

# Your Sanctuary of Expression: A Guide

## Welcome to Your Sanctuary

Hey there, you amazing, strong, and incredibly resilient parent. I know how much you carry, how many hats you wear, and how often you put everyone else's needs before your own. This guide is a gentle invitation to create a little space just for *you* – a sanctuary to process what's happening and find your strength.

-Lesley

## The Sanctuary *Is You*: Practical Tips to Create Your Sanctuary

Sometimes it's hard for any parent to find a quiet moment to themselves. Add in appointments, unexpected emergencies, and the unique demands of your daily routine, and it feels like creating a sanctuary around you is next to impossible.

You need to carve time out of your day *for you*. You deserve it.

- **Your Voice Matters:** How many times has your voice been screaming in your head but stayed silent? Seeing your thoughts on paper validates them and gives you time to process your feelings in a way that thinking, alone, can't.
- **Tiny Time Treasures:** Think of this slice of time like a mini retreat. If you can, schedule 10 minutes for yourself. Perhaps just before your head hits the pillow or minutes before everyone else wakes up.
- **Your Cozy Corner:** Find a spot that feels safe. It doesn't have to be perfect, just yours. A soft chair in a quiet room, a corner of a busy café, or locking yourself in the bathroom will work.
- **Waiting Room Wisdom:** A clinic waiting room may be a golden opportunity: your emotions are primed and a journal, or even a text to yourself, helps you process all those feels.
- **Ask for a Hand:** It's hard to ask for help. If possible, let someone else hold the fort so you can refill your own cup. Traumatized parents may have a hard time seeking help because it can be scary to leave someone else in charge of a complicated life.
- **Scribbles Count:** Don't wait for inspiration or perfect sentences. Let the words flow, even if they're messy or incoherent. Honesty that matters more than grammar!
- **Technology helps:** If writing feels too much, send yourself a voice memo or use voice-to-text dictation for a digital journal.
- **Tactile Comfort:** If a smooth pen or thick notebook feels good, use those tools to create a positive feedback loop and reward you for processing what may be your toughest feelings.
- **It's *Your* Sanctuary – Don't Hold Back:** This is your safe place. Let it all out.

## Empowering Your Sanctuary

Certain words can help you dig a little deeper into your thoughts and feelings. These 'cognitive words' can help you process your experiences more fully.

- **Cause and effect:** because, since, therefore, due to, resulting in
- **Insight and Understanding:** realize, understand, learn, discover, recognize

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- **Planning and Intention:** decide, plan, intend, goal, objective
- **Reflection and Introspection:** analyze, evaluate, assess, review, contemplate
- **Cognitive processing:** think, know, believe, imagine, remember

## Your Sanctuary Prompts

I've curated journal prompts to empower you. Write one a day or randomly choose the ones that speak to you.

1. What is one small act of self-care you can commit to today?
2. Describe a time when someone helped you and how you felt.
3. What do you need to grieve? (something you thought you were going to have but don't)
4. Describe a moment when you felt truly seen and supported.
5. Did you feel a sense of community with others? If not, what would you like to feel?
6. What is a boundary you have or need to set to protect your emotional well-being?
7. What does a happy life look like to you?
8. Describe if you ever felt dismissed or misunderstood by a medical professional.
9. What is a fear you have for your child's future?
10. Describe a moment when you felt proud of your strength and resilience.
11. Describe what makes you feel exhausted and drained.
12. What is one practical need you have that you can ask for help with?
13. What does advocacy mean to you?
14. Write about a time you had to make a difficult medical decision.
15. Describe a resource you'd like to have and how it would help.
16. What do you want the world to know about you, your child, or your family?
17. Write about a time you showed yourself compassion and understanding.
18. What is a positive affirmation you can repeat to yourself daily?
19. Describe a moment when you found hope in a difficult situation.
20. Write about a time you celebrated a small victory.
21. Describe something a meaningful thing you've learned as a parent.
22. What is the most amusing thing that has happened in your parenting journey?
23. Describe when you felt a deep connection with your child.

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24. What is one thing you can let go of to lighten your load?
25. Describe a moment when you felt overwhelmed.
26. What do you know to be true, regardless of what others say?
27. How does fiercely advocating for your child make you feel?
28. What would you like people to know about you and your family?
29. Describe your feelings as if they are shapes or colours. What impact do they have?
30. Write about a time you felt empowered in a medical setting.
31. What advice would you give to yourself if you could go back in time a month ago?

## Your Sanctuary: The Magic of Handwriting

Handwriting helps your brain process emotions. It's true!

- Writing gives your brain the time to process what you're saying
- Feeling a pen move on paper is part of your cognitive experience
- Your handwriting is as unique as your feelings; let your hand speak
- After a time, when you go back and read what you've written, you might find new insights
- Emotional release, catharsis, and physical benefit may be enhanced by handwriting