



## **Introduction: Here We Are**

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You did all this personal healing work so you could have a happier life, and now look! We have ongoing white supremacy and climate change, manifesting as destructive leaders, militarized police, escalating wildfires, and a world-wide pandemic. We live in difficult times.

Many people's first line of defense is denial, shading into victim-blaming. "It's not real. I'll be fine. It won't affect me. If someone over there is getting hurt, it's because they're doing something wrong." We can move toward acceptance, compassion, collaboration, and action.

**Experienced survivors.** People who have gone through trauma and healing are familiar with the initial shock, disbelief, and disorientation of sudden change. We can keep functioning when a pandemic changes everything.

We have developed tolerance for terror and uncertainty. We know how to reach out for support and how to keep

ourselves company when support is not available. While we can adapt to increasing stress up to a point, we also have limits and disabilities that continue to need care.

**Re-embodiment.** Trauma divides us from our bodies. Our survival tools of denial, dissociation, and freeze save us during terrible events, and at the same time rob us of feeling alive and connected with others.

Healing from trauma is re-embodiment, reclaiming our full present experience from those survival tools. We claim our emotional and physical pain as well as our joy and ease of movement. We sense what we want and need, as well as what we do not want and need to escape.

**Benefits.** As risky as it may seem after trauma, embodiment is physically safer. When we inhabit our bodies, we navigate smoothly around obstacles rather than bumping into corners and doorways. We notice subtle internal and external signals that help us take good care of ourselves.

Embodied, we can play and create. When we feel ourselves as part of the planet, we act with care for those around us.

People who are already fully themselves do not need to buy the latest marketed product to cover their shame or feelings of emptiness. People who acknowledge uncomfortable truths are less vulnerable to gaslighting. People who allow their feelings to flow can have empathy for others, and can no longer ignore the suffering caused by white supremacy.

**Not knowing.** While being embodied anchors us in the present, it does not help us know or control the future. Some people thrive on chaos and uncertainty, and some want stability and solid ground under their feet.

Not knowing can be used to dissociate and disengage. “I don’t need to know about voter suppression efforts.” It can be a painful suspension of safety. “Will that court decision

take away my rights?” It can be an opening to learn more about the world and ourselves. “I don’t know how to be anti-racist and I want to learn.”

**Hope** is continuing to take action in the face of not knowing. Hope is separate from belief or faith or trust or certainty that it will all work out.

Hope accepts what we do know, sense, and feel. Knowing can be tentative, our best effort to sort through conflicting and unreliable information. We might wish things were different, but hope does not pretend them away.

For trauma survivors, hope can feel like a mockery of painful lived experience. It might feel like hope for a good outcome invites more punishment instead. The kind of hope that requires cheerful sunshine and flowers is not a good fit for stormy times.

**We embody hope** when we keep moving forward, one stubborn step after another, like walking through steady rain. We also embody hope when we take shelter for protection and rest. Breath is hope. The spark of life that keeps looking for a way to live in the midst of suicidal despair, that is hope. Can you sense the force of hope in your body in this moment?

Hope might feel like one of those relighting candles whose flame pops up no matter how many times it is extinguished. It might feel like gritted teeth, never letting go. It might feel like a reliable smooth stone. It might feel airy, light, confident. It might trickle through you like water from an inexhaustible spring.

**Take your time.** You can read this book as a continuous whole, or dip in and out, focusing on the topics that are most alive for you right now. If you feel anxious, impatient, or bored, take a break or skip the parts that feel difficult.

As you read, listen to your body and notice what is true for you with kind awareness. Tune in to your experience when you have an uninterrupted block of time to yourself, or in bits and pieces as you go about your day, whenever you have time to think and feel. Invite in comfort and support.

Robyn Posin's expressive drawing of a reclining figure at the beginning of each article reminds you, as she often says, that rest is a sacred act. She has also given kind permission to use her joyfully embodied figures at the beginning of each chapter.

The cover photo is Ein Gedi, an oasis in Israel near the Dead Sea. Reliable flowing water brings hope, relief, and abundant life to those dusty dry hills under the hot sun. I hope this book offers you respite and replenishment in these hard times.

**Overview.** Articles are grouped into seven themes.

- 1. Wider Narratives.** Choose stories with room for new possibilities.
- 2. Difficult Times.** Name what is happening, find support, and take positive action.
- 3. Uncomfortable Emotions.** Turn toward your powerful emotions with compassion.
- 4. Full Self.** Embrace the complexity of all of you.
- 5. Intricate Body.** Delve into the details of being a body.
- 6. Relationship Skills.** Relate to people around you with presence and care.
- 7. Healing Support.** You are the expert on what you need to make it through.

Check the **Glossary** for definitions of unfamiliar terms.

All the links in this book are clickable at:

<https://traumahealed.com/embodying-hope-links/>