

THE SANCTUARY PROJECT

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PROJECT**

Reclaiming Your Story, Your Body, and Your Future

Introduction: The Architecture of Survival

Trauma is like a storm that moved through your house and changed the layout. Some doors are now locked; some windows are broken; some rooms feel like they don't belong to you anymore.

The Sanctuary Project isn't about "fixing" what happened—it's about moving back into your life on your own terms. Over the next 8 weeks, we aren't just surviving the memory; we are rebuilding the sanctuary.

Week 1: Mapping the Ground Floor (Safety & Grounding)

The Focus: Establishing a "Base of Operations" where you feel secure.

Before we can look at the "upper floors" of our story, we need to know the ground under our feet is solid. Trauma keeps us in the past or the future. Healing happens in the Now.

The Window of Tolerance

Think of your ability to handle stress as a window.

- **Above the Window:** Hyper-arousal (Anxiety, anger, racing thoughts).
- **Below the Window:** Hypo-arousal (Numbness, freezing, feeling "zoned out").
- **Inside the Window:** You can feel your feelings without being overwhelmed by them.

Exercise: The 5-4-3-2-1 Reset

When you feel yourself leaving the window, name:

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- 5 things you can **see** (The texture of the wall, a tree).
- 4 things you can **touch** (The fabric of your jeans, your own skin).
- 3 things you can **hear** (Traffic, your breath, a hum).
- 2 things you can **smell** (or favorite smells).
- 1 thing you can **taste** (or a favorite taste).

Week 2: The Nervous System's Alarm (Fight, Flight, Freeze, Fawn)

The Focus: Understanding your body's "Security System."

Your body has a brilliant security system designed to keep you alive. Sometimes, after trauma, that alarm gets stuck in the "ON" position.

Identifying Your Default Mode

When you feel threatened or stressed, which "Security Guard" shows up?

- **Fight:** Irritability, clenched jaw, wanting to control everything.
- **Flight:** Wanting to leave, staying busy, "spacing out" on your phone.
- **Freeze:** Feeling heavy, unable to speak, feeling "stuck" in place.
- **Fawn:** Trying to please others to avoid conflict, losing your own "No."

Mission: This week, when you feel a "Security Guard" show up, say to yourself: "Thank you for trying to protect me, but I am safe right now. You can stand down."

Week 3: The Echoes (Identifying Triggers)

The Focus: Distinguishing between the "Then" and the "Now."

A trigger is like an "echo" of the past. Your brain sees a smell, a sound, or a look on someone's face and thinks the original event is happening all over again.

The Time Travel Log

When you get triggered, you are "Time Traveling."

- **The Past Event:** (Don't write details, just a label like "The Accident" or "The Argument").
- **The Present Trigger:** What set it off? (A loud noise? A specific tone of voice?)
- **The Present Truth:** Write down three things that are true *right now* that weren't true *then*. (e.g., "I am in my own apartment," "I have my phone," "I am 19 years old.")

Week 4: The Internal Landscape (Parts of the Self)

The Focus: Befriending the "Protector" parts of your mind.

We often hate the parts of ourselves that are "messy"—the part that gets angry, the part that hides, or the part that feels "weak." In this week, we treat these as "Interior Designers" who were trying to help but used the wrong materials.

Activity: The Council Meeting

Imagine a table in your mind. Invite your "Anger," your "Fear," and your "Shame" to sit down.

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- Ask them: "What are you afraid will happen if you stop doing your job?"
- Write their answer here: _____

The Shift: Instead of fighting these parts, we start leading them. You are the Architect; they are the crew.

Week 5: Setting the Perimeter (Boundaries)

The Focus: Deciding who gets a "Key" to your Sanctuary.

Trauma often involves a violation of boundaries. Healing involves rebuilding them. A boundary isn't a wall to keep everyone out; it's a gate that you control.

The Three Gates

1. **The Public Gate:** People you meet casually. What information do they get?
2. **The Inner Courtyard:** Friends and family. What are the "rules" for being in this space?
3. **The Private Room:** Only you and your most trusted people.

Exercise: Practicing the "Soft No"

Write a script for a boundary you need to set:

"I appreciate the invite, but I don't have the energy for that today. I need some quiet time."

Week 6: The Lies Trauma Tells (Cognitive Reframing)

The Focus: Exposing the "Malware" in your thinking.

Trauma leaves "Malware" in our brains. It tells us: "It was your fault," "You are broken," or "You can't trust anyone."

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Activity: The Fact-Check

- **The Trauma Lie:** "I am permanently damaged."
- **The Evidence:** List three things you have accomplished or handled since the trauma.
- **The Rewritten Truth:** "I have been through a lot, but my capacity to heal is bigger than what happened to me."

Week 7: Narrative Reconstruction (Owning the Story)

The Focus: Moving from "Victim" to "Survivor" to "Author."

You didn't choose the first few chapters of your book. But you are holding the pen for the rest of it.

The "Redacted" Exercise:

Write a paragraph about a difficult time, but use a black marker to "redact" (black out) the parts that you no longer want to define you.

Now, write a new paragraph underneath it focusing only on your strength, your resilience, and the help you found.

Week 8: The Open Horizon (Integration & Growth)

The Focus: Looking at the world through "New Windows."

Recovery isn't a destination; it's a way of traveling. This week, we look at "Post-Traumatic Growth"—the idea that we can actually become stronger and wiser because of what we navigated.

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The Blueprint for the Future

- **My Anchor:** (The one thing that keeps me grounded when things get tough).
- **My Support Squad:** (The 2-3 people I can call without feeling ashamed).
- **My North Star:** (One thing I am looking forward to in the next 6 months).

Closing Declaration:

"What happened to me is a part of my story, but it is not the whole book. I am the Architect of my Sanctuary, and I am finally home."

Date: _____

Signature: _____

In "The Sanctuary Project," embark on an eight-week journey to reclaim your narrative, your body, and your future after trauma. This transformative guide helps you rebuild your personal sanctuary by establishing safety, addressing deep-seated fears, and fostering resilience. By the end, you'll have the tools to own your story and step into a brighter, empowered horizon, reminding you that while trauma is a chapter, it does not define your entire book.

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