Finding Safety Within

A Creative Companion



A gentle, guided art journal using simple drawing and mark-making prompts to help you process grief, find stillness, and reconnect with your own sense of safety.

No artistic experience needed.

By Kimberley Cooper, Wild Thread Collective

A companion to my chapter in Good Grief: The Oracle.

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Before you begin

Some days I simply couldn't find the words for what I was carrying. What I could still do was make something with my hands.



This journal is for those days.

You don't need to be an artist. You don't need nice materials. A pen, a few colours, scraps of paper or fabric, whatever is near you will do. Every prompt uses simple marks: lines, shapes, colour, scribbles. Nothing has to look like anything.

There's no right order and no finish line. Skip what doesn't feel right today. Come back to it, or don't.

And before you start, the thing nobody told me: **your fear counts too.** Whether the loss is yours, or you're standing beside someone you love while they grieve, there's no hierarchy.

"A loss is a loss. Grief is grief. Love is love."

by Kimberley Cooper, Finding Safety Within: A partners path to feeling safe
as featured in Good Grief: The Oracle.

Your fear counts too

Fear, for me, was never just in my head. It was the racing heart, the breath that wouldn't go deep enough, my body bracing for something that had already happened.

Prompt: Notice where fear is sitting in your body right now. Then, without thinking too hard, make marks for it. Fast or slow, heavy or light, jagged or round. Let it take up as much of the page as it needs.

Underneath, finish this sentence: My fear counts because...

Witnessing without disappearing

Holding space for your person can cost you everything you have some days, and you don't always notice you're empty until you've given the last of it away.

Prompt: Draw a line to split the space once. On one side, make marks for what you've been holding for someone else. On the other, make marks for what has landed in you.

Let both sides count.

Fear wearing strength's clothes

For months I tried to be a rock. I called it strength.
It wasn't. It was fear, wearing strength's clothes.

Prompt: Draw the wall you've built. Fill each brick with something you've been doing to hold everything together. For example; staying composed, saying "I'm fine", keeping busy.

Draw one small window in it. If you let one thing through, what would it be?

Say your number out loud

Think of yourselves as two people, each carrying a battery. Some days you're on 70% and they're on 30%, so you carry more. Other days it flips entirely. It only works if you say your number out loud.

Prompt: Draw your battery and shade in how much you have left today. If you're supporting someone, draw theirs beside it.
Write your number big, ready to share.

Try it for a week: one battery a day, and notice the pattern.

What your body already knows

Your body remembers everything it lives through, even when your mind is too busy coping to notice.

Prompt: Draw a simple body outline. Colour in where you feel tight, heavy or braced. Then, in a different colour, mark where warmth would help. A hand on your chest? Warmth against your stomach? Being held by warm water?

Underneath, write: What does my body need today, separate from what I think I should be managing?

Rooted

Grief brings you right back down to solid ground. It makes you sink your bare feet into the earth and remember what is actually real.

Prompt: Draw yourself as a tree. Your spine is the trunk, holding you up. Draw roots reaching down into the earth: the things that ground you. In your belly, draw the fire that gives you your drive. And mark the place your quiet, certain knowing lives, the voice in your gut that speaks louder than any thought.

Curling up like a hamster

As a little girl, I used to wrap myself tightly in my duvet and pretend I was a hibernating hamster. Decades later, on one of the very worst nights, I found myself doing exactly the same thing.

Prompt: Draw a nest, a burrow or a cocoon, somewhere small and warm where the little you could curl up. Notice what shapes and colours you use and reflect on what they may represent in the material world.

Then ask the little you: what do you need today? Write down the answer, and give it the same patience you'd give any frightened child.

One true thing

Sometimes you have to trick your own brain into steadiness a few seconds before the spiral gets there first. That isn't pretending. That's just how you survive a day you can't yet see the other side of.

Prompt: Draw seven small boxes, one for each night of the week. At the end of each day, find one true thing to be grateful for and draw or write it in. We're all tucked up safely. We made it through. There's a new day to see. **One day at a time.**

When there are no words

If words fail you, that doesn't mean you have no way through. It just means your way might look different to everyone else's.

Prompt: No prompt today. Just make. Scribble, colour, tear, stick, stitch. Let your hands be busy so your head has somewhere else to be.

A letter to the one at the beginning

If I could go back to the woman on that drive, white-knuckled and terrified, I would hold her hand and tell her: "Everything you are about to do, you will do with love, and that has to be enough."

Prompt: Think of the moment it all began for you. Write a letter to the version of you who was there. What would you tell them? What do they need to hear?

Decorate the edges with marks and colour as you write.

Coming back to safety

Look back through these pages. Notice what you made, not how it looks.

Safety was never going to come from holding everything together. It was only ever going to come from within.

You are allowed to feel safe again. You just have to start by giving that safety to yourself.

Prompt: Write one sentence you want to carry with you.

Grief can be heavy. If it ever feels too much to hold on your own, please reach out to someone you trust.

With love, Kim x

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