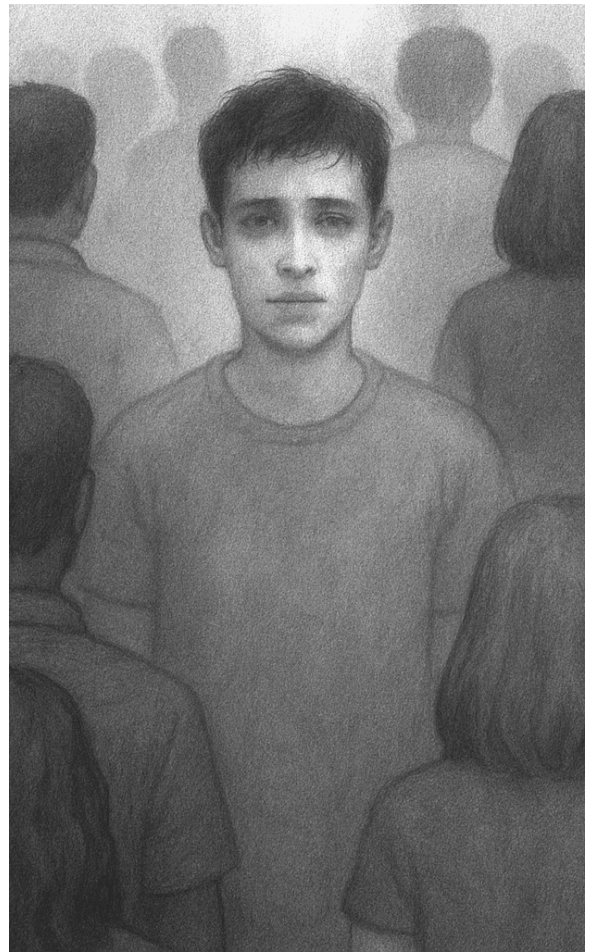
Arrival

Friday evening

Read *Let It Out*, pages 15–18

“I’m tired of pretending I’m okay.”

AN OPENING CHECK-IN, CHAPTER ONE



The idea

Twenty-three people answer a check-in. The first answers are familiar: “Fine.” “A little nervous.” Then other words come. The author describes what he brought into the room, including the experience at eighteen that opened a door but could not walk through it for him, and asks how much a facilitator hears the person in front of him and how much an earlier version of himself.

This session’s focus

Noticing what you feel as you begin, and what your usual answer costs or protects.

Before you read: when someone asks how you are, what is your usual first answer?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. What am I feeling as I begin this book? "I'm not sure" is an answer, and it can be written down.

2. What would I like to understand or do differently by the time I finish?

3. What would help me approach these pages at my own pace? What do I already know I want to keep private?

4. The author asks how much he is hearing the person and how much an earlier version of himself. Whose voice do I tend to hear when someone tells me they are struggling?

The opening check-in

A check-in is a brief time to notice and name what you feel. Either person can pass. Do this one on paper, for yourself.

My usual first answer (“Fine,” “Busy,” “Okay,” a joke):

What that answer protects:

What it costs me:

A sentence a little closer to true, if I want one. I do not have to say it to anyone.

What I am bringing into the room

Experiences of mine that may shape how I hear someone else’s struggle:

A question I can ask myself when that happens (the author’s is: am I hearing this person, or an earlier version of myself?):

1. If you are working with someone, each take one minute to answer the check-in. The listener says only, "Thank you for telling me."
2. What makes it easier for you to give a true answer? What makes it harder?
3. What do you want the other person to do with what you say: listen, ask more, or let it rest?

You can do the check-in alone, at the same time each day for a week, and notice whether the first answer changes.

Agreeing to attend is not agreeing to every exercise. Receive “Fine” and “I’m not sure” the same way you receive a fuller answer (Appendix, “Make the invitation credible”).

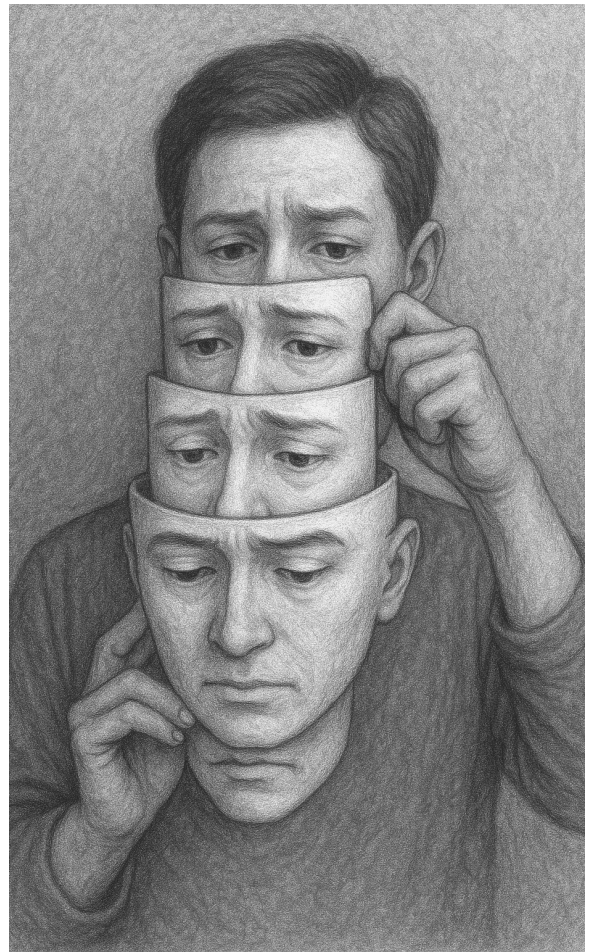
What I Am Afraid You Will See

Later on Friday evening

Read *Let It Out*, pages 21–23

“What I’m afraid you’ll see if I let it out is...”

THE SLIP OF PAPER, CHAPTER TWO



The idea

Three first answers sit side by side. Sylvia speaks. Peter keeps his paper. Kelly whispers that this is bullshit and stays in her chair. A moving pen told the author someone was writing; an empty page left him with a question. Neither told him what the person was ready to share.

This session’s focus

Keeping “writing it down” and “saying it aloud” as two separate choices, and deciding who, if anyone, you would tell.

Before you read: whose reaction do you picture when you imagine letting something out?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. If the prompt feels useful, finish it privately: "What I'm afraid you'll see if I let it out is..." You can also leave it unfinished.

2. Think about the person you imagine telling. How have they responded to you before, when you said something hard?

3. What do you want to keep private, even with someone you trust?

4. Kelly's objection was already something the facilitators could understand and act on. When have you disliked what was being offered to you, and what happened when you said so?

Two separate choices

Writing something down and saying it aloud are separate decisions. This sheet keeps them apart.

Choice one, private. “What I’m afraid you’ll see if I let it out is...” (or leave it blank):

Choice two, who might hear it

PERSON	HOW THEY HAVE RESPONDED TO ME BEFORE	WHAT I WOULD WANT FROM THEM

What stays private, even with someone I trust:

My decision for now:

- ☐ Keep it on the page
- ☐ Tell one person
- ☐ Not now
- ☐ I don’t know yet

Each of these is a complete answer. Agreeing to begin did not take away anyone’s right to change their mind.

1. Tell the other person how you want them to respond if you ever share something like this: listen, ask, or say nothing.
2. Ask them the same question, and write their answer down so you remember it.
3. What would make “not now” easy to say between you?

On your own

The second table can be filled in alone. It prepares a decision; it does not make one.

FOR FACILITATORS

A refusal should not become the next exercise. If someone passes, accept the answer without asking them to defend it or praising others for being braver.

One small step this week:

A week later. What I tried, what followed, and what remains open:

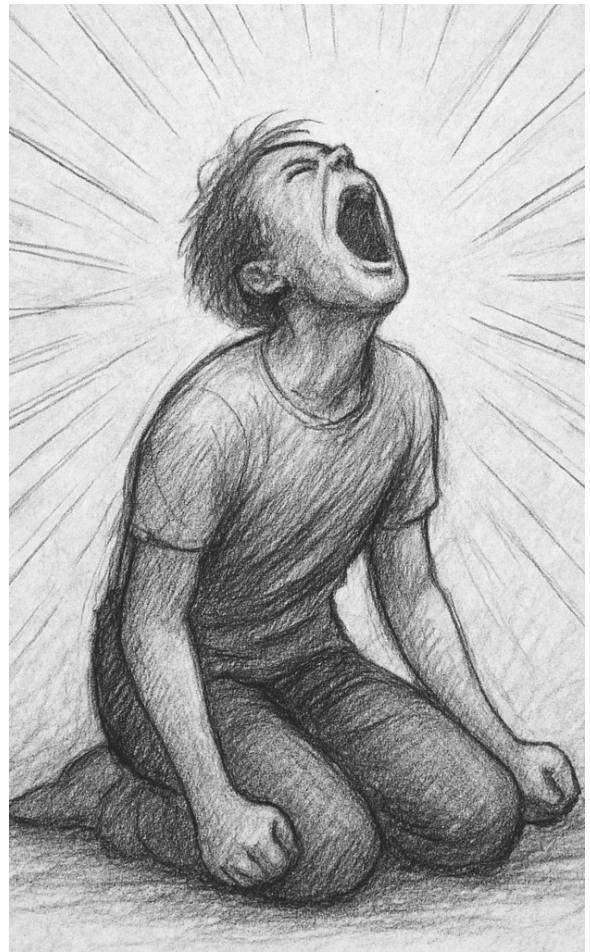
I Hate It When

Saturday morning

Read *Let It Out*, pages 25–28

“I hate it when I don’t know what I feel.”

ROBERT, CHAPTER THREE



The idea

Saturday morning turns to anger. Robert says he does not think he is angry, then finds a sentence anyway. Joe speaks about loss. Kelly says no, and the author examines whether she felt free to remain seated. Naming a feeling leaves us with choices about how to respond; we remain responsible for what we do.

This session’s focus

Hearing frustration as information, and turning a complaint into a description, a feeling, and a request someone can answer.

Before you read: finish this privately, or leave it: “It bothers me when...”

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose an ordinary frustration you feel able to consider privately. Begin with "I hate it when..." or, if that does not fit, "It bothers me when..."

2. Describe what happened without guessing at motives. What would a camera have recorded?

3. What did you feel, and what did you want?

4. If you have insulted or frightened someone, what do you need to acknowledge and repair?
Explaining your feelings does not finish that task.

From complaint to request

The book carries one example through: a request for help with the dishes. Use the same four steps with a frustration of your own.

THE BOOK'S EXAMPLE (PAGE 28)

What happened: "When I asked for help with the dishes, you left the room without answering."

What I felt and wanted: "I felt frustrated and alone with the work."

A request: "Would you be willing to wash the dishes tonight? If you can't, please tell me so we can work out a plan."

1. What happened, without motives:

2. What I felt, and what I wanted:

3. A request someone can answer (name the task and the time):

4. Their answer might be yes, no, or a different plan. What I would do with each:

If I have insulted or frightened someone along the way, what I need to acknowledge and repair:

1. Read only step 3 aloud. Ask: “Is that something you can answer?” Let them answer honestly, including no.
2. If the answer is no, the practical problem remains. Work out a plan together, or name that it is still open.
3. Ask the other person to describe one frustration of theirs in step-1 language, and check that you heard it without defending yourself.

Steps 1 to 4 can be done alone. Writing the request prepares it; only the other person can give the answer.

Kelly's story leaves a practical question: what happens after someone declines? Explain the activity before inviting participation, and offer options that actually work: an invented situation, private writing, observing, or passing.

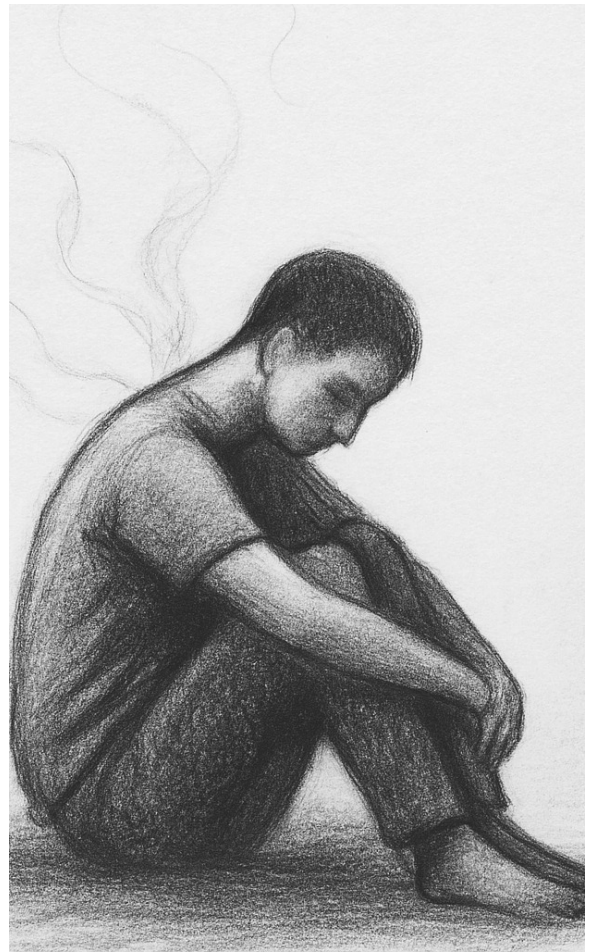
The Tears We Swallowed

Saturday afternoon

Read *Let It Out*, pages 31–34

“I never got to say goodbye.”

MARIE, CHAPTER FOUR



The idea

In the afternoon’s grief work, Marie says, “I miss you, Mami.” Robert shouts, “Why didn’t you protect me?!” Sylvia names that beneath her anger she is heartbroken. The chapter is about grieving what we needed and never received, and about offering company without hurrying toward comfort.

This session’s focus

Naming a loss or an unmet hope without telling the whole story, and saying what kind of company would help.

Before you read: is there a sentence about a loss you have been interrupting for years?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose a loss or an unmet hope you feel able to acknowledge today. "I miss..." or "I wish I had been able to..." may be enough.

2. What would you like someone to understand about it?

3. Would you welcome a conversation, practical help, or company without words? Has anyone been told?

4. Someone can be grateful for what a parent provided and still wish that parent had noticed when they were afraid. Do both belong in your account? Write each half.

A sentence, and a letter kept in a drawer

Finding the sentence does not decide what comes next. You can name a loss here without telling the whole story, and begin a letter you may never send.

“I miss...”

“I wish I had been able to...”

What I would like someone to understand about it:

What would help:

- ☐ A conversation ☐ Practical help ☐ Company without words
☐ Nothing right now

A letter kept in a drawer (optional)

The person may be gone, unwilling to listen, or unsafe to approach. A letter can let you finish a sentence without deciding to send it.

For now, this letter:

- ☐ Stays here ☐ Goes to someone else I trust ☐ Might be sent, later ☐ Is finished

1. If you share the sentence, tell the listener first what would help: “Would you like to tell me about her?” or “Would you like me to sit with you?” are questions a listener can ask.
2. The listener does not explain how life will improve. A few minutes in which the loss can be spoken without being moved toward a conclusion is the task.
3. Agree how the conversation can remain unfinished while you return to dinner, a call, or work.

The letter and the sentence are complete on their own. Company without words can also be a walk, music, or a familiar place.

Offer “I miss...” and “I wish I had been able to...” as private writing prompts before any sharing (Appendix, Session two). Do not supply a missing scene or ask someone to search for an event they do not recall.

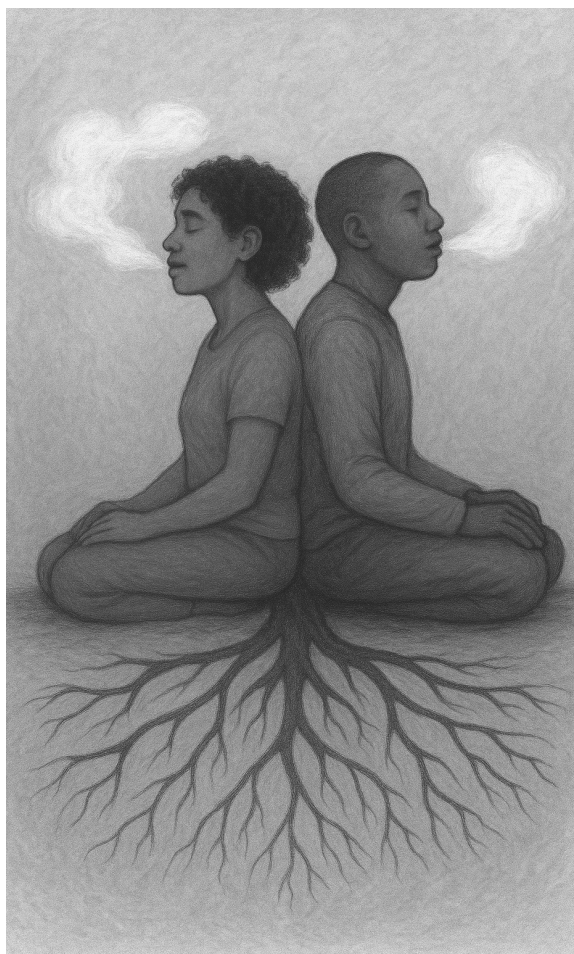
Can I Be Close Without Disappearing

Saturday evening

Read *Let It Out*, pages 37–39

“What I want you to know... is that I’m scared that if I let you in, I’ll disappear.”

JULES, CHAPTER FIVE



The idea

In a paired listening exercise, one person begins with “What I want you to know is...” and the other listens without advice. Hillary tells Mark she still wants to know him. Clair and Thomas admit they are terrified and continue anyway. If we argue each answer away, the other person may learn to agree while keeping their experience to themselves.

This session’s focus

Letting the speaker finish, checking what you heard, and making room for an answer you did not want.

Before you read: what would you like to be able to say without fearing you will lose the relationship?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. "You can be yourself with me." What happens, in your relationships, when being yourself includes disagreeing with a plan or wanting time alone?

2. How much have you asked the person close to you to infer from your silence, or from the things you continue to get done?

3. What would you like to be able to say without fearing you will lose the relationship? An honest answer may be "not now."

4. Being the one who holds can be easier than being held. Which is easier for you, and what does the other one ask of you?

The listening practice

Ask someone who is willing and agree on a few minutes. Touch and eye contact are optional, and either person can stop. Prepare your part here; the other person's part belongs to them.

Who I would ask:

How many minutes we agree on:

Speaker. Begin with something manageable: "What I want you to know is..."

Listener. "What I heard is..." then ask whether you understood. Write what you expect to be hard about not offering advice:

Room for correction. If the speaker says "not quite," what will you say next?

What I would like to be able to say without fearing I will lose the relationship:

Can both of us say "not now" and have it heard?

☐ Yes ☐ I think so ☐ Not yet ☐ I don't know

1. Do the practice with the agreed minutes, then switch. Afterward, each person names one thing the listener did that helped.
2. “I’d like you to sit beside me. I don’t want to be touched right now” tells someone how to come close. Tell each other one instruction like that.
3. “I want to hear this, and I need a few minutes before we start” may be the listener’s most honest offer. Practice saying it.

You can write your “What I want you to know” sentence and your own “What I heard” for a conversation you remember. You cannot know how the other person would answer; the sheet prepares you to ask.

Model a reflection, then let pairs summarize an invented account and ask, “Did I get that right?” (Appendix, Session three). The educational practice uses conversation and needs no touch.

I Am Still Here

Sunday morning

Read *Let It Out*, pages 41–45

“Can I?”

PETER TO HIS FATHER, CHAPTER SIX



The idea

Sunday brings a letter “from the part of you that made it through,” a comfort rehearsal in which everyone is asked before anyone is touched, Peter going to his father, and a final circle in which each person says, “I am still here.” The chapter ends in the empty room. Its questions open Part Two, on page 45, under “Looking back on the weekend.”

This session’s focus

Writing to yourself from the part that kept going, and naming one person to ask and one action to take.

Before you read: what did you make it through that no one else saw?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. If the letter prompt feels useful, begin with something you can honestly acknowledge: "I kept going when..." or "Someone helped me by..."

2. Jules wrote, "I'm not leaving you again." What would a promise like that ask of you once you went home?

3. Who could you ask for support, and what exactly would you ask them to do?

4. Clair said she let someone comfort her without needing to earn it. What do you usually feel you have to do before you can be cared for?

Addressed to:

One manageable action I can take next, and when:

1. If you read any part of the letter aloud, tell the listener beforehand whether you want a response or only company.
2. Tell the other person the one action you chose. Ask them only to notice whether you take it, not to remind you.
3. What would each of you need in order to say “I am still here” and mean it on an ordinary Tuesday?

The letter is complete without a reader. If you choose a support person, the request on the right is ready to make when you are.

Invite people to name something they understood, a question they still have, or a small action they may choose. Passing remains an option. Give the ending enough time (Appendix, “Give the ending enough time”).

PART TWO

Reflections

Sessions 7 to 12 · Book pages 45 to 68

Part Two takes one question from the weekend into ordinary life: with a partner, a child, a friend, or a decision you would rather put off. What makes it possible to ask for care, and to receive it? How do you put an experience into words someone else can answer? Who controls a story once it has been told? What does choice look like when two people want different things? What do you do with grief when a limit has to stay in place? What does responsibility ask of you after an apology?

The practices in this part are the ones you are most likely to use again: the four parts of one conversation, an offer someone can answer, and an apology with something after it.

7. Making Room for Care	37
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In this part you will practice

- Ask for help, then let it arrive
- Separate what happened, what you felt, what it meant, and what you need
- Answer the person instead of taking the floor
- Find an adjustment two people can accept
- Hold both halves of a sentence about loss
- Choose a next step and follow through

Before this part

What I am feeling as I begin these sessions. “I’m not sure” is an answer.

What I want from them, and what I already know I will keep private:

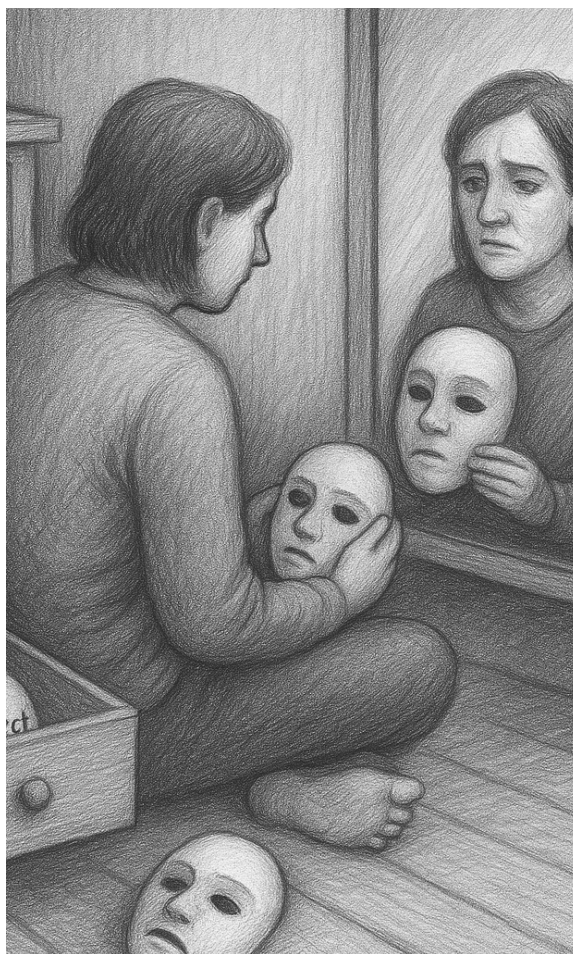
If I am working with someone else: what we have agreed about passing and stopping:

Making Room for Care

Read *Let It Out*, pages 47–48

“Could you take over bedtime tonight? I’m worn out.”

AN ORDINARY REQUEST, CHAPTER SEVEN



The idea

Peter asked, “Can I?” and Michael answered that question. Asking is one difficulty; this chapter is about the one that follows: letting the help arrive once someone has said yes, including when it is done differently from how you would do it. Before asking someone to change a familiar response, the author wants to understand what it does for them.

This session’s focus

Asking for one specific form of help, then letting the other person finish.

Before you read: when you accept help, what do you tend to take back?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Think of an exchange in which you answered automatically: "I'm fine," a joke, a quick agreement, or an offer to help. What did that answer protect?

2. The dependable person may be proud of being reliable. Which familiar response of yours is also a source of pride, and what would it mean to keep it while making room for another?

3. The next time you accept help, what do you expect to want to take back?

4. What kind of care do you actually welcome: practical help, encouragement, company, being left alone for a while? Has anyone been told?

Ask, then leave the room

Receiving help means letting the other person take over, including doing the task their own way. Plan one request, and plan what you will do while it is being done.

One specific form of help I could ask for, and from whom:

What matters for safety or for someone depending on me. I will say this once, clearly, before leaving the room:

What I expect to want to take back (instructions, a redo, an apology for needing it):

What I will do instead while the help is being given:

Afterward

What happened, in their way:

What I noticed in myself:

1. Make the request. Hear the answer. If it is yes, agree on when, and then let it be done.
2. Afterward, ask the other person what it was like to be asked, and what it was like to be left to do it.
3. Each name one kind of care you welcome and one kind you do not. An unexpected hug may be unwelcome; practical help may be more useful than encouragement.

You can plan the request and decide what you will not take back. The second half of the page waits for an actual exchange.

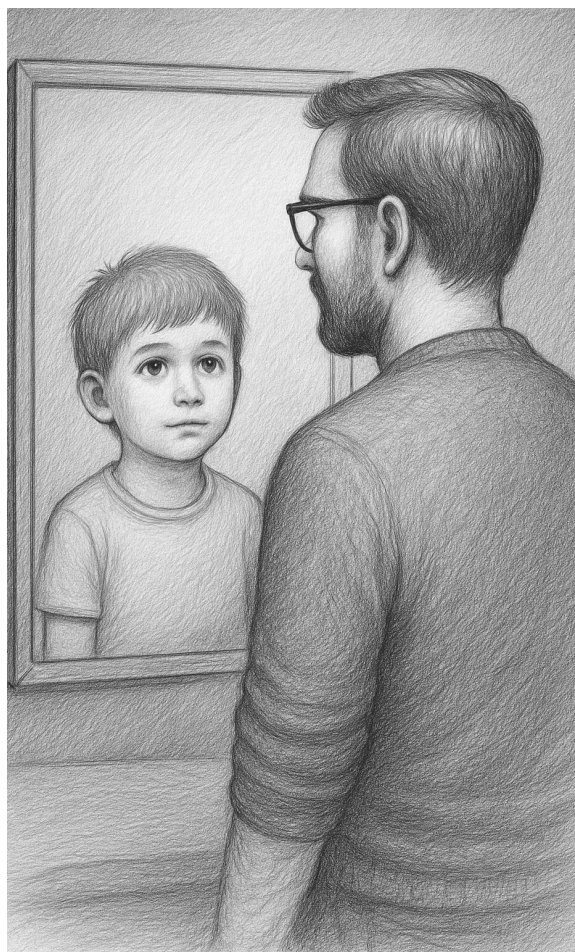
Hear what kind of care a participant welcomes before offering it. A quieter place to sit, instructions people can understand, and a choice the leader will honor are care too.

Giving Feelings Words

Read *Let It Out*, pages 51–53

“Could I finish what I was trying to say?”

A REQUEST AFTER AN INTERRUPTION, CHAPTER EIGHT



The idea

One interruption at a meeting is carried through four parts: what happened, what I felt, what I thought it meant, and what I need now. Collapsed into one sentence, “You never let me talk,” they become an accusation to defend against. Kept apart, they give two people something to work with. The same four parts apply to a memory and the meaning attached to it.

This session’s focus

Separating what happened from what you think it meant, and naming a present need in a sentence you could use today.

Before you read: think of one recent moment that stung. What would a camera have recorded?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose a manageable situation from the present. What happened, in terms anyone in the room could have seen?

2. What did you feel? It is yours to report, and no one else has to agree with it.

3. What did you think it meant? Leave the question open. What else might explain it?

4. Sometimes the feeling is larger than the moment explains. When a raised voice or a disappointed look makes you want the conversation to stop, what sentence could you say that stays in the present?

One conversation, four parts

Keep the four parts in separate columns. The example is the book's. Then do the same with a situation of your own, and with a memory if you choose.

THE BOOK'S EXAMPLE (PAGE 51)

What happened: a colleague interrupted me twice in a meeting.

What I felt: embarrassed; I stopped talking.

What I thought it meant: that they think my ideas don't matter (open; they may be impatient, anxious about time, or unaware).

What I need now: "Could I finish what I was trying to say?"

WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT I FELT	WHAT I THOUGHT IT MEANT (OPEN)	WHAT I NEED NOW

A memory and its meaning (optional)

What I remember:

The meaning I attached to it:

A sentence for when an old fear enters a present conversation (the book's: "I'm having trouble staying in this conversation while voices are raised. I need a pause."):

1. Read your four columns aloud in order. Ask the listener to repeat only column one before responding to anything else.
2. Let the other person answer column three. Their answer may tell you more about what happened than your guess did.
3. When a friend tells you about an earlier hurt, “What do you want me to understand about it?” leaves the choice with them. Try the question on each other.

All four columns can be filled in alone. Column three stays a guess until someone answers it; mark it as open.

Practice describing an event and a feeling without assigning a motive, using an invented situation (Appendix, Session two). Stay with what the person reports.

Being Heard in a Group

Read *Let It Out*, pages 55–56

“I thought I was the only one.”

THOMAS, CHAPTER NINE



The idea

A group offers more than one chance to be heard, and recognition can come from an unexpected person. It also raises a question: who controls a person’s account once they have shared it? Taking the floor with your own story and repeating someone’s story later are the same mistake at different times.

This session’s focus

Answering the person rather than making their story an entrance to yours, and knowing where their words may travel.

Before you read: when someone’s story reminds you of your own, how quickly do you start telling it?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Think of a conversation in which another person's words reminded you of your own experience. What was the first story you wanted to tell?

2. Two people who describe loneliness may want very different things. When you recognized something of yourself, what was different about their experience?

3. Which parts of another person's account do you have permission to share afterward? Which have you shared without asking?

4. Privacy is easier to discuss before people begin sharing. In the groups you belong to, what has been agreed, and what are the limits of that agreement?

Answering the person

Thomas's words offer a measure: have I answered the person, or have I made their story an entrance to mine? Use a conversation you remember.

What they said that was familiar:

The story I wanted to tell:

What I could say instead ("Something in what you said is familiar to me" may be enough):

The part of their experience that is different from mine, and that I need to listen for:

Where the words travel

What I may say afterward about my own experience:

What of their account stays with them unless they give permission:

1. Before offering your story, ask whether the person wants to hear it. Practice the asking.
2. Agree, in plain terms, what each of you may repeat to others and what you may not. Write it down.
3. People need a way to raise a privacy concern without revealing more in order to do so. How would one of you raise it?

The first four fields can be done alone. The privacy agreement needs the other people whose words are involved.

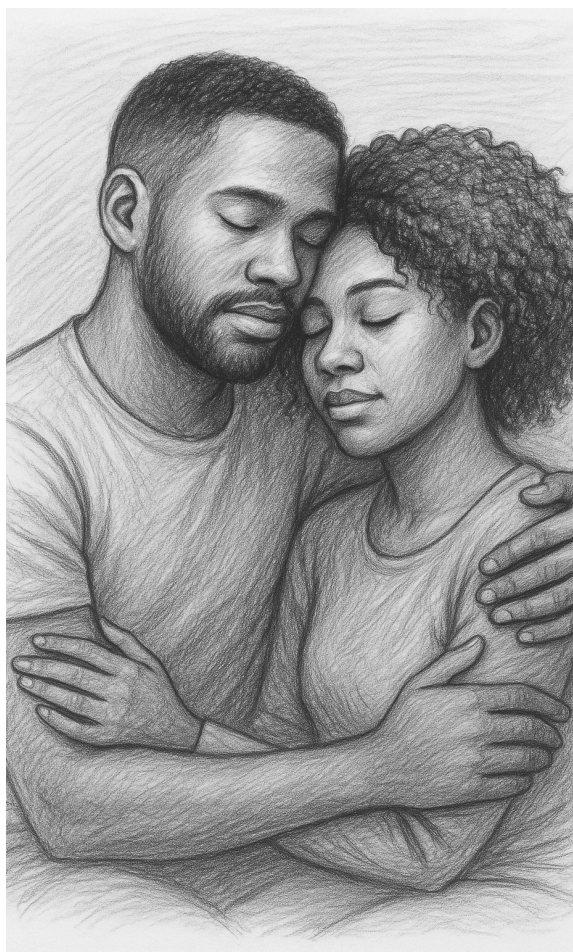
Explain what information you keep, who can see it, and the limits of confidentiality in your role. For educational discussions, make no recording the default (Appendix, “Prepare for privacy and access”).

Touch, Sound, and Choice

Read *Let It Out*, pages 59–60

“I need five minutes to regulate, then I’ll check in.”

MARK, CHAPTER SIX, RECALLED IN CHAPTER TEN



The idea

Hillary wanted closeness and offered to ask rather than assume. Mark wanted time and offered a return rather than a retreat. Each answer made room for the other. Comfort is an offer someone can answer, the person offering has choices too, and volume alone tells us little about what an expression means.

This session’s focus

One offer, one answer, and an adjustment both people can accept, with room for either to change their mind.

Before you read: what form of comfort would you welcome today, and what limit would you want respected?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Name one form of comfort you would welcome and one limit you would want respected.

2. The person offering care has choices too: "I'd like to sit with you. I'm not comfortable holding you." What can you offer, and what can you not?

3. A small change (a moved chair, a released hand, sitting closer) may make it possible to stay together comfortably. What adjustment has worked for you before?

4. Sound reaches the listener too. "I want to hear you. Could we speak more quietly?" What is your version of that sentence?

One offer, one answer, one adjustment

Fill in your own column. If you discuss it with someone, invite them to fill in theirs. Either person can ask for a change or a pause after the exchange begins.

	ME	THE OTHER PERSON (IN THEIR WORDS)
Comfort I would welcome		
A limit I want respected		
What I can offer		
What I am not comfortable with		

An adjustment both of us could accept:

How either of us will say that we have changed our mind:

The shape I hope for: one offer, one answer, one adjustment. Write the exchange as you would want it to go:

1. Make one offer in the form of a question: “Would you like me to hold your hand?” or “Would you like me to sit nearby?” Hear the answer without adjusting it.
2. Each name one limit. Check that the other person can repeat it accurately.
3. Agree on what “not yet” will sound like between you, so it does not have to sound like “no.”

Your column is yours to fill. The other person's column should hold their words, not your guess; leave it blank until they give them.

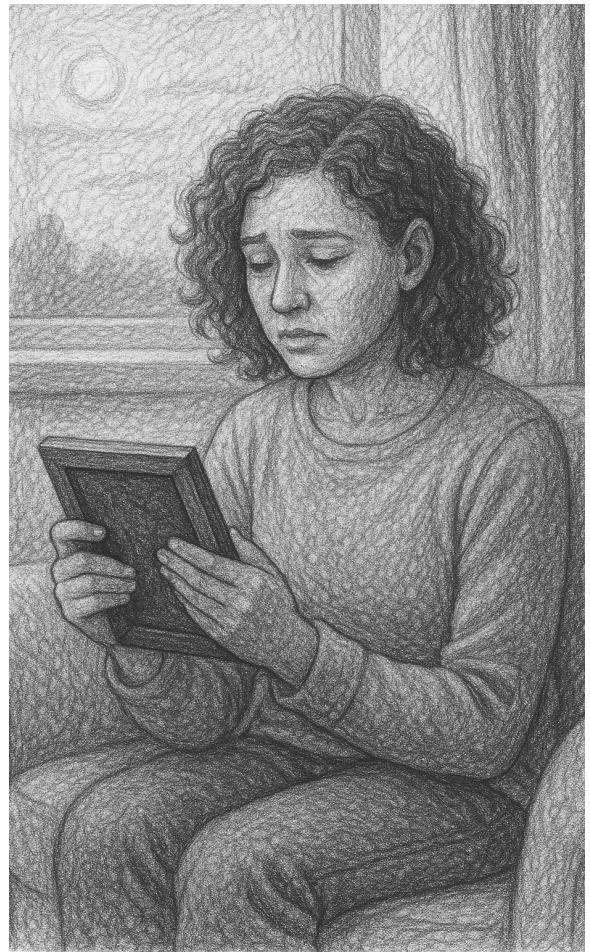
Touch needs its own invitation. Ask about the specific contact before it happens, and leave room for the answer to change. Consent to one activity is not consent to the next.

Grief and the Love We Wanted

Read *Let It Out*, pages 63–64

“I miss him, and I’m not going back.”

A SENTENCE WITH TWO HALVES, CHAPTER ELEVEN



The idea

Sylvia wished her father had stayed. When the person is still alive, a wish can remain active in small ways. An explanation and an unmet wish can sit side by side. A necessary limit can leave a lonely evening behind it, and no one owes the listener a lesson they have learned from suffering.

This session’s focus

Hearing both halves of a sentence about loss, and keeping a limit without pretending it does not hurt.

Before you read: is there a wish you are still waiting on, in small ways?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Complete one sentence about someone you miss, an answer you wanted, or a limit you intend to keep. You can leave it unfinished if that is where the words stop.

2. "I understand some of what happened" and "I wanted more from you." Write each half for a person in your life.

3. A birthday comes. A holiday custom no longer fits. Which small decision around a loss is in front of you, and would you keep the custom, change it, or leave it alone this year?

4. If you choose to share any of this, what would help the listener hear the whole sentence?

Both halves of the sentence

If a listener hears only one half, they may suggest renewed contact or praise the departure and miss the grief. Write both halves so neither gets lost.

“I miss...”

“...and...” (the limit, the decision, or the other feeling)

“I understand some of what happened...”

“...and I wanted more from you.”

The evening after a limit

Who understands why the limit exists, and could keep me company on that evening:

A sentence I can say without turning it into a lesson or an account of growth (“I wish she were here” is enough):

Pleasure has a place alongside grief. Something I can still enjoy this week:

☐ A joke ☐ A song ☐ An afternoon elsewhere ☐ Something else:

1. Read the whole sentence, both halves. Ask the listener to repeat both before saying anything else.
2. Tell the listener which half you most fear they will skip.
3. If a limit is part of the sentence, agree that the conversation is about the loss, not about reopening the decision.

Both halves can be written alone. Company on the evening after a limit needs a person; the field names who.

Do not insist on finding the “real” feeling. Someone may be describing a loss, not defending a decision. Hear both halves and leave them side by side.

The Healthy Adult

Read *Let It Out*, pages 67–68

“Who’s driving the bus right now?”

RACHEL’S QUESTION, CHAPTER TWELVE



The idea

Jules felt “like the grown-up in my own life.” The term Healthy Adult is borrowed from schema therapy for an everyday question: when a strong feeling arrives, who makes the next decision? An apology names what you did and its effect; repair is what comes after. The other person may remain upset, and that is their right.

This session’s focus

Choosing a next step, following through, and apologizing without asking the other person to reassure you.

Before you read: what decision are you about to make too quickly, or agree to because you fear disappointing someone?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose one decision you face now. What do you feel? What are you about to agree to?

2. What help would make the choice clearer, and who could give it?

3. Think of a promise you broke. What did your embarrassment send you toward: a defense, an account of everything else you do, or acknowledgment?

4. Jules's promise, "I'm not leaving you again," becomes real in small decisions. What is one small decision this week in which you could be on your own side?

An apology with something after it

The book's template: "I said I would take care of it, and I didn't. I understand that left you without something you were counting on. I'm sorry. Here is what I can do now." The last sentence needs something possible behind it.

What I did, plainly:

The effect on the other person, as best I understand it:

What I can do now (if the opportunity has passed, what I will ask would help):

What changes before someone next relies on me (a smaller promise, a reminder, an honest refusal):

What I will not ask of them (they may remain upset; asking them to reassure me that I am good turns the repair into another task for them):

Who is driving the bus

One small action I will take:

When I will take it, specific enough to recognize when I have kept it:

1. If the apology is for the other person at the table, say the first three lines and stop. Let them answer without being asked for reassurance.
2. Ask what would help now, and hear the answer even if it is “nothing.”
3. Tell each other one commitment you are reconsidering, and what a smaller, keepable version would be.

The apology can be prepared alone and delivered when you are ready. The person's response is theirs; the sheet does not script it.

Separate shame from responsibility. Practice an apology that names the action, its impact, and a change, using a fictional situation (Appendix, Session five).

One small step this week:

A week later. What I tried, what followed, and what remains open:

PART THREE

Taking It Home

Sessions 13 to 22 · Book pages 71 to 109

Part Three follows participants home and turns to practice: what to try, how to tell whether it helps, and what to do when it does not. These sessions begin with shame and pace, set out the three tools of Chapter Fifteen, and follow them into relationships, parenting, and limits. They end with care after an intense experience, a way to test a practice for a week, and what remained difficult months later.

The worksheets at the back of this workbook belong to this part. The page, the pause, and the request each have a full sheet you can copy, and the care-afterward plan from Chapter Nineteen appears as a page of its own.

13.Undoing Shame	63
14.Beginning at Your Own Pace	67
15.Your Emotional Toolkit	71
16.Letting It Out in Relationships	75
17.Parenting with Permission	79
18.Love and Limits	83
19.After an Intense Experience	87
20.Practice That Fits Your Life	91
21.The Voice Returns	95
22.The Path Ahead	99

In this part you will practice

- Replace a harsh verdict with a specific description
- Give one concern a moment, support, and a stopping place
- Choose between the page, the pause, and the request
- Try a five-minute check-in and a pause with a return
- Hear a child's feeling and keep a necessary limit
- State what you can offer and follow through
- Plan care for the next day
- Test one small practice for a week
- Say what changed and what remains difficult
- Choose one next step

Before this part

What I am feeling as I begin these sessions. "I'm not sure" is an answer.

What I want from them, and what I already know I will keep private:

If I am working with someone else: what we have agreed about passing and stopping:

Undoing Shame

Read *Let It Out*, pages 73–74

“I thought people would pull away. But no one left. They came closer.”

MARIE, CHAPTER THIRTEEN



The idea

Kelly and Marie shared an expectation: if people see this, they will go. Shame tells a person to hide what they feel, then treats the hiding as proof that hiding was necessary. It turns a particular event into a verdict about a whole person. Specific language separates harm caused from harm suffered, and shows which repair belongs to whom.

This session’s focus

Replacing a harsh judgment with a specific description, and asking for care without first making yourself easier to care for.

Before you read: what sentence about yourself have you been treating as a fact?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Write one harsh judgment you have been treating as a fact ("I ruin everything," "I'm too much," "I'm worthless").

2. Describe the situation behind it more specifically. What did you do? Who was affected?

3. Which responsibilities are yours, and which belong to someone else? "I broke the promise" and "they mistreated me" point toward different kinds of help.

4. What care would you ask for if you did not first have to make yourself easier to care for?

From verdict to description

“I wish I had handled that differently” gives us something to examine. “I ruin everything” leaves an accusation too large to answer. Move one verdict into the specific.

The verdict:

The specific situation (what, when, who):

WHAT I DID	WHO WAS AFFECTED	WHAT REPAIR BELONGS TO ME

What belongs to someone else, and is not mine to repair:

Making myself easier to care for

The way I usually shrink a need before asking (“Sorry to bother you,” “I’ll keep it short,” “I promise I won’t cry”):

The same request without the shrinking:

1. Say the request without the shrinking. The listener answers with “I’m glad you told me” or “I have time to sit with you,” if true.
2. Tell the other person one verdict you carry and the specific situation under it. Ask them only to hear the difference.
3. Agree that disagreeing with each other does not cost either of you a place at the table.

Everything on this page can be done alone. If you want to test Marie's finding, that the expectation met a different response, the request has to be made to someone.

Hear the need beneath the effort to make it smaller. Someone harmed by another person should not be handed the task of repairing that person's conduct.

Beginning at Your Own Pace

Read *Let It Out*, pages 77–78

“I didn’t know I needed to cry. But my throat did.”

ALEX, CHAPTER FOURTEEN



The idea

Alex’s beginning arrived through a sad song in the car, on its own schedule. After an intense weekend it is easy to make intensity the measure of whether an experience matters. A beginning can be organized around four things: a concern, a workable moment, the support it needs, and a place to stop.

This session’s focus

Giving one concern a moment that can hold it, the support it needs, and a stopping place decided in advance.

Before you read: what in your week would make attention to a concern possible, and what makes it hard?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. An ordinary day already gives us things worth noticing. "I agreed to work late again, and I resent it." "I don't know what I feel." What concern is in front of you?

2. Income, housing, transportation, and schedules shape the conditions in which people care for themselves. Which of these shape your pace right now?

3. If someone else may read a page or a device, is reflecting without a record the better choice for you?

4. How will you know it is time to stop: a time, a task you will return to, a person you will call?

A beginning in four parts

Give one concern a moment that can hold it. Look at the calendar before accepting another commitment. If you are driving, wait until you are safely parked.

1. A concern (one is enough):

2. A workable moment: when and where, and whether it is private:

3. Support: a quiet room, a ride, help with a task, someone who knows I am doing this:

4. A stopping place: how I will stop, decided now:

What I will do if the activity leaves me increasingly overwhelmed (Session 19 and page 106 describe care afterward):

Afterward

What I noticed, and what I did next (intensity is not the measure):

1. Tell one person the moment you have chosen and the stopping place. Ask them to respect both.
2. Before encouraging someone else to begin, ask what would make attention possible for them: a quiet room, a ride, support that fits a work schedule.
3. Compare what shapes each of your paces. Neither of you has to justify it.

This page is designed for one person. Support can be practical and need not involve telling anyone what the concern is.

Help each person choose one small practice, a time to try it, and the support it needs. Accept “nothing this week” as a complete answer (Appendix, Session six).

One small step this week:

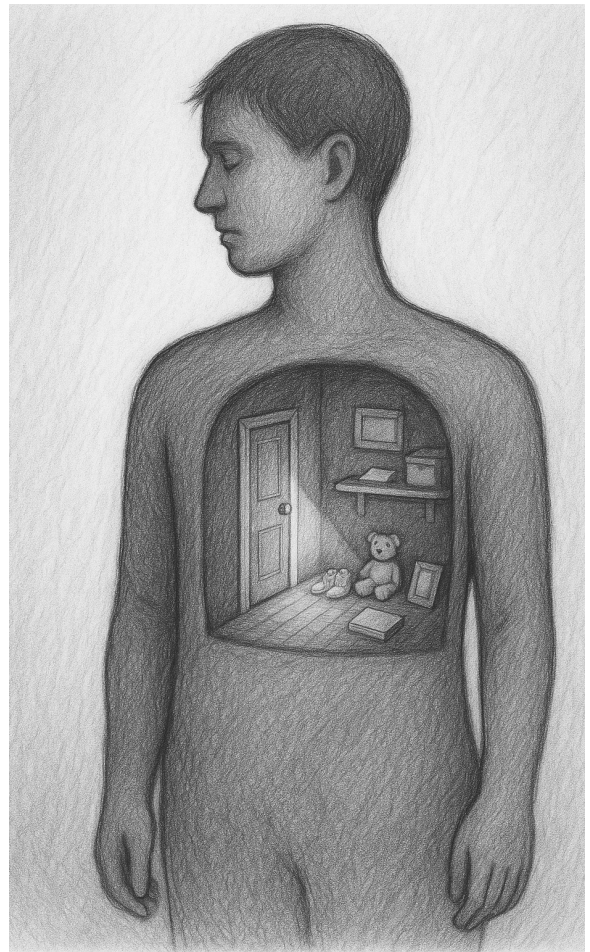
A week later. What I tried, what followed, and what remains open:

Your Emotional Toolkit

Read *Let It Out*, pages 81–83

“What I wish I could say is...”

THE PAGE, CHAPTER FIFTEEN



The idea

Jules called their nightly writing “bleeding the page.” A practice earns its place by helping with a particular task. The chapter describes three: the page, for finding words; the pause, for time before an answer; and the request, for bringing someone else into a decision. If you are unsure, start with the page. It often shows whether you need a pause or a request.

This session’s focus

Choosing the tool that fits one current concern, trying it, and noticing what became clearer and what is still missing.

Before you read: for the concern on your mind, do you need words, time, or another person’s answer?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose one current concern. Do you need words you can keep private, time before answering, or another person's help with a decision?

2. The page: when something needs expression but is not ready for another person. What has been waiting to be written rather than sent?

3. The pause: when you are about to reply in a way you may regret, or you are missing information. What silence have you recently given a meaning you have not confirmed?

4. The request: when the concern involves what someone else will do. What task and what time would you name?

Choosing a tool

Three tools, one concern. The full worksheets for each tool begin on page 103 and can be copied. Use this page to decide, then turn to the one you need.

CHOOSING A TOOL (BOOK PAGE 81)

The page: when something needs expression but is not ready for another person. Begin with “What I wish I could say is...” and keep the draft private.

The pause: when you are about to reply in a way you may regret, or you are missing information. Step away, then return at a time you name.

The request: when the concern involves what someone else will do. Name the task and the time, and leave room for an answer.

The concern:

What it needs first:

☐ Words I can keep private ☐ Time before answering ☐ Another person's help

The tool I will try:

☐ The page (p. 103) ☐ The pause (p. 104) ☐ The request (p. 105)

What became clearer:

What is still missing:

Did the first tool show that I need a second one? Which?

1. If you chose the request, make it. Listen for what was actually agreed: who will do what, and when.
2. If you chose the pause, tell the other person the time you will return, and return then.
3. If you chose the page, you may share nothing. Say so plainly if someone asks: “I’m working something out on paper first.”

The page and the pause are solitary tools. The request needs an answer from someone else; preparing it is still worth doing.

A completed exercise is only part of the account. Ask what helped and what got in the way; tears, volume, and the amount disclosed are poor substitutes for that information.

Letting It Out in Relationships

Read *Let It Out*, pages 85–86

“I was scared to see how much pain you were carrying. And now I see it. I’m not going anywhere.”

ROBERT TO SYLVIA, CHAPTER SIXTEEN



The idea

After the weekend, Sylvia and Robert began five-minute check-ins each evening. Five minutes is enough to ask what mattered during the day; it is not enough to settle a disagreement that has been building for years. A pause between partners needs one more element: an agreed return. These conversations depend on being able to disagree or stop without retaliation.

This session’s focus

Trying a brief check-in, naming what is agreed and what remains open, and giving a pause somewhere to end.

Before you read: what in your relationship could five minutes hold, and what could it not?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose one concern to discuss with your partner. What do you need to hear before deciding what happens next?

2. The book's example: a Sunday plan changed without checking. What agreement between you has recently been understood differently by each of you?

3. When you need a break from an argument, what do you usually do? Does the pause have a return?

4. Afterward, name what you agreed to and what remains open. Take responsibility for the part that is yours.

A five-minute check-in, and a pause with a return

Five minutes is enough to say “I’m worn out” or “Something from work is still bothering me.” Either person can pass. End by naming what is agreed and what remains open.

DAY	WHAT MATTERED TODAY (MINE)	WHAT MATTERED TODAY (THEIRS)	OPEN / AGREED
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

A pause with a return

My words for the pause (the book’s: “I’m having trouble listening. I need a break. Can we check in after dinner about whether we’re ready to continue?”):

When we will return:

What I will step away from, including messages:

If disclosure brings threats, coercion, or monitoring, seek support with your circumstances and safety first. See the Resources page.

1. Hear the concern before settling the plan. The listener guesses the feeling (“The change left you feeling unimportant. Is that right?”) and the speaker corrects the guess.
2. If you broke an agreement, acknowledge it plainly before discussing what is possible now.
3. Agree on the time for the larger conversation a check-in cannot hold.

You can keep your own column of the check-in log and write your pause sentence. An agreed return requires the other person's agreement; propose it rather than assume it.

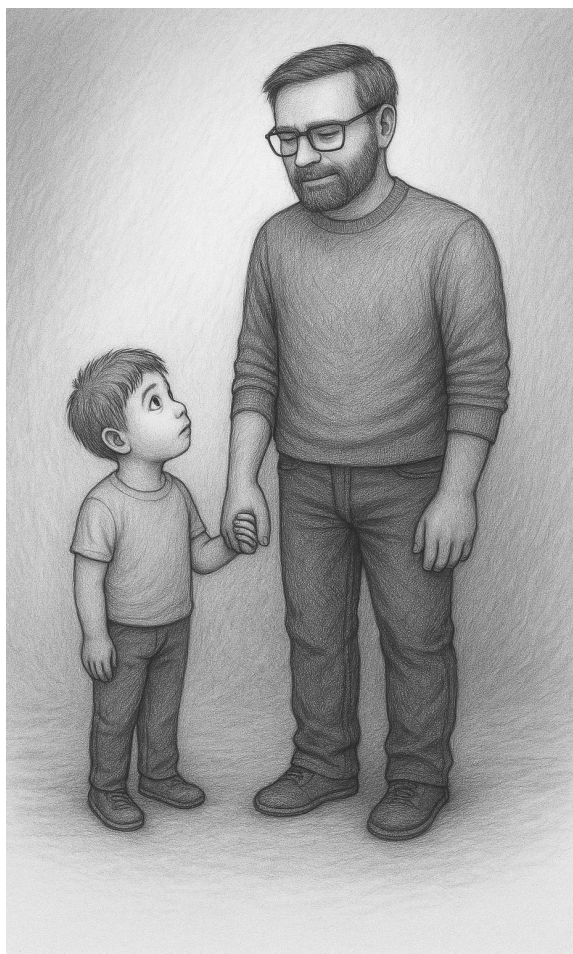
Partners who attend together may not feel equally free to speak. Practice with invented situations before inviting couples to apply a skill to their own relationship. Where there are signs of fear, control, or violence, joint exercises may be unsafe.

Parenting with Permission

Read *Let It Out*, pages 89–91

“My dad didn’t fix me. He just didn’t leave.”

PETER’S JOURNAL, CHAPTER SEVENTEEN



The idea

A child may tell us something we would rather they had kept to themselves. The invitation becomes real in how we answer then. A feeling can be heard while a decision stands. Comfort is offered as a question. An apology to a child has work to do tomorrow morning, and a child also needs time with us when nothing is being corrected.

This session’s focus

Hearing a child’s feeling while keeping a necessary limit, and planning one repair or practical change that belongs to you.

Before you read: what answer from your child, or from a child in your life, did you find hard to hear?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Recall one answer from your child that you found hard to hear. What did you do next?

2. "You can tell me you're angry. I won't let you hit your brother." Where in your home does a feeling need to be heard and a limit kept at the same time?

3. "Would you like a hug, or would you rather I sit over here?" When did you last offer comfort as a question, and respect the answer?

4. A child's kindness can move us; watching over a parent's mood is more than a child should have to take on. Who is your adult support, and does the sentence "I have someone I can talk to" hold true?

A feeling and a decision

The book’s pattern: “You wanted more time together. I understand why you’re disappointed. We’re leaving now, and we can talk about another visit.” The decision is clear, and the disappointment has been heard.

The situation:

THE FEELING, HEARD	THE DECISION, KEPT	WHAT WE CAN DO INSTEAD OR LATER

A question that leaves room to learn (“You seem frustrated. Is that what’s happening?”):

A usable apology

What happened, what I am sorry for, and what I will do differently tomorrow (without “but you made me”):

The practical change that gives the promise a chance (things by the door, an earlier start, another adult’s help):

The adult support that helps me follow through:

Time this week when nothing is being corrected (a game, something they made, what they enjoyed):

1. With a co-parent: agree on the decision before the conversation, so the child hears one answer and two people willing to hear the feeling.
2. Tell each other which of your children's feelings is hardest for you to stay available for, and why.
3. If harmful behavior keeps recurring, getting help to change it matters more than finding another way to apologize. Name the help you would seek.

A single parent can do the whole page. The adult-support line matters more, not less; if there is no adult to turn to yet, finding one is part of the plan.

Begin parenting groups with the skills in Chapter Seventeen rather than with personal history. Keep the conversation on what the parent wants for the child and what they can practice this week.

Love and Limits

Read *Let It Out*, pages 93–95

“I can help on Saturday morning, from eight until noon. I’m not available for the rest of the weekend.”

A LIMIT, CHAPTER EIGHTEEN



The idea

One ordinary situation, a friend’s request for help with a move, runs through request, limit, agreement, disappointment, and follow-through. A limit states what you can or will do; “respect my boundaries” tells a friend nothing useful. A limit needs an action that belongs to the person setting it. Controlling someone else’s choices is not a limit when it is called one.

This session’s focus

Stating what you can offer, accounting for existing commitments, and following through.

Before you read: where are you offering more than you can sustain?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Where are you offering more than you can sustain? What reluctant yes is someone currently counting on?

2. State what you can offer and what action is yours, accounting for existing commitments and anyone who depends on your care.

3. Someone can respect an answer and still be disappointed. What do you usually do when the asking continues after you have been clear?

4. "You can never mention how I hurt you" leaves the hurt unresolved. Is there a subject you have closed that you could instead choose a time to discuss?

Request, limit, agreement, follow-through

Use a request you have received or expect to receive. If fear or retaliation is involved, begin with outside support rather than with this sheet.

The request, as it was made:

My existing commitments, including dependent care:

What I can offer (times, tasks):

What I am not available for:

The agreement, specific enough that both of us can tell whether it happened:

If they are disappointed, my sentence (“I understand. I wish I could. Saturday morning is what I can do.”):

Follow-through: when I will arrive, when I will leave, and how I will let them know early if something changes:

- ☐ The action in my limit belongs to me, not to them.
- ☐ It does not control their friendships, movements, or money.
- ☐ If I have caused harm, I am choosing a time to discuss it, not closing the subject.

1. Practice hearing “no” without adding pressure: one person makes a request, the other states a limit, the first says only, “Thank you for telling me.”
2. Swap roles. Then revise anything that sounded like pressure or like a reluctant yes.
3. Tell each other one place where a limit of yours has become a demand on the other person, and what the action that belongs to you would be.

The limit and the follow-through are yours to prepare. The agreement is reached with the other person; write your proposal and leave room for theirs.

Use the twenty-minute request session (book page 124), then add a limit: what you can offer and which action is yours. A partner is practicing an answer, not agreeing to a real obligation.

One small step this week:

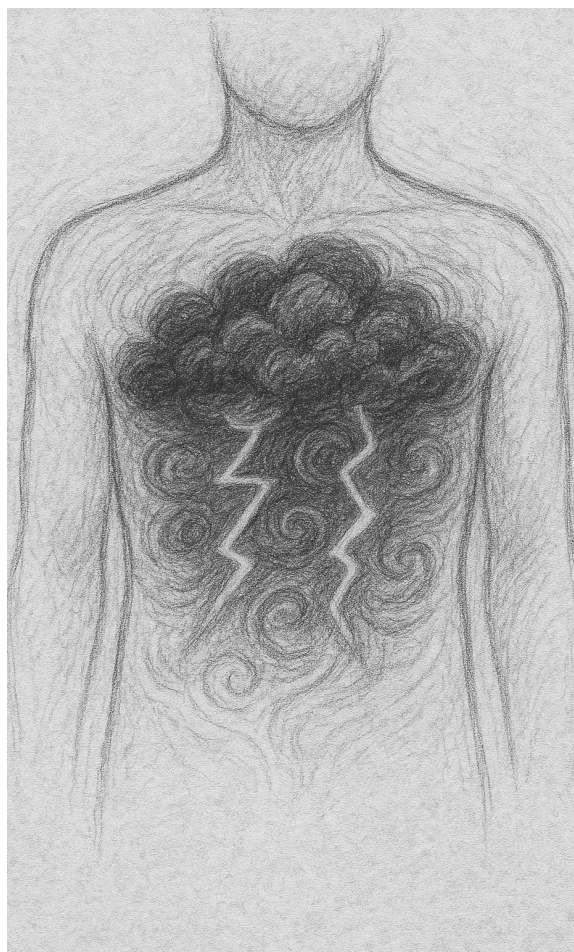
A week later. What I tried, what followed, and what remains open:

After an Intense Experience

Read *Let It Out*, pages 97–99

“I don’t want to talk about it yet. I just want to feel what it’s like not to be carrying it.”

JOE, CHAPTER NINETEEN



The idea

The care offered afterward belongs to the experience itself. There is still someone who has to get home, eat, rest, and meet the demands of another day. This chapter is the book’s main reference for that care and for knowing when more help is needed. Loyalty to a group or facilitator should not require calling worsening distress progress.

This session’s focus

Naming what you need over the next day, who has agreed to help, and the signs that mean it is time to seek more help.

Before you read: after a demanding day, what is usually your next practical need?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. After a demanding day, what is your next practical need: food, quiet, company, somewhere comfortable to sit?

2. Who could take over care of a child, a task, or a shift for a while? Have they been asked?

3. Your account may include relief, fatigue, disappointment, or uncertainty. Which have you been reluctant to report, and to whom?

4. If something unwanted or harmful occurred in a group, a concern about how you were treated needs an answer. Where would you raise it, and who would hear it independently?

Planning care afterward

The book's planning box, with room to write. A full-page copy is on page 106. Fill this in before an intense experience when you can, and revise it after.

Next few hours: food, water, a comfortable place to sit, and whether I want quiet or company:

Getting home: if distress or disorientation makes driving unsafe, how I will travel instead:

Responsibilities: who can take over care of a child, a task, or a shift for a while:

Agreed support: one person who has said yes to hearing from me:

When I will contact them:

If it worsens: whom I will contact, and the signs that mean it is time:

- ☐ Distress interferes with sleep, concentration, everyday tasks, or caring for myself.
- ☐ Physical symptoms (racing heart, dizziness, difficulty breathing) that a provider should assess.
- ☐ Flashbacks or recurring distressing memories that disrupt life.
- ☐ Thoughts of suicide or urges to hurt myself: call or text 988 (U.S.), or 911 in an emergency.

1. Ask one person to be your agreed support, and tell them what that means: a call at a named time, not a diagnosis.
2. If you attend a workshop together, agree beforehand on who drives home, who takes over at home, and what you will each say about the other person's stories: nothing without permission.
3. "Could you help with dinner?" gives someone a way to help while leaving the account of the day for another time. Practice asking for the practical thing.

Most of the plan can be made alone. Agreed support needs someone who has actually said yes; a name written without asking is not yet support.

Follow-up needs a person, a way to make contact, and realistic response times. Provide a private way to report what was uncomfortable, confusing, or missing, including a route that does not depend on the leader.

Practice That Fits Your Life

Read *Let It Out*, pages 101–102

“I scream less now. I speak more.”

BRYAN, CHAPTER TWENTY



The idea

Bryan set aside Tuesday evenings in his garage. The measure of the practice was what happened outside it. A practice earns its place in the hours around it. The chapter follows one ordinary behavior, listening without interrupting, through a week, and asks what changed, what did not, and what it cost.

This session's focus

Choosing one recognizable behavior, a place in the life you already have, and an honest review after a week.

Before you read: what ordinary behavior would you most like to change, in terms someone could recognize?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. "Be a better listener" names a wish. Letting the other person finish before offering advice gives you something recognizable to practice. State your wish, then the behavior.

2. Which conversation already part of your day could hold the practice?

3. If you slip ("I cut you off. Please finish."), what will you say to give the conversation back without taking the floor again?

4. What might the practice reveal that the practice itself cannot fix: an arrangement about work messages, a rushed time of day?

One behavior, one week

Choose a conversation already part of the day. Try the practice for a week. Then decide what to keep or adjust. There should be room for pleasure too; a family meal can remain a meal.

The wish:

The recognizable behavior:

Where it fits in the day I already have:

DAY	TRIED IT?	WHAT HAPPENED	WHAT IT COST (TIME, ATTENTION)
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

After a week

What changed:

What did not:

Decision:

☐ Continue ☐ Adjust (how?) ☐ Stop ☐ Discuss the arrangement instead

1. Tell the other person what you are practicing, so they can notice. Before offering suggestions during the week, ask whether they want them.
2. After the week, ask them: did you have more room to finish?
3. If the practice revealed an arrangement that needs discussion, set a time for that conversation rather than expecting the practice to fix it.

The tracker and review are yours. Whether the other person had more room to finish is their account; ask if you can.

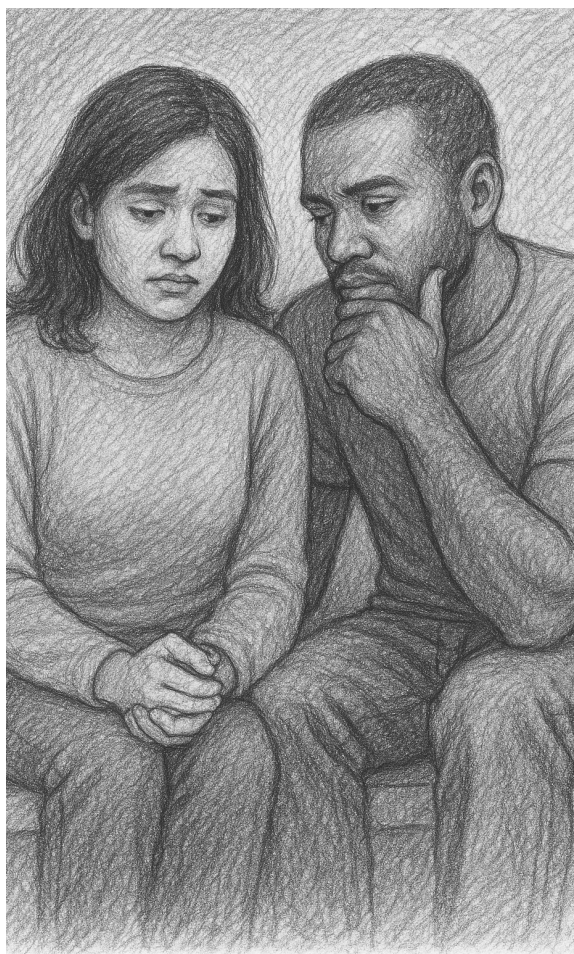
Between sessions, offer an optional practice rather than homework that must be reported. Look for the skill you set out to teach, not for intensity.

The Voice Returns

Read *Let It Out*, pages 105–107

“I didn’t go back to being who I was. I started telling the truth, one sentence at a time.”

ALEX, CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE



The idea

Three follow-up accounts, from Alex, Darrell, and Sylvia and Robert, show changes in ordinary life without suggesting that every difficulty was resolved. Darrell’s rage remained; he described a voice he could hear before acting on it. Sylvia and Robert still had something to work out; the change was how they stayed with each other while it remained unresolved.

This session’s focus

Saying what you said or did differently, what followed, and what remains difficult, without rounding up.

Before you read: what has changed for you since you began this workbook, in one sentence? What has not?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Think of one recent exchange. What did you say or do differently, if anything?

2. What followed? Include what the other person did, as far as you know it.

3. What remains difficult? Keeping the poem while leaving out the rage would change the story.

4. Darrell began attending a weekly trauma group. What support beyond a friend or partner are you considering, and what has kept you from it?

What changed, and what remains

Unfinished accounts have more to teach than endings in which every difficulty disappears. Write yours without rounding it up or down.

One recent exchange:

What I said or did differently, if anything:

What followed:

What remains difficult:

A voice I can hear before the next mistake, if I have found one. What does it say?

Support I am considering beyond talking with a friend or partner, and the first step toward it:

1. Each person reads only the “what remains difficult” line. The listener does not fix it.
2. Sylvia remembered Robert’s hand on her back: “Not to stop me—just to stay.” Tell each other what staying looks like when a disagreement is unresolved.
3. Take turns, with short, uninterrupted turns, as Marie and Jessica did. A talking stick can be imaginary.

This page is a private review. If you decide to seek further support, the last field is the plan.

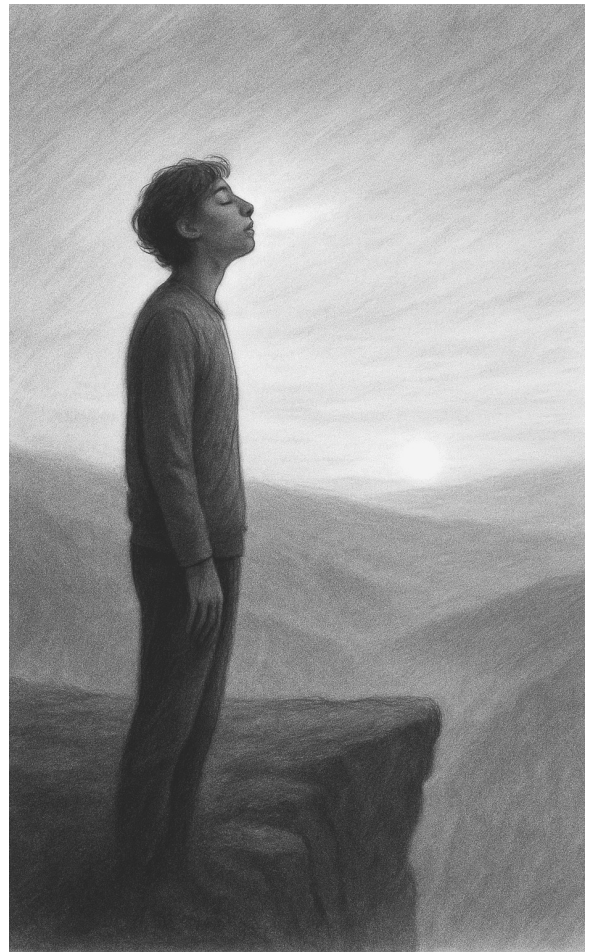
These are selected stories, not an evaluation of the intensive. Use the accounts to examine what people said and what a listener did next; they do not establish that everyone benefited.

The Path Ahead

Read *Let It Out*, pages 109

“What am I feeling, and what am I asking for?”

THE QUESTION TO CARRY, CHAPTER
TWENTY-TWO



The idea

The book ends with the next person who speaks, and with what the author hopes to do then: stay, let them finish, and ask what they want before offering what he has. You may have disagreed with parts of the book or left an exercise alone. Your judgment belongs in what happens next. There is room to begin with one sentence.

This session's focus

Choosing one next step, if you are ready, or leaving yourself a question to revisit.

Before you read: who is the next person likely to say something hard to you?

Reflect

From the chapter's "Before you turn the page." You can answer in writing, think them over, or leave them alone. Any of them can be kept private.

1. Choose one next step, if you are ready. Name the situation and the action: "When I speak with my sister, I'll ask how she experienced our last conversation and listen to her answer."

2. Which parts of the book did you disagree with, or leave alone? Your judgment belongs in what happens next.

3. The next person who speaks to you will say something, and you will feel your answer begin to form before they have finished. What will you do then?

4. You can also leave yourself a question to revisit. What is it, and when will you return to it?

One next step

Stay. Let them finish. Ask what they want before offering what you have. Write the step small enough to take, or write the question and a date.

The situation (“When I speak with...”):

The action (“...I’ll...”):

What I will ask them before offering what I have:

Or: a question to revisit, and the date I will come back to it:

The question underneath

What am I feeling?

What am I asking for?

For when someone else is speaking: what are they trying to tell me, and have I let them finish?

1. Tell the other person your one next step. Ask them to hear it, not to hold you to it.
2. Each name one thing from these sessions you will keep, and one you are setting down.
3. Say the four words, if you want to. You can also pass.

Taking time is a choice too. The question card on this page can be copied and kept where you will see it.

Leave time for goodbyes, follow-up options, and private feedback. An invitation to call should offer a reliable way to reach someone.

These three worksheets follow Chapter Fifteen. Copy them as often as you need. If you are unsure which tool fits, start with the page; it often shows whether you need a pause or a request.

103

The pause

When you are about to reply in a way you may regret, or you are missing information.

What I know (“They haven’t answered.”):

The meaning I gave it (“They no longer care about me.”):

The reply I was about to send or say:

What I will do instead for now (a glass of water, a familiar task):

When I will return:

What information is missing, and a simple question that might get it:

If a repeated pattern needs a firm response, the sentence that names it (the book’s: “The last two times you borrowed my car, you returned it with an empty tank. I need you to replace the fuel you use.”):

Between partners, a pause needs an agreed return. A pause with no return can feel like a door closing.

The request

When the concern involves what someone else will do.

The situation, and what I have been carrying (“I’ve been handling the evening cleanup and I’m tired.”):

The task:

The time:

The request, in one sentence someone can answer:

Their answer:

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ A different arrangement:

What was actually agreed: who will do what, and when:

If the answer is no, the practical problem remains. Another division of work, or another source of help:

If I have insulted or frightened someone before making this request, what I need to acknowledge and repair:

Planning care afterward

From Chapter Nineteen. Fill this in before an intense experience when you can, and keep it where you will find it.

Next few hours: food, water, a comfortable place to sit, and whether I want quiet or company.

Getting home: if distress or disorientation makes driving unsafe, another way to travel.

Responsibilities: who can take over care of a child, a task, or a shift for a while.

Agreed support: one person who has said yes to hearing from me.

When.

If it worsens: whom I will contact, and the signs that mean it is time.

If distress worsens or interferes with sleep, concentration, everyday tasks, or caring for yourself, speak with a health care professional. If you have thoughts of suicide or urges to hurt yourself, seek immediate help: in the United States, call or text 988; call 911 in a life-threatening emergency.

A six-session series

From the appendix of Let It Out, page 125. Six sessions of about ninety minutes; each pairs a reading with one skill, a practice using invented situations, and time to close.

SESSION ONE · PURPOSE AND PARTICIPATION

Reading: Introduction, Chapters 1–2. *In this workbook:* Sessions 1–2.

Introduce the purpose, the privacy expectations, and the choices available in every activity. Invite everyone to answer a light question or pass, and receive both answers the same way.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

SESSION TWO · NAMING AN EXPERIENCE

Reading: Chapters 4, 8. *In this workbook:* Sessions 4, 8.

Practice describing an event and a feeling without assigning a motive. Offer “I miss...” and “I wish I had been able to...” as private writing prompts before any sharing.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

SESSION THREE · LISTENING AND CHECKING

Reading: Chapters 5, 9. *In this workbook:* Sessions 5, 9.

Model a reflection, then let pairs summarize an invented account and ask, “Did I get that right?” Discuss what made a correction easy or hard to accept.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

A six-session series (continued)

SESSION FOUR · REQUESTS AND LIMITS

Reading: Chapters 3, 15, 18. *In this workbook:* Sessions 3, 15, 18 and the request sheet (page 105).

Use the short session on making a request (book page 124), then add a limit: what you can offer and which action is yours. Practice hearing “no” without adding pressure.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

SESSION FIVE · RESPONSIBILITY AND REPAIR

Reading: Chapters 12, 13, 16. *In this workbook:* Sessions 12, 13, 16.

Separate shame from responsibility. Practice an apology that names the action, its impact, and a change, using a fictional situation.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

SESSION SIX · A PRACTICE THAT FITS

Reading: Chapters 14, 19, 20, 22. *In this workbook:* Sessions 14, 19, 20, 22 and the care plan (page 106).

Help each person choose one small practice, a time to try it, and the support it needs. Leave time for goodbyes, follow-up options, and private feedback.

Date, room, co-leader, quieter space:

Practice option offered, and who passed:

Notes after the session:

BETWEEN SESSIONS

Offer an optional practice rather than homework that must be reported. When you ask what people tried, accept “nothing this week” as a complete answer. Participants who have not done the reading can still take part.

Leader's debrief

From the appendix, "Care for the leader." Use after each session, alone or with a co-leader.

Session and date:

Co-leader or consultant:

What happened (what people said, how invitations were answered, what a listener did next):

What I felt, including anything that touched my own history:

Whose need was each activity serving? Where the answer was mine, what I will slow down next time:

Who passed or declined, and what happened after they did:

Concerns raised privately, and how each will receive an answer:

What I will change in the next session:

Time protected between this session and my next responsibility:

Twenty-two sessions

One row per session. A date, a mark for the practice tried, and the one small step. Blank rows are information too.

SESSION	DATE	PRACTICE TRIED	SMALL STEP	NOTES
1. Arrival		☐	☐	
2. What I Am Afraid You Will See		☐	☐	
3. I Hate It When		☐	☐	
4. The Tears We Swallowed		☐	☐	
5. Can I Be Close Without Disappearing		☐	☐	
6. I Am Still Here		☐	☐	
7. Making Room for Care		☐	☐	
8. Giving Feelings Words		☐	☐	
9. Being Heard in a Group		☐	☐	
10. Touch, Sound, and Choice		☐	☐	
11. Grief and the Love We Wanted		☐	☐	
12. The Healthy Adult		☐	☐	
13. Undoing Shame		☐	☐	
14. Beginning at Your Own Pace		☐	☐	
15. Your Emotional Toolkit		☐	☐	
16. Letting It Out in Relationships		☐	☐	
17. Parenting with Permission		☐	☐	
18. Love and Limits		☐	☐	
19. After an Intense Experience		☐	☐	
20. Practice That Fits Your Life		☐	☐	
21. The Voice Returns		☐	☐	
22. The Path Ahead		☐	☐	

Where I am now

The same ten statements as page 7. Rate each from 1 (rarely true) to 5 (usually true), then compare. Movement in either direction is information; so is no movement.

	1	2	3	4	5
When someone asks how I am, my first answer is usually the whole answer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can tell the difference between what happened and what I think it meant.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can make a request someone can actually answer.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can hear “no” without adding pressure.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I am offered help, I can let the other person do it their way.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I let people finish before I offer advice or my own story.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can name a loss or an unmet hope without telling the whole story.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
When I have let someone down, I can apologize without defending myself.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I can state what I can offer instead of a reluctant yes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
I know what I need after an intense experience, and who I would call.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What moved, what did not, and what I make of it:

LOOKING BACK

Looking back

After the sessions, or after a few months. The book's own measure: what changed in ordinary life, and what remained difficult.

What I said or did differently, in exchanges I can name:

What followed, as far as I know it:

What remains difficult:

Which exercises I left alone, and whether I want to return to any:

Support I sought or am seeking beyond this workbook:

LOOKING BACK

A letter to revisit

Write to yourself, to be read one year from today. Begin, if it helps, with “I kept going when...” or “What I want you to know is...”

Date written:

Date to open:

Resources

If you need support now

If you have thoughts of suicide or urges to hurt yourself, seek immediate help. In the United States, call or text 988 (988lifeline.org). Call 911 in a life-threatening emergency. Outside the United States, contact your local crisis or emergency service.

National Domestic Violence Hotline (United States): thehotline.org. Guidance on individualized safety planning and support from advocates.

When more help is needed

Chapter Nineteen of *Let It Out* (page 97) describes care after an intense experience and the signs that call for a health care professional: distress that interferes with sleep, concentration, everyday tasks, or caring for yourself; physical symptoms that may need assessment; flashbacks or recurring distressing memories that disrupt life. You can seek help without returning to the exercise that preceded the distress.

In the book

Glossary, page 115. Exercise Index, page 118. Guidance for Group Leaders and Professionals, page 121. Chapter Briefs, page 130.

PAIRS Foundation

PAIRS Foundation, a nonprofit founded in 1983 to advance relationship education, publishes *Let It Out* and this workbook. pairs4me.com

About the author

Seth Eisenberg is a relationship educator, author, and President and CEO of PAIRS Foundation. A PAIRS Master Trainer, he has helped thousands of individuals, couples, families, and professionals learn practical skills for communication, emotional understanding, and lasting connection. He is the author of *Let It Out*, *The Road of Happiness Now*, and *Love That Grows With You*, and a co-developer of relationship education curricula including PAIRS Essentials and the PAIRS Warrior to Soul Mate program. A husband, father, and grandfather, he lives in South Florida.

