



WHEN YOU'RE HAVING
A HARD DAY

A Little Hellbloom Haven
SURVIVAL KIT



FOR THE DAYS
WHEN EVERYTHING
FEELS LIKE
a little too much.



HELLBLOOM HAVEN

www.hellbloomhaven.com

Distress - 0056 - 10/20/2018

Before Anything Else

Some days are just hard. Sometimes there is a reason, sometimes there are a hundred reasons, and sometimes you can't even explain why everything feels so heavy.

You don't need to make sense of it right now. You don't need to find the silver lining, be grateful for what you have, think positive, or figure out how you're going to fix everything.

You are allowed to admit that today hurts, that you're overwhelmed, angry, exhausted, scared, numb, or simply done with all of it.

These pages aren't here to fix you or tell you how you should feel. They're simply a place to land for a little while. Take what feels helpful and leave whatever doesn't. Cry if you need to. Be angry if you need to. Sit quietly and do absolutely nothing for a minute if that's all you have in you. Whatever brought you here, you don't have to carry all of it at once. For now, we're only going to take care of the person sitting here in this moment.

That's enough for today.

Come Back to Your Body.

When life feels overwhelming, our minds have a way of going everywhere except where we actually are. We replay conversations, revisit things we can't change, imagine what might happen next, and mentally work through problems that haven't even happened yet. Before we realize it, we're carrying yesterday, today, and tomorrow all at the same time.

Learning to come back to the present doesn't mean ignoring what's happening in your life or pretending everything is okay. It means giving yourself a place to stand while you move through it.

The present moment is where your body lives. It's where you can notice your feet on the floor, the air entering your lungs, the sounds around you, the warmth of a cup in your hands, or the tension you've been carrying in your shoulders without even realizing it.

The more we practice returning here, the easier it can become to notice when our thoughts are pulling us somewhere else. We create a little space between what is happening right now and everything our minds are telling us about it. Sometimes that tiny bit of space is enough to help us respond instead of react, recognize what we actually need, or realize that we don't have to solve everything this very second.

Being present won't make hard things disappear. That's not the point.

It's about learning that even when your mind is carrying a hundred things, you can gently bring yourself back to this breath, this body, this room, this moment.

You don't have to carry your whole life at once.

You only ever have to meet it one moment at a time.

Hum a Little Tune

Humming creates gentle vibration in the throat and naturally lengthens your exhale, both of which may support vagal and parasympathetic activity, the systems involved in helping your body settle after stress. The steady sound, vibration, and slower breathing also give your brain something to focus on right now, helping bring your attention out of racing thoughts and back into your body.



Cool Down

Cool water on your face or wrists gives your brain a strong sensory signal that can help pull your attention away from racing thoughts and back into the present moment. Research suggests that cooling the face can also influence the autonomic nervous system and increase parasympathetic activity, which is involved in helping the body settle after stress. The water doesn't need to be freezing, the goal is gentle cooling and noticing the sensation, not shocking your system.



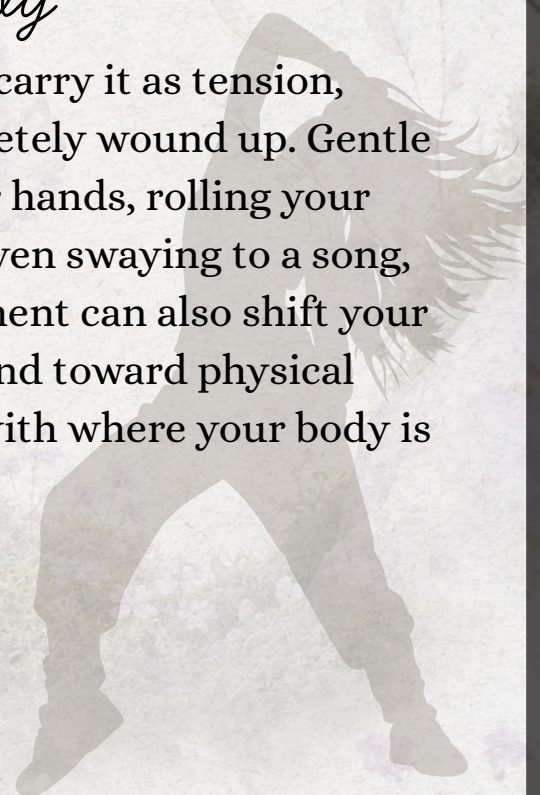
Smile Stupidly

Making an exaggerated, ridiculous smile can do more than make you feel a little silly. Research on the facial-feedback effect suggests that the expressions we make can have a small influence on our emotional experience. Doing something intentionally goofy can also interrupt a heavy or repetitive thought pattern and introduce a brief moment of playfulness. You aren't pretending you're happy or that everything is okay, you're simply reminding your brain that a lighter feeling can exist alongside a hard one.



Move Your Body

When stress builds up, your body can carry it as tension, restlessness, or that feeling of being completely wound up. Gentle movement, stretching, shaking out your hands, rolling your shoulders, walking around the room, or even swaying to a song, gives that energy somewhere to go. Movement can also shift your attention away from racing thoughts and toward physical sensations, helping reconnect your mind with where your body is right now.



Release the Tension

Stress often shows up in the body before we even realize we're holding it, a clenched jaw, raised shoulders, tight hands, or muscles braced for something that isn't happening right now. Intentionally noticing and relaxing just one of those areas can help interrupt that pattern of physical tension. You don't have to relax your entire body. Unclench your jaw, drop your shoulders, open your hands, and let one small part of you soften.



Feel Something

Touch can be a powerful way to bring yourself back into the present. Wrap yourself in a soft blanket, hold something warm or cool, notice the fabric against your skin, walk barefoot on the floor, or hold something with an interesting texture. Focusing your attention on physical sensation gives your brain something concrete to process instead of following every thought that passes through. Notice what you can feel without needing to change anything about it.



Orient Yourself

When you're overwhelmed, your attention can get pulled so deeply into your thoughts that you lose track of what's happening around you. Slowly look around and remind yourself of a few simple facts: where you are, what day it is, what time of day it is, and what you're doing right now. This process, called orientation, gives your brain present-day information and can help create some distance between what you're thinking or remembering and what is actually happening in this moment.



Name What You Need

When you're overwhelmed, it can be hard to tell what you actually need because everything feels urgent at once. Pause and ask yourself something simple: What would help me in this moment? Maybe it's water, food, quiet, movement, rest, reassurance, space, connection, or simply a few minutes without having to do anything. Identifying a need helps shift your brain from reacting to everything at once toward one small, manageable thing you can respond to right now.



Comfort Yourself

Comfort isn't something you have to earn, and it isn't only for when everything else is finished. Familiar sensations, wrapping up in a favorite blanket, holding a warm drink, cuddling a pet, listening to a familiar song, or settling into a place that feels safe, can provide your brain and body with cues of familiarity and safety. These small acts won't solve what's hurting, but they can give your nervous system a softer place to experience it.



Notice Something

When your mind is caught in a loop, deliberately noticing your surroundings can help redirect attention toward what's actually happening around you. Pick one color and find it in the room, listen for the quietest sound you can hear, watch the way light falls across something, or study an ordinary object as though you've never seen it before. This kind of mindful attention strengthens your ability to notice when your mind has wandered and gently bring it back to the present



Press Into Something

When your thoughts feel scattered or you feel disconnected from your body, try creating gentle physical resistance. Press your palms together, push your feet firmly into the floor, squeeze a pillow, or press your hands against a wall for several seconds, then release. The pressure creates strong proprioceptive input, information your muscles and joints send your brain about where your body is in space. Focusing on that pressure and release can help shift attention away from racing thoughts and give you something solid and physical to come back to: your body, right here.



Follow the Rhythm

Rhythm gives your brain something predictable to follow when everything inside you feels scattered. Tap your fingers against your leg, gently drum your hands, rock from side to side, or tap your feet to a steady beat. Repetitive rhythmic movement combines movement, touch, and predictable sensory input, which can help organize your attention and bring awareness back into your body. You don't need to find the perfect rhythm, just give yourself a simple beat to come back to.



What Do You Need Right Now?

Okay. You're Here. Now What?

You've taken a moment to come back to your body and notice where you are. Maybe you feel a little calmer. Maybe you don't.

You don't have to be calm to keep going.

When everything feels like too much, it has a way of becoming one giant tangled mess. Sadness mixes with exhaustion. Anxiety mixes with real problems. Loneliness can sound like nobody cares about me. Overstimulation can feel like I can't handle anything.

Before you try to fix all of it, see if you can gently separate the pile.

Ask yourself:

What kind of hard is this?

Are you scared? Angry? Lonely? Heartbroken? Overstimulated? Exhausted? Stuck in your thoughts? Is there something that actually needs your attention, or are you carrying something that simply hurts right now?

You don't need the perfect answer. You're just trying to understand what this moment might be asking from you.

Because sometimes you need a plan.

Sometimes you need another person.

Sometimes you need quiet, food, sleep, movement, reassurance, or a really good cry.

Sometimes there is absolutely nothing to fix.

You just need somewhere soft to land while it hurts.

What Kind of Hard Is This?

You don't have to figure everything out right now. Just notice which one feels closest to where you are.

OVERWHELMED

Everything feels important at the same time.
I need to make things smaller.

ANXIOUS OR PANICKY

My mind or body feels like something is wrong.
I need safety, grounding, and reassurance.

ANGRY OR FRUSTRATED

There is energy in me that needs somewhere to go.
I need a safe way to release it.

SAD OR HEARTBROKEN

Something hurts, and I don't need to rush myself through it.
I need comfort and permission to feel.

LONELY

I don't necessarily need fixing. I might just need another human.
I need connection.

OVERSTIMULATED

Everything feels too loud, too much, too close, or too demanding.
I need less.

NUMB OR DISCONNECTED

I can't quite reach myself or what I'm feeling.

I need gentle sensation, movement, or engagement.

EXHAUSTED

Maybe I don't need more discipline, motivation, or productivity.

I need rest.

STUCK IN MY HEAD

I'm replaying, worrying, imagining, analyzing, or spiraling.

I need to interrupt the loop.

THERE'S AN ACTUAL PROBLEM

Something really does need my attention.

*I don't need to solve everything. I need one next step.
More than one can be true. Start with the one that feels the
loudest right now.*

When Everything Feels Overwhelming

When everything feels important, everything starts to feel urgent. Your brain tries to hold all of it at once, the things you need to do, the things you're worried about, the people who need something from you, the decisions you haven't made, and all the little things you've been meaning to deal with.

You don't need to organize your entire life right now.

Make the world smaller.

Forget about this week for a minute. Forget about tomorrow.

You don't even need to figure out the rest of today.

Ask yourself:

What actually needs my attention in the next 10 minutes? Maybe you need to answer one message. Take your medication. Feed yourself. Put something in the oven. Make a phone call. Get dressed. Pay one bill. Sit down and drink some water.

Choose one thing.

Then ask:

What can wait?

If it doesn't need to happen right now, mentally put it down.

You aren't ignoring it. You're giving yourself permission to come back to it later.

Finally:

What isn't mine to carry?

Someone else's mood. Someone else's choices. A problem you can't solve today. Something that hasn't happened yet. An expectation you never agreed to.

Put that down too.

**You don't need to find your way through the entire forest.
Just find the next place to put your foot.**

When You Feel Anxious or Panicky

Anxiety has a way of making everything feel like an emergency. Your heart might race, your stomach might turn, your thoughts might speed up, or you might feel like you need to do something even when you don't know what that something is. Your body is trying to protect you.

It just might be responding to a threat that is in your thoughts rather than something happening in front of you.

Before you follow every thought your anxiety throws at you, ask:

Am I unsafe right now, or do I feel unsafe right now?

If there is an immediate problem, take care of yourself and get the help you need.

If you're physically safe, give your body a little time to catch up.

Come back to what you know:

Where am I?

What is actually happening right now?

What do I know to be true, not what am I afraid might be true?

Try one of the grounding exercises from earlier. Slow your breathing. Put your feet on the floor. Hold something comforting. Step somewhere quieter. Let the wave move through without demanding that you understand or solve it.

You don't have to argue with every anxious thought.

You don't have to prove that nothing bad will ever happen.

You only need to come back to what is true in this moment.

Right now. Right here. One moment at a time.

When You Feel Angry or Frustrated

Anger isn't a bad emotion. It can show up when you've been hurt, dismissed, overwhelmed, disrespected, pushed too far, or when something simply isn't okay. Sometimes anger is even the part of you that finally says, enough.

You don't have to get rid of it.

You just need somewhere safe to put the energy.

Before you send the message, start the argument, make the decision, or say the thing you can't take back, give your body a chance to move some of that intensity through.

Move. Walk fast. Shake out your arms. Dance aggressively to a song. Stomp your feet. Do jumping jacks. Push against a wall. Get it out. Write the completely unfiltered version in your notes and don't send it. Scribble furiously across a piece of paper. Say what you wish you could say out loud when you're alone. Give yourself space. Step outside. Go to another room. Put your phone down. Tell someone, "I'm too upset to talk about this well right now. I need a minute.

Then, when the intensity has come down a little, ask yourself:
What is underneath my anger?

Maybe you're hurt. Maybe a boundary was crossed. Maybe you're exhausted. Maybe you feel powerless. Maybe something really is unfair.

Your anger may have something important to tell you.
Listen to it before you let it speak for you.

When You Feel Sad or Heartbroken

Some things just hurt.

There isn't always a lesson to find, a perspective to change, or something you can do to make it better. Sometimes you lost someone. Something ended. You were disappointed. Your heart was broken. Life changed in a way you didn't want it to.

You don't have to rush yourself out of that.

Let yourself be sad.

Cry if the tears come. Curl up under a blanket. Take a shower.

Put on the song that understands when words don't. Write down everything you wish were different. Hold something, or someone, you love.

You don't have to make your sadness productive.

You don't have to turn your pain into growth today.

Sometimes the kindest thing you can do is stop fighting the fact that this hurts.

Ask yourself:

What would make this hurt a little easier to carry right now?

Not disappear. Not become okay.

Just a little easier to carry.

Maybe you need someone to sit beside you. Maybe you need to be alone. Maybe you need comfort, distraction, sleep, a familiar movie, fresh air, a good cry, or permission to do absolutely nothing for a while.

There will be time for figuring out what comes next.

Right now, you can simply take care of the part of you that hurts.

Some things aren't meant to be fixed in a moment. Sometimes they just need to be held.

When You Feel Lonely

Loneliness isn't always about being alone. You can be surrounded by people and still feel like no one really sees you, understands you, or knows what's happening underneath the surface.

Sometimes what you're missing isn't company.

It's connection.

Before loneliness convinces you that nobody cares, that you're bothering people, or that you have to carry everything by yourself, try reaching toward someone, even just a little. Send the text. Call the person who makes you feel safe. Sit near someone you love without needing to talk. Go somewhere other people are, even if you don't interact with anyone. Cuddle your pet. Join an online space that feels kind. Let yourself be part of the world instead of disappearing from it.

If reaching out feels too hard, make it small:

“Hey, do you have a minute?”

“I'm having a rough day. Can you talk?”

“I don't need advice. I just don't want to be alone right now.”

You don't have to explain everything before you're allowed to ask for connection.

Sometimes no one is available when we need them, and that can hurt too. If that's where you are, give yourself some form of companionship, a familiar show, music, a walk somewhere people are, a warm drink in a coffee shop, or even a voice on a podcast that makes the room feel a little less empty.

Loneliness can tell a very convincing story that you are alone in the world.

Feeling alone and being alone are not always the same thing.

When You Feel Overstimulated

Sometimes the problem isn't that you need to do something.
Sometimes you need less.

Less noise. Less light. Less conversation. Less touching. Less information. Less of everyone needing something from you for five damn minutes.

When your brain has taken in more than it can comfortably process, even ordinary things can suddenly feel unbearable. The television is too loud. A simple question feels like one question too many. Your clothes feel wrong. Every sound seems louder than it should be.

You aren't required to keep pushing through it.

Turn something down.

Dim the lights. Lower the volume. Put your phone on Do Not Disturb. Change into comfortable clothes. Step somewhere quieter. Close the door. Put in headphones or earplugs.

Then give yourself permission to do one thing at a time.

You don't need music playing while you answer messages while someone talks to you while you're trying to decide what to make for dinner.

One thing. One sound. One conversation. One decision.

If you can, give yourself a few minutes where nothing is asking anything from you.

You don't always need to become better at handling more.

Sometimes you need to let yourself have less.

When You Feel Numb or Disconnected

Sometimes hard doesn't feel like sadness, anger, or anxiety.
Sometimes it feels like nothing at all.

You might feel far away from yourself, like you're going through the motions or watching your life happen from somewhere outside of it. Things you normally care about might feel flat, and even figuring out what you feel can seem impossible.

You don't have to force yourself to feel something.

Instead, gently remind yourself that you're here.

Give your senses something to notice. Step outside and feel the air on your skin. Hold something warm or cool. Smell something familiar. Put on a song you know by heart. Stretch, walk, sway, or press your feet firmly into the floor.

Choose something small that makes you feel even one percent more present.

You don't need to dig for the reason you're disconnected right now. Sometimes numbness is simply your mind's way of turning the volume down when everything has been too much for too long.

Let yourself come back slowly.

You don't have to feel everything at once to begin feeling like yourself again.

When You Feel Exhausted

Sometimes you're not lazy, unmotivated, or falling behind.
You're just tired.

Maybe you've been doing too much for too long. Maybe you've been carrying things nobody else can see. Maybe your body is tired, your mind is tired, or you're the kind of tired that sleep alone doesn't seem to fix.

You don't always need to push through it.

Ask yourself:

What is actually necessary today?

Not what would be nice to accomplish. Not what you think you should be doing. What truly needs to happen?

Do that, and let some of the rest wait.

Eat something easy. Sit down. Cancel something if you can.

Leave the dishes. Take the shortcut. Ask for help. Go to bed early. Give yourself permission to do something poorly instead of using your last bit of energy trying to do it perfectly.

Rest isn't something you earn after you've finally done enough.

Sometimes rest is simply what your body is asking for.

You are still worthy on the days when all you can do is the bare minimum.

When You're Stuck in Your Head

Sometimes your brain just won't let something go. You replay the conversation. Rewrite what you should have said. Imagine every possible outcome. Search for meaning in every little detail. Try to solve the same problem for the hundredth time, hoping this time you'll finally think your way into certainty.

But sometimes more thinking isn't the answer.

Ask yourself:

Is there anything I can actually do about this right now?

If there is, choose one small action.

If there isn't, give your brain permission to put it down for now. Write the thought somewhere so you don't have to keep holding it. Change rooms. Put on music. Take a shower. Do something with your hands. Watch something that holds your attention.

Go outside and notice what's happening around you.

You aren't trying to run away from the thought. You're interrupting the loop long enough to remember that there is a whole world happening outside of your head. You can come back to the problem when there's something new to do, know, or decide.

Until then, you don't have to keep solving something that can't be solved right now.

Not every thought needs an answer.

When There's an Actual Problem

Sometimes it isn't anxiety. It isn't overthinking.

There really is something you need to deal with.

A bill is due. A conversation needs to happen. Something went wrong. A decision needs to be made. There's a problem sitting in front of you, and pretending it isn't there won't make it disappear.

But you still don't have to solve the whole thing at once.

Ask yourself:

What do I know?

Separate the facts from everything you're afraid might happen.

What can I control?

Your choices, your words, your actions, and what you do next.

What can't I control?

Other people's reactions, decisions already made, and outcomes you can't guarantee.

Then ask the most important question:

What is the next smallest thing I can do?

Make the phone call. Send the email. Look up the information.

Ask for help. Write down your options. Make the appointment.

Put \$10 toward the bill. Have the conversation.

You don't need the entire path figured out before you take the first step.

Sometimes problems become a little less frightening when we stop staring at the whole mountain and start looking for the next place to put our foot.

The Bare-Minimum Day

Some days aren't for thriving.

They're not for catching up, getting your life together, being productive, working on yourself, or becoming the best version of anything.

Some days are simply about getting through the day with a little kindness toward yourself.

If today is one of those days, lower the bar.

Drink some water. Eat something, even if it's easy, frozen, delivered, or straight out of the package. Take the medications you normally take. Brush your teeth, wash your face, or change your clothes if it would make you feel better. Do the one thing that truly can't wait, and let something else wait. Rest without turning it into another thing you need to feel guilty about.

You are allowed to use paper plates. You are allowed to cancel plans. You are allowed to leave the laundry in the basket, order dinner, ignore the mess, put on the comfort show you've already watched seventeen times, and go to bed ridiculously early.

Tomorrow can have tomorrow's expectations.
Today, take care of the human being who has to make it there.
Sometimes making it through the day is enough.

Put It Somewhere

Sometimes you don't need another coping skill.
You need somewhere to put all the shit you've been carrying
around in your head.

Grab a notebook, open your notes app, use the space below, or
find whatever you can write on. Don't worry about making it
sound good. Don't worry about being reasonable, grateful,
positive, or fair.

Nobody has to read this.
Start wherever you need to.
What hurts right now?
What am I angry about?
What am I afraid of?
What am I tired of carrying?

What do I wish I could say if I didn't have to worry about
anyone else's feelings?
What do I wish someone understood about me right now?
What do I need that I'm having a hard time asking for?
Write the ugly version. The selfish version. The confused
version. The version that contradicts itself three sentences
later.

You can make sense of it another day.
For now, just let it exist somewhere besides inside of you.
You don't have to carry every thought just because your mind
created it.

Borrow Some Hope

Maybe you don't feel hopeful right now.

That's okay.

You don't have to believe everything will work out or find some beautiful reason for what you're going through. Sometimes hope asks too much of us when we're hurting.

So don't make yourself find it.

Borrow some instead.

Borrow it from someone who loves you. From the version of you who has survived hard days before. From the sunrise that keeps showing up or the trees that somehow know when it's time to grow again.

Or borrow a little from me.

I don't know what happens next, but I believe there are still moments you haven't lived yet that will be worth being here for, a laugh you don't know is coming, a person you haven't met, a quiet morning that feels different, a song you'll love.

You don't have to believe that today.

I'll hold the hope until you're ready to carry a little of it again.

Leave Something for Tomorrow

Sometimes we keep going because we're convinced everything will fall apart the second we stop.

If I don't answer the message, they'll be upset. If I don't finish this, I'll fall behind. If I don't take care of it, nobody else will. We carry this quiet belief that the world needs us constantly holding everything together.

But most things can survive being put down for a little while. The dishes will still be there. The email can wait. Most decisions don't need to be made tonight. Even the problems that need your attention will usually still be there after you've had a chance to rest.

Resting isn't the same as abandoning your responsibilities. It's remembering that you are a person inside of your life too. You cannot spend every moment taking care of everything except yourself.

Ask yourself:

What can I safely put down for tonight?

Write down anything you're afraid you'll forget. Decide what genuinely needs your attention tomorrow. Then give yourself permission to stop.

Let something wait. Let someone else handle something. Let tomorrow carry its own weight when it gets here. You are allowed to be unavailable to the world for a little while.

Before You Go

Whatever brought you to these pages, I hope something here made the moment a little easier to carry.

Maybe you feel better. Maybe you don't. Maybe nothing has changed except that you stopped for a few minutes and paid attention to yourself.

That matters too.

You don't have to leave here with answers. You don't have to suddenly feel positive, motivated, healed, or ready to take on the world.

Just take the next moment as it comes.

Drink some water. Step outside. Call someone you love. Take a nap. Cry. Laugh. Eat something. Put your phone down. Do whatever feels kindest to the person you are right now.

Come back to these pages whenever you need them.

There is no limit on how many times you're allowed to need a soft place to land.

Take good care of yourself, lovely soul.

You're Always Welcome at Hellbloom Haven

Hellbloom Haven was created for the messy parts of being human, the healing and hurting, growing and grieving, starting over, and figuring ourselves out along the way.

It's a place to learn, reflect, explore, and simply be human without needing to have everything figured out, and so much of it is completely free.

Come explore trauma education and healing insights. Read poetry and letters for the days you need words you can't quite find yourself. Wander through the self-discovery portal and learn a little more about who you are. Use the daily journal, practice gratitude, or visit the grounding space when you need help coming back to yourself.

You can also subscribe to Hellbloom Haven on Substack and have new reflections, letters, and reminders find their way to you. You don't need to be healed to come here. You don't need to be struggling either. You can simply be curious about yourself, your life, and what it means to keep becoming.

Come as you are.
Take what you need. Come back whenever you want.

Welcome to Hellbloom Haven.
From the Ashes We Rise.

www.hellbloomhaven.com