I AM SORRY

SHATTERED TRUST

WHISPERS OF THE PAST

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Thrive*:* It is a book that enlightens readers on how to prioritize individual mental health, especially when faced with challenges and even after overcoming them. Wondering how to be happy again? Thrive will guide you.

Strong from Within*:* This book explores the strength found in faith and resilience, offering an understanding of how inner peace and spiritual grounding can empower individuals to overcome life's challenges. We also explore intersection between mental health and religion.

African Daughters: A compelling narrative celebrating the resilience, strength, and achievements of African women, while addressing the cultural and social dynamics that shape their journeys.

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PREFACE

A Journey Through the Pain of Young Adulthood.

As children, we build our world around those we trust most; our parents, our caregivers or our friends. These foundational relationships shape who we are, teaching us the values of love, loyalty, and safety. But what happens when these bonds are broken, when the very people who should protect and nurture us are the ones who let us down?

This question lies at the heart of the second phase of my book; I am sorry and the theme is *Shattered Trust*, where I explore the transition from childhood into young adulthood, a time often filled with immense change, emotional turmoil, and, most importantly, the echoes of past wounds. The pain experienced in childhood does not disappear with age; instead, it transforms and takes on new forms. For many young adults, these unresolved pains, especially those related to broken trust, create significant challenges as they navigate relationships, careers, and personal growth.

In the previous phase, we delved into the trauma of neglect, abuse, and the absence of love, but the transition into young adulthood forces these issues into the light. How can you trust others when your earliest memories are laced with betrayal?

How do you form healthy relationships when your foundation is cracked by past hurts? The pain from harsh authority figures, abandonment, or emotional neglect often manifests as broken trust in adulthood. We see it in relationships that falter, in friendships that fail, and in the mistrust of opportunities that feel too risky to seize.

After years of dreaming and preparing, many young adults step into the next phase of life after university, only to find that it's not the smooth, easy ride they had envisioned. The confidence gained from academic achievements often clashes with the reality of adult life. In the workplace, they encounter conflicts with colleagues, supervisors, and even clients. These challenges can trigger old wounds where trust was broken before, whether in their family or early friendships, those same feelings of betrayal resurface.

They might struggle with boundaries, self-doubt, or the fear of being judged, often wondering if they're truly capable of succeeding in a world that demands so much of them.

The stress of these expectations can further erode their sense of trust not only in others but in themselves. When these young adults are faced with difficult situations at work or in relationships, they may react with defensiveness, withdrawal, or even self-sabotage, believing that every challenge is an indication of their failure. The deeply covered with scars from childhood be it the unhealed trauma of an absentee parent, an abusive relationship, or a betrayal manifest in their adult choices. Those who were emotionally neglected as children may find it difficult to trust their partners, believing that love is conditional. Those who were abandoned may experience panic when faced with conflicts or separations, even minor ones, and may resort to unhealthy coping mechanisms like isolation, substance abuse, or toxic relationships.

Yet, amidst the devastation, there is hope. *Shattered Trust* is not just about the pain; it is about the journey toward rebuilding what has been broken.

The chapter offers a guide for those who are struggling with the weight of their past, offering them the tools to reclaim trust in themselves and others. It encourages the process of inner healing, through both forgiveness and self-compassion. In order to heal, we must first learn to forgive not just those who have hurt us, but ourselves as well. Forgiveness isn't about forgetting; it's about freeing ourselves from the chains of our past so we can move forward with an open heart. It is also about rebuilding what was broken and rediscovering our worth, despite the scars of our past. Healing from shattered trust takes time and patience. It requires acknowledging the wounds, understanding their impact, and then slowly, day by day, taking steps toward trusting again both ourselves and the world around us.

In this phase, young adulthood may be filled with moments of disillusionment, where everything feels harder than anticipated. But it is also a period where individuals can learn to challenge old patterns, break through cycles of pain, and find new strength in vulnerability. Healing comes from understanding that trust can be rebuilt not just with others, but within ourselves.

CHAPTER 1:

WHEN GOODBYE FEELS FINAL



WILTED ROSES

It was a day like any other, or so it seemed. The sun was just beginning to set, casting a warm orange glow through the window. But for Sara, the world had already darkened. She sat quietly on the edge of her bed, holding a letter in her hand. A letter she had read over and over again, yet each time it felt as if it were the first. The words on the paper blurred together, and her heart felt heavy with a weight she couldn't explain.

It was a goodbye letter from her best friend, the one person she had trusted most in the world. She had known Maya since childhood; shared secrets, laughed through sleepless nights, and comforted each other through the darkest of times. But now, after years of friendship, Maya was leaving. The letter spoke of her need to move on, to seek something new, and though Sara understood the reasons, the pain of it felt unbearable. The finality of it sank deep into her chest. There was no promise of returning, no hope of reconciliation, just a simple goodbye. A goodbye that felt more like a door closing, one that would never open again.

Sara had always known that goodbyes were part of life, but this one hit differently. It wasn't just the end of a friendship. It felt like the end of a chapter of her life that she had cherished for so long.

The weight of that finality left her feeling empty, as if the world around her had shifted, and she was left behind, unable to move forward.

This was the moment when goodbye felt truly final. The anguish of irreversible loss; the type of loss that changes you forever.

The kind of goodbye that doesn't offer the comfort of hope, of things getting better, of the possibility of reunions. This was the kind of goodbye that carved a deep scar in the heart, one that no amount of time could heal.

For Sara, and for many of us, the pain of losing someone we love is never easy to bear. Even if it's just casual friendship. It's not just about saying goodbye; it's about learning to navigate the space they once occupied in our hearts.

LOSS

It was early morning when the call came, unexpected and sharp, like a crack of thunder in the stillness. Rachel had been preparing breakfast when the phone rang, its shrill tone pulling her from her thoughts. She knew something was wrong even before she picked up. The voice on the other end was shaky, struggling to find the words. *"I'm so sorry, Rachel... he's gone. Your dad passed away this morning."* Had she been anticipating this call? No. Not ever.

He was sick but he just shouldn't have died. Being the first born, she knew that things will never be the same again.

The room felt as though it were collapsing around her. Time seemed to stretch out in an agonizing silence. Her hands shook as she clutched the phone tighter, her mind refusing to accept the reality of what she had just heard. *Gone.* Her father, the man who had been there for every milestone in her life, the man who had guided her through the hardest times, was no longer there. The world had suddenly gone still, and the weight of his absence crashed down on her like a tidal wave.

The hours that followed were a blur. There were calls to make, arrangements to be planned, and family to comfort. But in the midst of it all, Rachel felt something deeper. An overwhelming sense of finality that she couldn't shake. Death had taken him, and there was no undoing it. There would be no more visits, no more conversations, no more moments to share. The bond that had once been so strong now felt like a fragile thread, severed with one blow.

In the days that followed, Rachel's world felt out of sync. She could still hear her father's voice in her head, offering advice, cracking jokes, or simply asking how her day had been. But his absence; his physical absence, left a gaping hole that nothing could fill.

Every room in the house felt emptier, every family gathering a little quieter. She realized that death doesn't just take away the person; it takes away the life that was built around them, the routine, the shared moments, and the quiet understanding that they would always be there. In that moment, Rachel learned something she hadn't known before: *that death is not just the end of a life, but the end of a relationship in a way that is utterly final.*

Unlike other losses, which might leave room for reconciliation or forgiveness, death leaves no space for anything more. It's a goodbye that cannot be reversed, a chapter closed forever. And the hardest part is learning how to continue writing the rest of your story without them.

This chapter explores that unbearable finality; the loss of someone through death, and how it shapes the course of our lives. It delves into the pain of realizing that there will be no more goodbyes, no more chances to make things right.

As Rachel found, it is through this process of mourning and grieving that we begin to understand the depth of love we had for the one we lost. And, in time, we learn that while death may sever the connection physically, the love, the memories, and the impact that person had on our lives will always remain a part of us, forever.

HEART BREAK

It had been months, maybe even years, of subtle signs; moments where the connection between Emma and James seemed to fray at the edges. At first, it was small things. A tone in his voice that she hadn't heard before, the distance in his eyes during conversations they once shared. Then, it was the longer silences, the lack of excitement over plans they used to make with ease. They were still together, still holding on, but Emma could feel the drift, could sense the inevitable unraveling.

But love is a funny thing. Sometimes, we see the cracks forming, but we choose to ignore them. We tell ourselves that it's just a rough patch, that things will get better. Emma had convinced herself time and time again that this wasn't the end. That they could work through it, that they could find their way back to the spark they once had. She would make excuses for James' behavior i.e., he was stressed, he was tired, he was going through something. She would reassure herself that everything would be fine, that this was just a temporary phase.

Then one day, the conversation they had been avoiding came. It was over dinner, the two of them sitting at their favorite restaurant, the same table where they had shared countless memories. James was quieter than usual; his gaze fixed on his plate. Emma had a sinking feeling in her stomach, but she wasn't ready to face the truth.

"I think we need to talk," James said, his voice almost a whisper.

Emma froze. She knew, in that moment, what was coming. She had known for a long time, deep down, that this was where it would lead. Yet, hearing the words spoken out loud still felt like a punch to the gut.

"I think we've both been pretending for too long," James continued, his eyes avoiding hers. "I care about you, but I don't think we're the same anymore. I don't think we can fix this."

The finality in his words hung in the air. Emma sat there, staring at him, unable to speak. All the signs had been there, but she hadn't been ready to accept them.

She had held on to the hope that things would turn around, that love could somehow make it all better. But now, it was clear. The goodbye she had been avoiding was here.

The reality of it hit her like a wave; overwhelming, consuming, and utterly final. She had known, somewhere deep inside, that this moment was inevitable.

They had grown apart, lost their connection, and failed to meet each other's needs in ways that mattered. But accepting it, actually accepting that their love story was over, was a different kind of pain. It wasn't the surprise of a sudden breakup; it was the sorrow of seeing something slowly die and refusing to acknowledge it until it was too late. This is the pain of a relationship we all saw coming, but one we refused to accept.

It's the kind of goodbye that sneaks up on us, hidden beneath layers of denial, stubborn hope, and fear. It's the pain of loving someone enough to hold on, even when everything around you tell you it's time to let go.

In this chapter, we explore the complexity of relationships that end, not because of a single event or betrayal, but because of the slow, unspoken truth that we all sometimes choose to ignore. It's about the moments when we refuse to acknowledge the inevitable, and the agony that comes when we finally do. It's about accepting the goodbye we've been putting off, and learning how to move forward when the person we thought we would be with forever is no longer in our lives.

WHEN FOREVER CHANGED

Sophie had worked at the same company for over a decade. It wasn't just a job, it was her career, her passion, her identity. She had risen through the ranks, starting as an intern, then working tirelessly to earn promotions, develop key relationships, and become an integral part of the team. She was proud of what she had built, of the work she had done, the goals she had achieved, and the sense of purpose that her job gave her every day. It was more than just earning a paycheck; it was about creating something meaningful, contributing to a larger vision, and feeling valued in the process.

But slowly, things began to change. The company, once like a family to her, became a place where she no longer recognized the values or the culture.

There were new leadership structures, shifting priorities, and a growing disconnect between the company's original mission and its current direction. Sophie found herself feeling increasingly disillusioned, unsure of her place in the company she had once loved. Despite her years of dedication, she started to feel like an outsider, out of sync with the changes that had taken over.

It wasn't just the work itself. It was the toll it was taking on her personal life.

Late nights, weekend emails, the constant pressure to perform. it all started to erode the passion she had once felt. The exhaustion, the stress, and the realization that her job no longer aligned with her personal values started to weigh heavily on her heart. She tried to push through, hoping it was just a phase, but deep down, Sophie knew the truth: the job that had once been her life was no longer the right fit.

One morning, after another long week of endless meetings and unrealistic expectations, Sophie sat at her desk, looking out the window at the city below. For the first time, she felt no sense of excitement about her work, no spark of motivation. And that's when it hit her that *it was time to go*. She had given it everything she had, but it was no longer serving her. It was time to say goodbye to the job that had once felt like an extension of herself.

The decision to leave wasn't easy. *The weight of saying goodbye to something that had shaped her life for so long was heavy. But it was also liberating. Sophie realized that sometimes, holding on to a job just for the sake of security or familiarity can keep us stuck, preventing us from growing or pursuing something more fulfilling.*

It was painful to accept that her time in that role had come to an end, but she knew deep down that moving on was the only way to reclaim her happiness and purpose.

In this chapter, we explore the finality of saying goodbye to a job that was once a defining part of who we are. It's about the struggle between loyalty to an organization and the recognition that personal growth and fulfillment require change. It's about the pain of letting go of something that no longer serves us, even when it feels like we should hold on. And it's about finding the courage to step into the unknown, knowing that sometimes the hardest goodbyes are the ones that lead us to the most rewarding new beginnings.

Saying goodbye to a job we've invested so much of ourselves in is a deeply emotional experience, but it's also an opportunity for renewal and growth. It's a chance to rediscover our passions, redefine our sense of purpose, and step into a new chapter of our lives.

WHY SHATTERED TRUST?

We all experience pain in our lives but in different magnitudes or different dimension. The Pain of Loss is not just about the feeling of grief. It's about the emotional journey we must take to come to terms with the permanence of loss.

It's about accepting that no matter how hard we try, there are some things we cannot change. It's about learning to live in a world that feels different, quieter, lonelier. And it's about finding a way to move forward, to honor the memory of those we've lost, and to rebuild our lives with the understanding that though they are no longer with us, they are still part of us.

This chapter is about those moments of irreversible loss, the ones that leave us feeling stranded in a world that seems too vast without that person, that experience or that item yet we have to move on. It's about the struggle to move on, to reclaim ourselves after a part of us has been taken away.

As we explore the theme of loss in this book, we will journey through the pain that happens in adulthood even when you least expect it; how it shapes our identities, how it challenges us to grow, and how, ultimately, we learn to heal and move forward, even when it feels impossible.

CHERISHING THE PRESENT

It is in adulthood where you wake up okay and you may not be able to predict how tomorrow looks like. At this phase so many things are unpredictable and loss is one of them. Loss is one of the most transformative experiences that life can offer. It is the event that forces us to confront the impermanence of everything we hold dear. Whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, the loss of a career, or the fading away of something once deeply cherished, loss has a unique way of awakening us to the fleeting nature of time. It is often said that we only truly appreciate what we have when it is gone, and while that phrase rings true, it does little to lessen the pain of realizing that forever is not promised to us.

The anguish that comes with irreversible loss is unlike any other. There is a unique form of sorrow that accompanies the awareness that what once was is now lost forever. This kind of grief is not just the sadness we feel when something ends; it is the emotional, mental, and physical struggle to accept that no matter how much we wish it, we cannot turn back time. It is the pain of knowing that we will never again experience things as we once did, that the person we once knew is no longer here, or that the path we were on has taken an irreversible turn.

The emotional toll of loss runs deep, often going beyond the pain of missing someone or something. It brings us face-to-face with the uncomfortable reality that we do not have control over everything in life, and that life itself is fragile. This realization can be both sobering and disorienting, as we are forced to reckon with the fact that all things are temporary.

The sense of security that we often take for granted is shaken, leaving us to ask ourselves: "*What is truly important?" "What do I have that I might lose?" "How much time do I really have to cherish what I love?"*

The emotional struggle to move on from loss is not a straightforward process. Grief is complex, often presenting itself in waves. sometimes soft, other times overwhelming. In the wake of loss, we experience a mix of emotions: sadness, anger, guilt, regret, disbelief, and sometimes even numbness. The early days following a loss are often the hardest, as the world feels like it has been altered. The absence of the person or thing we've lost is a void that seems impossible to fill, and we can find ourselves in a state of shock, unable to fully accept the new reality.

It is in these moments that we must allow ourselves to feel the pain and acknowledge the magnitude of what has been taken from us. Denying our feelings, avoiding the grief, or pushing it away can only prolong the suffering. Grief must be experienced, understood, and processed, no matter how difficult or uncomfortable it may be. The journey through this pain is neither quick nor easy, but it is necessary for healing. Eventually, we come to understand that this pain is not something to "get over" or "move past," but something we must learn to live with. We learn to adapt to a new reality where the absence of what we once had becomes a part of our experience.

Acceptance of loss does not mean forgetting or erasing the memories of what has been lost. In fact, it is often the memories that keep us tethered to the past, to the love, joy, and connection that once existed.

What acceptance means is coming to terms with the fact that, while those moments cannot be relived, they will continue to live on in us. The memories we carry of what was are precious and invaluable, but they must be integrated into our lives in a way that allows us to move forward. This does not mean moving on in a way that diminishes the importance of the loss; rather, it means finding a way to honor that loss and continue our journey despite it.

One of the most profound lessons that loss teaches us is the importance of cherishing the moments we have.

When something or someone is lost, it often becomes clear that time is not as abundant as we once thought. The days, weeks, and months slip by so quickly, and it is only when we face loss that we realize how often we neglect to truly appreciate the present.

We take for granted the relationships that sustain us, the people who show up for us, and the fleeting moments of joy that come our way. In the midst of our busy lives, we often wait for the "right time" to show appreciation, to express love, to spend quality time with those who matter most. Yet loss reminds us that time is not something we can control or hold onto forever. If we want to build meaningful connections, if we want to experience joy, and if we want to create lasting memories, we must do so now—because the future is never certain, and forever is not a guarantee.

Loss teaches us the true value of life, of love, and of connection. It forces us to look at our lives from a different perspective, to ask ourselves what we would do differently if we truly understood how fragile our time with others can be. In the aftermath of loss, we are often left with a renewed sense of urgency, a desire to make the most of the moments we still have, to be fully present with those we love, and to appreciate the beauty of the everyday.

But even more than that, loss teaches us the importance of healing, of letting go, and of learning to live with the pain.

It reminds us that grief is not something to be avoided, but something that must be integrated into our lives. The pain of loss, though heavy, has the potential to shape us, to deepen our understanding of the world, and to inspire us to live more intentionally. In the face of irreversible loss, we learn that we must find ways to embrace what we have, appreciate it while it lasts, and allow ourselves to grow from the experience.

Ultimately, loss teaches us that while nothing in life is permanent, the love, wisdom, and lessons we gain from our experiences and the people we meet along the way stay with us forever. It is up to us to cherish the time we have, to honor the memories we carry, and to move forward in a way that acknowledges the profound impact that loss has on our lives. While it is impossible to predict what tomorrow will bring, we have today and today is the only moment we truly control. So, let us cherish it.

COPING WITH LOSS

Life is full of change, and with change often comes loss. Whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the realization that a dream has been deferred or lost, these experiences can be incredibly painful.

They force us to confront the fragility of life and the unpredictability of our journey. Coping with these losses requires resilience, patience, and an understanding that healing is not a linear process.

DEATH

Death is one of the most profound experiences we can face, and the pain that accompanies it can feel unbearable. When someone we love deeply passes away, it feels as though a part of us has been torn away. The grief is overwhelming, and there are times when the weight of the loss seems too much to bear.

We can't imagine a life without them; without their presence, their voice, their guidance, and the simple joy of knowing they're there.

In those moments, the world seems to stop spinning, and everything we see, touch, or hear reminds us of them.

The grief of losing someone close to us often feels like a deep, aching hole in our hearts. It's a painful emptiness that seems impossible to fill. We replay moments in our minds, wishing we could turn back time and say just one more thing, share one more laugh, or spend one more day together. We long for the comfort of their presence, the safety of their love.

In the days following their passing, everything feels like a reminder of them, a harsh juxtaposition between the life they lived and the reality of their absence. Their favorite songs play on the radio, their scent lingers in familiar places, and their belongings are still in the spots where they left them. These constant reminders can trigger waves of sadness and longing, making it hard to function, let alone imagine a future without them.

Yet, as much as it hurts, the world doesn't stop. Life moves forward, relentlessly pushing us to continue despite the devastation we feel inside.

People go about their lives, and the world carries on with its usual rhythms. The reality is hard to accept: the world doesn't pause for grief.

We are expected to go back to work, attend events, and perform our daily routines, even as our hearts remain broken. This can feel incredibly isolating, as though the world is unaware of the depth of our loss. The disconnect between how the world continues and how we feel inside can make the pain even more pronounced.

One of the hardest aspects of coping with death is this juxtaposition; the world continues on, while internally, we are struggling to reconcile the absence of someone we held dear.

There are moments when we question how to carry on, when the weight of grief feels insurmountable, and we wonder how life will ever feel the same again. It feels like we're walking through a fog, our steps heavy, our hearts raw.

The pain of loss can also manifest in ways we don't expect. There are moments when you catch yourself reaching for the phone to call them, only to remember they're gone.

Or you find yourself setting the table for dinner, instinctively placing their favorite drink where they used to sit. These small, everyday actions become reminders of the void that now exists in your life. At times, it feels like your grief is too much to bear, and the idea of moving forward can feel impossible. But the reality is that, despite the pain, life keeps moving forward.

The key to coping with death is learning how to live with the pain, rather than waiting for it to disappear. Grief is not a journey that has a clear end point. it's something that we learn to live with, carrying it with us as we continue through life. Time does not erase the pain, but it does offer us the space to begin healing. Gradually, the sharpness of grief softens, not because the love we had for the person is any less, but because we learn to adapt to the absence. We learn how to hold the memory of our loved one in a place where it can coexist with the rest of our lives.

Coping with death also involves giving ourselves permission to grieve.

It’s easy to feel guilty about being sad when others around us may seem unaffected by the passing, but grief has no set timeline. There is no "right" way to grieve, and it’s important to honor the process, even if it feels messy or uncomfortable. Cry when you need to cry, laugh when you remember the good times, and let yourself feel whatever emotions come your way. The pain may ebb and flow, sometimes hitting you unexpectedly, but it’s important to let yourself feel it fully. This is part of the healing process.

One of the most challenging aspects of grieving is the feeling that life will never be the same. We hold on to the hope that the hurt will lessen over time, that we will one day be able to smile without tears welling up, or laugh without feeling the emptiness of their absence. While we may never forget them, we can find ways to carry their memory in a way that honors their life and allows us to move forward. Life may never be the same, but it can still be meaningful.

Eventually, as we move through the pain, we start to find new ways to engage with the world. We may begin to appreciate the small, everyday moments in a deeper way, cherishing the time we have with others.

We may find new purposes, new passions, or new connections that help us continue living, even though part of us will always carry the grief of the loss.

In the end, coping with death is not about forgetting or moving on too quickly; it's about learning to integrate the loss into the tapestry of our lives. It's about finding a way to honor their memory while continuing to live and grow. The pain will never truly disappear, but with time, we learn to live with it. We learn that even in the face of death, life can still have a meaning, and that the love we shared with those who have passed remains a part of us, guiding us forward.

RELATIONSHIPS

The Pain of Unresolved Love

Love, in its many forms, is one of the most powerful emotions we can experience. It brings us joy, comfort, and connection. However, it also has the capacity to bring immense pain, especially when a relationship ends. Whether it's romantic or platonic. In these moments, the heartache can feel overwhelming, as though we are losing more than just a person, but a future we had envisioned, a dream that seemed so certain. The pain of a failed relationship often lingers far beyond the breakup, creating doubts about ourselves and our worth.

When a relationship ends, it's common to hold on to the hope that things will work out, despite all the signs that they won't.

We find ourselves clinging to the past, replaying moments of happiness, imagining that maybe, just maybe, things will fall back into place. We want to believe that love can conquer all, that the bond we shared was enough to overcome any challenge.

But often, no matter how tightly we hold on, it becomes clear that the relationship is over, and the person we once loved may have already moved on.

This reality can be incredibly painful. The hardest part is coming to terms with the fact that, while we may still hold on to the hope of reconciliation, the other person may have let go long ago. They may have already found peace, moved forward, or even started a new chapter in their life without us. Meanwhile, we remain stuck in the past, unwilling or unable to let go, hoping for a future that may never come.

The emotional toll of this can feel like a betrayal in itself. We question why they moved on while we're still here, stuck in a cycle of yearning and regret. The love we once shared seems to slip further away, and we're left to wonder if we were ever truly loved at all. Was it something we did? Could we have been better partners? Did we miss the signs that the relationship was ending? The pain of holding on to a relationship that's already over makes us question our self-worth. We begin to wonder if we were good enough, if we are capable of finding love again, or if we will ever be able to open our hearts fully to someone else.

Love, which is meant to be a source of joy and connection, can sometimes lead to confusion and self-doubt, especially when it's tied to feelings of abandonment or rejection.

We might ask ourselves: "Am I the right person?" or "Was I ever truly enough for them?" These questions plague our minds, leaving us to second-guess our choices and our ability to trust in future relationships. It's easy to fall into a spiral of self-criticism, believing that somehow, we've failed. This self-doubt is a natural response to the end of a relationship, but it's also an obstacle we must overcome in order to heal.

The truth is, love is not always enough to make a relationship work, no matter how deeply we care for someone. People change, circumstances shift, and sometimes, two people who once shared a deep connection can no longer grow together. The end of a relationship doesn't diminish our value as individuals; it's simply a sign that this chapter of our lives has come to a close, even if we haven't fully accepted it yet.

Moving on from a failed relationship takes time, and the process is rarely linear. There will be moments when we feel ready to let go, only to be pulled back into memories or lingering emotions. But healing comes from learning to release the past and understanding that we are worthy of love and connection, not because of what we've done or what we've lost, but because of who we are.

In time, we learn that the pain we feel in letting go is not a reflection of our inadequacy, but a sign of the love we gave and the lessons we learned. Every relationship, whether it ends in joy or sorrow, teaches us something valuable about ourselves, our needs, and what we're truly seeking in a partner. Holding on to a relationship that is no longer serving us can hold us back from finding the love and fulfillment we deserve.

The beauty of love is that it is not finite. It doesn't belong to just one person or one relationship. Love evolves, it changes, and it transforms us, making us better versions of ourselves. The key to moving on from a failed relationship is not to forget the love we had, but to honor it by learning and growing from it.

In the end, love is not just about the other person; it's about understanding and nurturing the love we have for ourselves, so that we can continue to give and receive love in ways that bring us true happiness and fulfillment.

DEFERRED DREAMS

Dreams deferred or unattained can come in many shapes and sizes, and the emotional toll of each one can be profound. These dreams represent hopes and aspirations we hold dear, whether it's a career we've worked tirelessly for, a business we've poured our heart and soul into, or a personal vision of our life that gets derailed by unexpected events. The pain of these unmet dreams can be as deep and sorrowful as losing someone we love, and navigating the aftermath can feel like a journey through an emotional wilderness where we struggle to find our footing again.

For many, a dream can revolve around career success or professional achievement. We envision ourselves in a specific role, climbing the corporate ladder, or owning a business that reflects our passion and vision.

We spend years working hard to gain the necessary skills, connections, and experiences to make this dream a reality. But sometimes, no matter how much effort we invest, opportunities don't pan out.

We might be passed over for a promotion, rejected for a job we felt was meant for us, or lose our job entirely due to circumstances beyond our control—like company restructuring or economic downturns. When these career dreams are dashed, the emotional toll can be heavy. The sense of failure can be overwhelming, as we question our worth, our abilities, and whether we're truly capable of achieving success. It's not just about the lost job or the missed opportunity; it's about the deep sense of self-doubt that accompanies it.

We mourn the future we thought we were working towards, the life we pictured for ourselves, and the identity that was tied to our professional aspirations.

Similarly, for those who have poured their heart and soul into a business venture, the pain of seeing it collapse can be just as devastating, if not more so.

Entrepreneurs often invest more than just money into their business. They invest time, effort, passion, and sometimes their identity. The dream of creating something meaningful, of contributing to the world, of building a legacy, can quickly turn into a nightmare when the business fails. Whether it's due to market forces, mismanagement, or unforeseen circumstances, the result is the same: the loss of a dream that was envisioned with great hope.

For many, the pain of failure is compounded by the fear of judgment, the shame of letting down partners, employees, and loved ones, and the fear of starting over. In such moments, it can feel like all the hard work, sacrifice, and belief in the vision were in vain. This can leave a person emotionally bruised, questioning their abilities and future in the business world.

Personal dreams, too, can be deferred in ways that carry significant emotional weight. One such instance is unplanned pregnancies. For individuals who have a clear vision of their life path, perhaps prioritizing career, travel or personal goals, an unexpected pregnancy can feel like an abrupt detour.

While a new life is undoubtedly a blessing, the emotional strain of having to adjust one's dreams and plans to accommodate an unplanned event can feel overwhelming. The sudden shift forces individuals to grapple with feelings of confusion, fear, and a sense of being unprepared. What was once a well-thought-out plan now feels uncertain and out of control.

There can also be guilt or shame, especially if the pregnancy wasn't part of the plan or if societal pressures make one feel inadequate or unready for parenthood. It can feel like a profound loss of freedom, as everything you once dreamed of now needs to be re-imagined to fit the new reality.

The pain of a deferred dream, regardless of its form, is deeply rooted in the loss of the future we once imagined. It's not just about the tangible disappointment of missed opportunities or failed plans; it's about the emotional and psychological toll these setbacks take. The grief associated with these dreams is often tied to a sense of betrayal; by life, by circumstances, or by our own perceived shortcomings. We often find ourselves stuck in a cycle of "what ifs" i.e., what if I had made different choices, worked harder, or been more patient?

This internal dialogue can lead to feelings of guilt, regret, and inadequacy. We question our worth and begin to doubt whether we are capable of achieving anything in the future. The pain of these unfulfilled dreams can also spark anger, frustration, and sadness, which, when left unchecked, can spiral into bitterness and hopelessness.

But while the pain is real, the process of navigating through it can also be an opportunity for growth. Coping with dreams that were deferred or lost requires us to reframe our understanding of success, failure, and the future. We must allow ourselves to mourn what was lost but also give ourselves permission to rebuild. It's crucial to recognize that life doesn't always go as planned, but that doesn't mean we are incapable of finding new paths, new dreams, and new opportunities.

Sometimes, the greatest lessons come from the hardest experiences. As we heal, we begin to see that setbacks and disappointments are not the end of our journey. They are simply a part of it. Often, the pain we feel is a catalyst for personal growth, self-discovery, and resilience.

It pushes us to reevaluate our values, priorities, and goals, helping us become more attuned to what truly matters in our lives.

For those who have experienced the loss of a dream, the key to moving forward lies in finding the strength to forgive ourselves and others, to release the shame of failure, and to open ourselves up to the possibility of new dreams. It's about learning to trust again. Not necessarily in the dream itself, but in our ability to adapt, evolve, and create new opportunities. In many cases, dreams deferred aren't truly lost forever. They're simply delayed, waiting for the right time, the right conditions, or the right perspective to come into focus. By shifting our mindset and embracing new possibilities, we give ourselves the freedom to dream again. The pain of the past becomes a stepping stone toward a brighter, more fulfilling future.

COPING

Coping with the loss of a dream can be one of life's most challenging emotional battles. It requires both acceptance and resilience; two powerful tools in navigating the pain of unfulfilled expectations while still making room for new opportunities. The road to healing is not easy, and often, we may find ourselves stuck in a cycle of regret, anger, or sadness. However, it's important to recognize that the process of grieving a lost dream is also a chance for growth and self-discovery.

When a dream is deferred whether it's a career goal, a personal ambition, or even a vision of how our life would unfold the pain can feel overwhelming. We might question ourselves, wondering why things didn't work out or where we went wrong.

We may feel a sense of deep loss, not just for the opportunity that has slipped through our fingers, but for the version of ourselves we thought we would be.

The reality we face is vastly different from the future we envisioned, and that dissonance can be difficult to accept.

In these moments of despair, some people may retreat inwardly, withdrawing from others in an attempt to cope with the hurt.

They may isolate themselves, feeling that no one could possibly understand their pain. Others might project their anger and frustration onto those closest to them, pushing away support and amplifying their sense of loneliness. It's not uncommon for individuals facing such emotional turbulence to turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms, such as substance use. Whether it's alcohol, drugs, or other distractions, these behaviors can offer temporary relief, but they ultimately deepen the pain and delay the healing process.

In more severe cases, the weight of lost dreams can lead people to contemplate more drastic measures, including thoughts of suicide. When a person feels that they have no purpose, no direction, or no way forward, the darkness can feel all-consuming. These thoughts are a cry for help, a desperate attempt to escape the overwhelming emotional turmoil.

It’s crucial to acknowledge that if you or someone you know is struggling with these feelings, it’s essential to reach out for support. No dream, no matter how important it may seem, is worth sacrificing our well-being or our life for. The journey toward healing begins with acknowledging the pain of our lost dreams. It's okay to grieve and feel the weight of disappointment.

However, we must also learn to let go of the pressure to be perfect and accept that life’s journey is not always linear. What we once believed was our path may no longer fit the person we’ve become. The dreams we once held so tightly to may evolve into something new, something more suited to the life we’re living now.

This process of transformation takes time. It requires patience and self-compassion. It’s okay to take small steps forward, even if the path ahead is unclear. The key is to remain open to the idea that new dreams can arise from the ashes of the old ones. These new dreams may not be the ones we originally imagined, but they have the potential to bring fulfillment, growth, and a renewed sense of purpose.

We must allow ourselves the space to embrace change, and in doing so, we can discover new opportunities we hadn't considered before. Even in the face of hardship, it's important to remember that life moves forward. The world doesn't stop, and neither should we. While our dreams may have shifted, new ones are waiting to be discovered.

They may require us to take a different path, to embrace a new direction, or to explore interests we never considered. The key is to keep going, even when the road ahead seems uncertain.

We also need to be mindful of the ways in which we cope with loss. It's easy to fall into unhealthy habits, whether it's withdrawing from others, numbing our emotions with substances, or allowing ourselves to spiral into negative thinking. However, these behaviors don't bring healing they only prolong the pain.

Instead, we must cultivate healthy coping mechanisms, such as seeking support from friends, family, or a professional, practicing self-care, and allowing ourselves to process our emotions at our own pace.

Ultimately, the loss of a dream is not the end of the journey. It is simply a chapter that, though painful, can lead to growth, resilience, and new beginnings. By embracing the lessons learned from our losses, we can open ourselves up to a future filled with possibilities—possibilities that we might not have been able to see before. Moving forward requires courage, but it also offers us the opportunity to build a life that is more authentic, meaningful, and aligned with who we are becoming, rather than who we once were.

THE JOURNEY TO HEALING

Why am I not healing after all these years? Why does it still hurt, even though time has passed? Why do I find myself crying when I least expect it, thinking of someone or something I thought I'd moved on from? Why is it that so and so moved on yet am still stuck? These are questions many of us wrestle with when we find ourselves caught in the grip of loss whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a relationship, or the collapse of a dream.

The truth is, healing is not a linear process. It's not something that happens according to a set timeline or a prescribed formula. It’s normal to wonder why you’re not "over it" or why you still feel the pain, even after a long time. Today you may feel okay, tomorrow you could be stuck at square one and that’s is okay. The reality is, the quality of the relationship you had with that person or situation plays a significant role in the intensity of your grief. Was this person someone you were deeply attached to?

Was the relationship a core part of your identity, your sense of self? When we experience a deep, emotional bond with someone, whether through love, friendship, or shared experiences, the loss can feel like part of us is being torn away. It's not just about losing a person; it’s about losing a part of ourselves.

Attachment styles; how we form and experience relationships also come into play. Those with a secure attachment style might find it easier to process grief and move through it, while those with anxious or avoidant attachment styles might struggle more.

Anxious attachment can lead to persistent rumination and difficulty letting go, while avoidant attachment might result in emotional suppression or denial, making it harder to confront and process the feelings of loss.

But here's the beauty of it all: grief is an experience we can't rush. It's an emotional journey that, while painful, is also deeply human. Allowing yourself to grieve is an act of self-compassion. It's giving yourself the space to feel, to experience the full range of emotions without judgment. It's okay to cry when you need to, even if it's been years since the loss occurred. It's okay to think of that person, that dream, or that situation.

Those thoughts and emotions are a reflection of the deep bond you shared, and it's through acknowledging them that you can begin to heal. Allowing yourself to grieve means giving yourself permission to feel the hurt, but it also means allowing yourself to heal in your own time. It's not about "getting over it" quickly; it's about processing the loss, understanding its impact on your life, and finding a way to carry forward the lessons, the love, and the experiences that were part of that relationship.

The healing process might look different for everyone, and that's okay. What matters is that you honor your emotions, trust that healing will come, and be gentle with yourself along the way.

TO DO

If you are experiencing loss, it’s important to allow yourself the time and space to process your emotions. Everyone’s journey with grief is different, and there is no right or wrong way to grieve. There is not a correct way to grieve at all. However, here are some steps you can take to help you cope and navigate the complex feelings that come with loss:

1. *Acknowledge the Pain:* The first step is to recognize and accept that you are in pain. It’s okay to feel sadness, anger, confusion, or even numbness. Denying your feelings can make the process of healing longer and harder.
2. *Allow Yourself to Grieve:* Grieving is a natural and necessary process. Allow yourself to experience the emotions without judgment. Cry if you need to, talk about your loss, or express your feelings through creative outlets like writing or art.

3. *Reach Out for Support:* Grief can feel isolating, but you don't have to go through it alone. Seek support from friends, family, or a professional counselor. Talking about your pain with someone who listens can provide comfort and understanding.
4. *Take Care of Your Body:* The emotional toll of loss can also affect your physical well-being. Make sure to take care of your body by getting enough rest, eating well, and engaging in gentle physical activity. It can be easy to neglect self-care during difficult times, but caring for your physical health can support your emotional healing.
5. *Be Patient with Yourself:* Healing doesn't happen overnight, and it's important to give yourself grace during this time. There is no set timeline for grief, and it's okay to have good days and bad days. Don't rush the process instead allow yourself to heal at your own pace.
6. *Seek Professional Help If Needed:* If you find that your grief is overwhelming or prolonged, or if you are struggling with feelings of depression, anxiety, or thoughts of self-harm, it's important to reach out for professional counseling or therapy.

A trained counselor can help you process your emotions, work through your grief, and offer tools to support your healing journey.

7. *Honor the Loss:* One way to cope with loss is to find ways to honor what you've lost. This could include holding a memorial, creating a tribute, or simply taking moments to reflect on the positive memories you have with the person or the situation.
8. *Allow Yourself to Move Forward:* Grieving doesn't mean you forget, and moving forward doesn't mean you stop caring. It's about finding a way to integrate the loss into your life while continuing to grow and live fully. Let yourself embrace new experiences and opportunities when you are ready.
9. *Find Meaning:* Sometimes, finding meaning in the loss can be a helpful way to process it. This doesn't mean finding a silver lining, but rather reflecting on how the experience has shaped you, what you've learned from it, and how you can move forward in a way that honors what you've been through.

Supporting a Grieving Person

Have you found yourself comforting someone who is grieving, whether from heartbreak, death, or other forms of loss, and felt unsure of how to help? It's common to feel uncertain about what to say or do during such vulnerable moments.

Offering comfort to someone in grief can be difficult, but your presence and understanding can make a significant difference in their healing journey.

Here are some ways to offer support and comfort:

1. *Be Present:* Sometimes, the most important thing you can do is simply be there. Your presence alone can provide immense comfort. Let the person know they are not alone in their grief. Offer to sit with them, listen, or just hold space for their emotions without the need for words.
2. *Listen with Compassion:* Grieving individuals often need someone who will listen without judgment or interruption. Let them express their feelings, whether they want to cry, vent, or reflect on memories. Don't feel the need to offer solutions or fix things. Instead, listen deeply and validate their emotions.

3. *Acknowledge Their Pain:* Acknowledge that their grief is real and valid. You might say something like, "I can't imagine how hard this is for you, but I'm here for you." It's important not to minimize their feelings by offering platitudes such as, "They're in a better place," or "It's for the best." Instead, honor their experience and let them feel heard.
4. *Avoid Offering Quick Fixes:* While it's natural to want to help, avoid trying to "fix" their grief or push them toward moving on too quickly. Healing takes time, and there's no set timeline. Let them process their emotions at their own pace. You can offer support, but respect that grief has its own course.
5. *Be Sensitive to Their Needs:* Everyone grieves differently. Some people may want to talk about their loss, while others may prefer silence or solitude. Ask them what they need whether they want company, a distraction, or time alone. Respect their boundaries and preferences.
6. *Offer Practical Help:* Grief can be exhausting, and daily tasks may feel overwhelming. Offer specific, practical support, such as helping with meals, errands, or household chores. Grieving people often struggle to manage routine activities, and your assistance can relieve some of the burden.

7. *Be Patient:* Grief doesn't have a clear endpoint, and healing takes time. The person may have good days and bad days, and it's important to be patient with their process. Continue offering support, even when the initial rush of sympathy fades. Your ongoing presence matters.
8. *Check In:* Grief doesn't end after the funeral or the initial weeks of mourning. After the immediate aftermath, continue checking in. A simple text or phone call, or an invitation to spend time together, can show the person that they're still in your thoughts.
9. *Encourage Professional Help:* Sometimes, grief can become overwhelming, and it may help to encourage the grieving person to seek professional support if they are struggling with their emotions. You can gently suggest they talk to a counselor or therapist who specializes in grief. It's important to remember that grief can be a complex process, and seeking professional help is a positive step in their healing journey.
10. *Don't Try to Rush Their Healing:* Each person's grief journey is unique. Don't rush them to "move on" or "get over it."

Healing takes time, and pushing someone to feel better too quickly can lead to further pain. Allow them the space they need to grieve, knowing that healing comes in waves.

Remember, the most important thing you can do is to show that you care, listen, and be present. While you may feel unsure about what to say or do, simply offering empathy and companionship during this difficult time will provide great comfort to someone who is grieving.

Stages of Grief

The five stages of grief, as identified by Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in her 1969 book *On Death and Dying*, are widely recognized as part of the emotional process people go through when facing loss. These stages are not necessarily experienced in a linear or predictable order, and everyone's experience with grief is unique. The stages are:



1. ***Denial***

   In this stage, individuals may refuse to accept the reality of their loss. It can feel too overwhelming or unreal to process. Denial acts as a defense mechanism, providing temporary emotional protection, and helping individuals slowly come to terms with what has happened.
2. ***Anger***

   As the reality of the loss begins to set in, anger often surfaces. The individual may direct their frustration toward themselves, others, or even the person who has passed. There might be feelings of injustice or resentment, questioning "Why me?" or "Why did this happen?"
3. ***Bargaining***

   In this stage, individuals may try to make deals or bargains in an attempt to reverse the loss or lessen the pain. They might have thoughts like, “If only I had done this differently,” or “Please, just let this not be true.” It’s often a subconscious attempt to regain some control over an uncontrollable situation.

4. ***Depression***
   As the individual begins to fully grasp the magnitude of their loss, sadness, despair, and hopelessness may take hold. This is often the longest stage, as it involves deep emotional pain and a sense of mourning. Feelings of emptiness, loneliness, and helplessness can be overwhelming.
5. ***Acceptance***
   In this final stage, individuals come to terms with the reality of their loss. Acceptance doesn't mean they are "okay" with the loss, but rather that they are at peace with it and have found a way to move forward. This stage involves understanding the new reality and learning to live in a world without what was lost.

These stages can overlap, occur in a different order, or even be revisited over time.

It's important to understand that grief is not something to be "fixed," but a process to be experienced and navigated. Everyone's journey through these stages is personal, and healing happens at its own pace. It's important to acknowledge that grief and loss are deeply personal experiences that touch each of us in different ways.

Whether it's the death of a loved one, the end of a significant relationship, or the shattering of dreams, the journey of healing can often feel isolating and overwhelming. But it is essential to remember that you do not have to navigate these challenges alone. Grief, though painful, is a natural process that requires time, patience, and, most importantly, support.

If you or someone you know is struggling with processing loss whether it's a personal loss or a collective grief experience. I am here to offer counseling and support. My services are available for individuals or groups, both virtually and in person, to help you work through the complex emotions that accompany grief. Together, we can explore your feelings, process the pain, and begin the journey toward healing.

Please don't hesitate to reach out. You can contact me at +254796037994 or via email at kinyanina52@gmail.com for more information or to schedule a session. It's okay to ask for help. Healing begins with taking the first step.

CHAPTER 2:

SHATTERED TRUST



Every day, across the world, there are countless people struggling with the pain of shattered trust. It is an experience that spans all walks of life; one that can arise in families, romantic relationships, friendships, and even in the workplace. The emotional aftermath is often deeply painful, and the journey to healing can feel long and daunting.

In families, the trauma of broken trust can begin in childhood, when children are left vulnerable by the very people who should protect them. Parents or guardians who fail to follow through on promises, or worse, engage in neglect, emotional abuse, or even physical harm, leave their children with lasting scars. The betrayal of trust at such a tender age can shape the way a child perceives the world, altering their future relationships and sense of self-worth. A child who experiences broken trust in their home may grow up with a deep-seated fear of rejection or abandonment. As they enter adulthood, they may struggle with trusting others, whether in friendships or romantic relationships, always holding back out of fear that others will hurt them as they were hurt before. For these individuals, healing requires confronting the pain of that broken trust, and learning to redefine what it means to feel safe in relationships.

THE MIRROR THEY SHATTERED

Dolly met John at a mutual friend's wedding. He was magnetic, with a captivating smile and an ability to command the attention of everyone in the room. When he turned his gaze to her, it felt like she was the only person in the world.

John's courtship was relentless. He sent her flowers daily, showered her with compliments, and made her feel like she was extraordinary. "You're the most beautiful woman I've ever met," he whispered during their first dance. Dolly, who had always been modest about her looks, felt seen and cherished in a way she never had before.

Their whirlwind romance quickly became serious. John was attentive and charming, always knowing what to say to make Dolly feel special. But as the honeymoon phase ended, subtle changes began to creep into their relationship.

One evening, as Dolly dressed for a date, John remarked, "That dress is a bit tight, isn't it? I mean, you look good, but you could look better."

She laughed it off, thinking he was being playful, but the comment lingered. Over time, these remarks became more frequent.

> *"You've put on a little weight, haven't you?"*
> *"I don't think red suits your complexion."*
> *"Maybe you should let me handle the conversation at dinner. You can be a bit too much sometimes."*

Each critique chipped away at Dolly's confidence. She started doubting herself, staring at the mirror for hours, questioning if she was attractive enough, intelligent enough, or even good enough for someone like John.

When she expressed her insecurities to him, hoping for reassurance, John's response was cold. "You're just overthinking," he'd say dismissively. "I've given you everything. Why are you always so needy?"

John's control grew insidious. He would plan every aspect of their lives; from the restaurants they ate at to the friends they saw. If Dolly suggested something different, he'd accuse her of being ungrateful.

"I do so much for you, and this is how you repay me?" he'd say, leaving her feeling guilty for even voicing her opinions.

Her friends began to notice her pulling away. "We never see you anymore," her best friend, Linda, said one day. But when Dolly brought it up with John, he sneered. "Linda's jealous of what we have.

She doesn't want you to be happy." Slowly, he isolated her from her support system, leaving her utterly dependent on him for validation.

John's mood swings became unpredictable. One moment he was affectionate, showering her with love, and the next, he was cold and dismissive, finding fault in everything she did. "I can't keep dealing with your failures," he'd say after a minor mistake, like burning dinner. When she cried, he'd smirk. "There you go again, being dramatic. No wonder no one else ever stayed with you." Dolly would sit alone in the evenings, staring at the wall, wondering if this was her fault. She asked herself if she was too emotional, too flawed, or simply unworthy of love. The fear of being alone consumed her. John had convinced her that no one else could ever love her the way he did.

She became hyper-aware of his needs, walking on eggshells to avoid triggering his wrath. Her own needs and desires became secondary, buried under the weight of his expectations.

She stopped painting, a hobby she once adored, because John called it "a childish waste of time." Dolly's once-bright personality dimmed. She no longer laughed freely or spoke her mind. At work, her colleagues noticed she was withdrawn, her spark gone. Her health began to suffer; she lost weight from constant stress, developed migraines, and struggled to sleep.

The breaking point came when Dolly discovered John had been flirting with a coworker. When she confronted him, he turned the tables. "If you were more exciting, maybe I wouldn't have to look elsewhere," he said, his voice dripping with contempt.

That night, Dolly sat on the floor of their living room, tears streaming down her face. She stared at her reflection in the window, unable to recognize the woman staring back. She questioned everything including her beauty, her worth, her ability to ever find someone who would truly love her.

It was Linda who finally intervened. After months of unanswered texts, she showed up at Dolly's door unannounced. When she saw the hollow shell of her once-vibrant friend, she refused to leave without helping.

With Linda's support, Dolly began to see the relationship for what it was; an endless cycle of manipulation, control, and emotional abuse.

She sought therapy, where she learned about narcissistic abuse and its effects. Her therapist explained how John's behavior; love-bombing, gaslighting, criticism, and isolation was a textbook example of narcissistic tactics designed to dominate and demean.

Leaving John was terrifying. He tried to win her back with promises to change, followed by threats when she refused.

But for the first time in years, Dolly chose herself. She moved into a small apartment, reconnected with old friends, and picked up her paintbrush again.

The road to healing was long and painful. There were nights when she doubted her decision, nights when she missed the fleeting moments of tenderness John had shown. But as she rebuilt her life, those moments became overshadowed by the freedom she felt.

One day, Dolly painted a self-portrait; a vibrant, defiant image of a woman staring straight ahead, unbroken despite the cracks in her heart. It was her way of reclaiming her narrative, proving to herself that she was worthy of love, beginning with her own.

John remained a ghost in her past, but he no longer controlled her future. Dolly had found herself again, and this time, she wouldn't let anyone dim her light.

In romantic relationships, the devastation of shattered trust can be just as profound. Love, once considered sacred, can quickly become a battleground when infidelity, dishonesty, or emotional neglect enters the picture. What was once a strong and comforting bond can collapse under the weight of secrets and lies. The sense of betrayal cuts deep, often leaving both partners unsure of how to move forward.

The pain of realizing that the person you trusted the most has hurt you in ways that cannot be undone can leave you feeling lost and broken. The individual who was once the object of your deepest affection may now seem like a stranger, and the relationship you believed would last a lifetime is suddenly fractured.

In these instances, the journey to healing is fraught with questions like was I not enough? What went wrong? How could I not have seen the warning signs? For many, it is not just the loss of the person that is painful, but the loss of the future they imagined together. The damage to trust leaves a lasting imprint, making it difficult to trust again, and the fear of being hurt again can prevent future love from blossoming.

Friendships, too, are not immune to the pain of shattered trust. We form bonds with friends, confiding in them our deepest fears, secrets, and dreams, only to later discover that these confidences were betrayed. A friend who has shared your joys and sorrows can become someone who spreads your most intimate moments to others, leaving you exposed and vulnerable.

Or perhaps a friend has broken a promise or left you in your time of need, showing that their loyalty was not as steadfast as you had believed. The hurt in these situations can be just as deep, if not more so, because friendships are built on shared history and a sense of mutual understanding. When that trust is broken, it can feel as though the very foundation of your friendship has crumbled.

This betrayal can cause you to question your judgment, your ability to trust others, and your capacity for real connection. And as you try to rebuild, the scars left behind can make it difficult to ever feel truly safe in the relationship again.

In the workplace, trust is often taken for granted, yet when it is broken, the effects can be just as damaging. Whether it's a colleague who undermines you, a manager who takes credit for your work, or an organization that fails to live up to its promises, the sense of betrayal can be overwhelming. Professional relationships, like personal ones, require a foundation of mutual respect, transparency, and accountability. When that foundation is shattered, it can lead to feelings of anger, frustration, and disillusionment.

These feelings often manifest in a loss of motivation, a decrease in productivity, and an inability to trust the systems or people in place. In these situations, healing may involve not only confronting the betrayal but also reestablishing boundaries and rebuilding a sense of self-worth in a space that may feel unsafe. The painful truth is that no one is exempt from the experience of shattered trust. It can happen to anyone, regardless of age, background, or circumstances.

Whether it happens in the form of betrayal from a family member, a broken relationship, a friendship that has fallen apart, or a disillusionment in the workplace, the pain of shattered trust is universal. The emotional toll it takes can be immeasurable, affecting one's sense of identity, self-esteem, and the ability to connect with others.

However, while the pain of betrayal is undeniable, it is also important to recognize that it is not the end of the story.

The journey to healing from shattered trust is one that requires time, patience, and self-reflection.

For those who have experienced the deep pain of broken trust, it may feel impossible to ever trust again. But with time, forgiveness, and the willingness to face the pain head-on, healing is possible. It begins with acknowledging the hurt, understanding the lessons that can be learned from the experience, and finding ways to rebuild one's sense of security and self-worth. Though the journey is often long and filled with setbacks, it is also one of tremendous growth. With each step, there is the potential for renewal, for the opportunity to embrace new forms of trust and connection that are healthier and more resilient.

The reality of shattered trust is that it is painful and often leaves lasting scars.

But in those scars, there is also the potential for healing, growth, and a renewed ability to trust again; first in ourselves, and then in others. Through confronting the pain of betrayal, we can reclaim our power, find peace, and rebuild the relationships that matter most. And while the scars of the past may never fully fade, they can become a testament to our resilience, to our ability to move forward even when the road ahead seems uncertain.

BETRAYAL

In relationships, whether romantic or familial, the deepest pain often arises not from what we do, but from what others say or do to us. Individuals we once trusted, those we loved with all our hearts, can, at times, become the very source of our most profound hurt. It is a betrayal of the most intimate kind; when a loved one, someone we've allowed into our lives with a sense of vulnerability, turns against us. The words they speak, the accusations they hurl, or the hurtful things they say can leave a permanent scar on our hearts.

The weight of these negative words is not easy to shake off. They seep into our minds and our spirits, becoming part of us in ways we never expected.

An individual might experience this kind of pain when a partner or someone they've trusted deeply lashes out with words that tear them down.

These words can be sharp, cutting through the very core of who they are. Whether it's a partner accusing them of being inadequate, unworthy, or unlovable, the damage done isn't just fleeting.

It sticks with them, becoming an echo that reverberates in their thoughts long after the argument has passed. And this isn't something that fades quickly. Even when the person who said those things moves on, the scars remain. It's like a heavy burden that the individual is forced to carry, silently, without others knowing the weight they bear.

In moments like these, an individual might wonder why those words still sting after so long. Why does it feel like they are still carrying the pain, even though time has passed?

Why do they feel like they're constantly being judged by those words, measuring their self-worth against the negative opinions of another person? The truth is, when these words are spoken by someone we love and trust, they become part of our internal narrative. They are no longer just words spoken in anger or frustration they become the story we start to tell ourselves. They slowly chip away at our sense of self. It's as if we begin to believe those words are true. And over time, these beliefs start to shape how we view ourselves, how we relate to others, and how we navigate the world.

For some individuals, this pain of shattered trust doesn't end with the words alone. It evolves. It becomes a journey towards low self-esteem. The person begins to question their worth, their abilities, and their place in the world. They begin to withdraw, to isolate themselves, because they no longer feel worthy of love or respect. The emotional toll of carrying this pain can be immense. The person may start to put up walls, not only to protect themselves from future hurt but also to shield their fragile self-image. But what these walls often do is prevent healing.

They may keep others out, yes, but they also stop the individual from experiencing the love and support they need to heal.

FROM FRACTURED BEGINNINGS

Two unprepared adults chose to engage in decisions that led to the arrival of a baby girl, whom we shall name *Zawadi*; Swahili for "gift." Yet, her life began not as a celebrated gift but as a source of tension and rejection. Her time in the womb was marred by adversity, with no family member ready to embrace her existence.

If Zawadi was unwelcome in the womb, what hope was there for her once she entered the world?

Pregnancy is temporary, but the ripple effects of rejection can span a lifetime. Born into a world that seemed set against her, Zawadi found herself spurned by both sides of her family.

Her mother, overwhelmed and ostracized, faced the harsh reality of raising a child alone, with no emotional or financial support. A father, traditionally seen as the fortress of protection and providence, was absent, leaving a gaping hole in Zawadi's early development.

At just four years old, Zawadi's mother abandoned her to the care of various relatives. She became a "walking burden," shuffled from one home to another, experiencing rejection after rejection. Though the attachment bond described by Bowlby's theory was meant to form in infancy, Zawadi had no such connection only a biological tie to her mother. Each new relative she lived with reinforced her sense of displacement, whispering reminders that she was unwanted. Despite this, she displayed a budding resilience that would later define her.

Life with her grandparents was riddled with poverty. Meals were scarce, clothing was torn, and sleeping arrangements were makeshift. Zawadi found herself caring for younger children by the age of eight and earning her own money by nine. Her ability to adapt and survive was extraordinary, though her spirit bore the weight of continuous psychological wounds. At thirteen, her mother reappeared after nearly a decade, but the meeting lacked warmth. The absence of nurturing in Zawadi's formative years made reconciliation nearly impossible. Zawadi faced betrayal when her mother, despite promising to support her secondary education, failed to follow through.

Instead, she relied on an uncle and aunt for support. In high school, Zawadi experienced moments of relief; three meals a day, a bed to sleep on but the emotional neglect persisted. Verbal abuse and humiliation were constants, breaking her already fragile self-esteem. She navigated schooling amid these challenges, relying on sheer willpower to survive.

During her teenage years, Zawadi reached her lowest points. Suicidal thoughts plagued her, and she struggled with anger and despair.

At one point, the pain of her circumstances almost drove her to harm a family member. But even at her darkest, a flicker of hope remained alive within her. She held onto the dream of pursuing higher education as a way out; a beacon of light amid the chaos.

In her final year of high school, health challenges compounded her struggles. Illness forced her to spend extended periods alone in the hospital, with no visitors to comfort her. Yet, Zawadi persevered, completed her exams, and earned a place at university.

This was a turning point in her life. She pursued counseling psychology and secured a job even before graduating.

Though her early years were defined by rejection and trauma, Zawadi's journey did not end there. Through therapy, faith, and unyielding determination, she embarked on a profound healing process. Today, she stands as a confident, self-aware, and empowered young woman. She has forgiven those who hurt her, broken free from destructive family patterns, and embraced her identity as a survivor and thriver.

Her recovery journey inspires her work as a counseling psychologist, focusing on teenagers and childhood trauma. Zawadi believes that everyone, like her, can find peace in the broken pieces of their lives.

Her story reminds us that healing is not a destination but a lifelong journey. It requires self-awareness, therapy, resilience, courage, and above all, hope. Zawadi is living proof that even the most fractured beginnings can lead to a fulfilling and joyful life. From her broken pieces, she has created a mosaic of strength, purpose, and hope.

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Her story reminds us that healing is not a destination but a lifelong journey. It requires self-awareness, therapy, resilience, courage, and above all, hope. Zawadi is living proof that even the most fractured beginnings can lead to a fulfilling and joyful life. From her broken pieces, she has created a mosaic of strength, purpose, and hope. In these situations, individuals may develop unhealthy defense mechanisms. These mechanisms are like coping strategies that help them manage the pain in the short term, but in the long run, they can make things worse.

For instance, a person might become emotionally distant, avoiding the risk of getting hurt again. They might stop opening up to others, even when they crave connection, because they're afraid of being hurt again. Or they might go the other extreme, becoming people-pleasers, constantly seeking validation from others to prove they are worthy. But these patterns of behavior, though they might seem protective, often keep them stuck in the cycle of pain. They prevent the individual from facing their wounds and moving through the healing process.

The individual may ask themselves, "Why can’t I just get over this? Why am I still crying after all this time?" They may feel like they are stuck in a never-ending loop of grief, hurt, and self-doubt. The pain from those words continues to echo, refusing to fade. But the reality is, healing from the damage caused by broken trust takes time. It’s a process that requires not just time, but effort. The person must confront the pain, feel it, and allow it to move through them. They must face the truth: the hurt they feel is real, and it deserves to be acknowledged.

CHAPTER 3:

LIVED EXPERIENCES



Trauma has a way of etching itself into the very fabric of our lives, altering how we perceive the world and ourselves. Yet, within these profound experiences of pain lies an equally powerful truth: the capacity to heal. This section brings together the lived experiences of individuals who have faced and overcome trauma.

Each story shared here represents a journey one that began with brokenness but moved towards wholeness. These narratives are not just reflections of resilience but also acts of courage, as the storytellers open their hearts to offer a glimpse into their pain, their struggles, and ultimately, their triumphs.

By sharing their journeys, these individuals seek not only to affirm their healing but also to extend a hand of hope to others who may be navigating their own paths. In these pages, you will find lessons on reclaiming joy, rediscovering strength, and the profound connection that emerges when we share our stories.

May their words inspire you to believe in the possibility of healing, and may this collective sharing serve as a reminder that no one walks alone in the journey to wholeness.

Entitled Tuesdays

My former self, darker days left to die,
The year was 2024, and I stood at the scene's cry.
Day one of a generation's time #reject,
All over social media, the cries they project.

The Financial Bill sparked unrest in the streets,
Demonstrations roared, demanding justice's seat.
Fighting for space in a government we barely own,
No leaders to guide, only courage shown.

Political mistakes splashed across the screen,
The shouts of "Who must go?" grew keen.
Proud to claim anything, yet it brought only pain,
Sufferings rooted in labels, etched in disdain.
To the MPs who voted "Yes," don't call this done;
Your lies, abductions, and crimes we'll see you undone.

There's a part I hesitate to share,
Unlike my comrades, who fell unaware.
I knew riots only as stories on TV's glare,
Until police brutality became too real to bear.

It took time to heal, scars etched deep,
Memories of comrades whose fates I keep.

Months have passed, but questions remain,
Change isn't free it demands its pain.

Freedom shaped me to work harder, strive,
Yet I recall the chaos where others found wives.
Growing up with nightmares, stories that sear,
I wish for a world where justice is clear.

©@nyabandegl

by Lawrence Nyabande

Fragments of Childhood

My mother was not a constant presence during my formative years. The separation between her and my father, fueled by their disagreements, cast a shadow over my childhood. I was too young to grasp the magnitude of what was happening, but I could sense the tension and the instability. My memories of that time are fragmented, as if my mind has intentionally blurred out the most painful parts.

One day, my mother decided to take us; my sister, my brother, and me to her paternal home during a school holiday.

What we thought was a temporary visit turned out to be an unannounced relocation. When the holiday ended, she didn't take us back to our father. It later became clear that she had taken us away without my father's consent, effectively cutting off any connection we had with him. Our lives were uprooted, and we found ourselves in unfamiliar territory.

Life in my maternal grandfather's home was not easy. My siblings and I were treated differently from the other children in the household. There was an underlying tone of segregation, and the environment felt cold and unwelcoming. We were enrolled in a local school where the teachers often spoke in the local dialect, which I didn't understand. I vividly recall the day I mustered the courage to tell a teacher that I couldn't follow her lessons. Instead of receiving support, I was scolded, leaving me feeling even more isolated.

The pressure of adapting to this new life was overwhelming. As the eldest sibling, I was burdened with responsibilities far beyond my years. I had to look after my younger siblings, a task that often left me frustrated and angry. I remember an incident at school where my bottled-up emotions erupted.

I got into a fight with another child and hit him on the nose, drawing blood. Even then, my mother's presence was scarce, and the weight of her absence was palpable.

One of my mother's sisters, however, defied the family's wishes and secretly allowed us to speak to our father over the phone. These clandestine calls became my lifeline. I would pour out our frustrations complaining about the lack of proper care and the longing to escape. My father, desperate to reunite with us, fought tirelessly to bring us back. After months of arguments between him, my mother, and her father, my mother's brother intervened. He decided it was best for us to return to our father, believing we would fare better under his care.

When we finally went back, it was like a breath of fresh air. We re-enrolled in our previous school and began the arduous task of catching up on lost time. My mother, too, returned briefly, but her presence was fleeting. Before long, she was gone again. A bicycle man was hired to take us to school, and I often found myself fielding questions from my classmates about her absence. I distinctly remember telling them, "She is not around, but I'm sure they haven't divorced. I haven't even seen them arguing."

Looking back, I marvel at my naivety and the lengths I went to defend my parents, even as a child.

My father tried to find a partner who could step into the role my mother had vacated. Several women came and went, each departure leaving a trail of confusion and pain. I was old enough to notice, and it hurt to witness these fleeting attempts at rebuilding a family. My younger siblings seemed blissfully unaware, but I carried the emotional weight of it all.

Eventually, my father's job as a truck driver meant he had to leave us under the care of his siblings; our aunts and uncle. They were young adults themselves, juggling studies and careers, and had little experience in raising children. The responsibility of being the "older brother" was constantly hammered into me. I was not just their sibling; I was their guardian.

One incident stands out vividly in my memory. I lost the bus fare for me and my siblings. With no other option, we walked the long, exhausting journey home. I was terrified of the repercussions and instructed my siblings to keep quiet about it. But children being children, they let it slip.

My uncle's fury was swift, and I bore the brunt of his anger in the form of a harsh beating. That day, I learned to suppress my own needs and emotions, focusing entirely on ensuring my siblings' safety and well-being.

As time passed, I assumed more and more parental duties ensuring they crossed the road safely, completed their homework, and stayed out of trouble. Playtime became a luxury I couldn't afford. My aunts and uncle saw my sacrifices as a lesson in responsibility, but it came at the cost of a normal childhood.

Eventually, we moved to my paternal grandparents' home. Life there was slightly better, thanks to my grandmother's nurturing care. However, my role as a caretaker persisted. I watched my siblings adapt quickly, making friends and playing freely, while I remained burdened by the past. My mother occasionally reached out, but her efforts were sporadic at best.

One day, I decided to call her. The excitement of hearing her voice after so long was quickly overshadowed by the brevity of the conversation.

To my dismay, my father called shortly after, questioning the interaction. I felt betrayed, realizing that any attempt to reconnect with my mother would always be filtered through my father.

I've often wondered how these experiences shaped me. I used to believe that growing up without my mother would leave a permanent scar. Yet, I pushed those feelings aside, not wanting to undermine the love and care my grandmother provided. Over time, I convinced myself that I was fine.

Even now, I struggle with the residual effects of my upbringing. I find myself overly protective of my siblings, to the point of anger and occasional violence when they make mistakes. I know it's wrong, but the weight of responsibility feels inescapable. My grandmother still relies on me to guide them, even though they are teenagers now.

Despite everything, I find solace in knowing my siblings seem unaffected by our tumultuous past. They don't carry the same emotional baggage, and for that, I am grateful. As for me, I continue to navigate the complexities of my feelings grappling with anger, guilt, and a longing for the childhood I never had.

My mother was not really present as I was growing up. They had an argument with my father and they got separated. I was young then and my small mind could not comprehend what was happening. It was crazy how it all went down and I can't remember everything even if I tried.

My mother took us one day to her paternal home after schools closed but when the holiday was over, she did not take us back to my father. It was me, my sister and my brother. Apparently, she had snatched us from our father in the first place. We could not even contact our father and honestly, I felt kind of mistreated. It was not the same treatment we got at home and we were somewhat segregated from the other children. We were also enrolled in the local school nearby. The teachers would mostly use the local dialect during classes and I did not like that. There is a time I told a teacher that I could not understand what she was saying and I was scolded. I experienced a lot of pressure as a child and was even forced to look after my younger siblings. I could often get angry and there is one time I fought a kid from school and hit him on the nose and he bled.

Even then I don't remember seeing my mother around. But one of her sisters would secretly let us talk to my father. Apparently, we were not supposed to talk to him, according to my mother's father. What a grandfather! We would complain how we weren't fed well and how we wanted to get away from that place so badly, so my father would tell me.

After schooling there for some weeks the family was unable to pay our school fees and we were forced to stay out of school and we wasted one and a half school term, that is approximately three months or so.

After a long argument between my father and my mother and her father, a decision was made for us to go back to our father. It was her brother who had decided to do so because he thought we would be better off with our father. We were able to get back to our previous school and with time we caught up. Even if our mother also came back, there was still some friction and before I knew it she was gone. She used to take us to school but now that she was gone, some bicycle man was hired to take us to school. I remember my fellow classmates asking me where my mother had gone.

"Why didn't your mother bring you to school today?"

"She is not around but I am sure they haven't divorced with my dad. I haven't even seen them arguing at all."

I found myself saying. I was around six or seven. I don't know why I said that but as I look back now, I am surprised that I gave that response. It was clear that I knew my parents had a fight but I was trying to defend them, as young as I was.

My father tried to find a suitable partner to take care of us. But for some reasons the would-have-been stepmothers kept coming and going and I had to suffer the pain of seeing all that happen. I am not sure if my younger siblings remember any of that but I do remember. I might have been too perceptive or maybe I was not too young to notice.

Since then, we never saw our mother until we moved away. She came to visit us like twice or thrice or four times then stopped. My father also went away and we hardly saw him; the nature of his job required him to be away. He was a truck driver so he was mostly away. Things happened fast: my mother left my father, we moved away and my father also went away.

We were left under the care of my aunts and uncle of whom were still students in campus and had no idea on how to parent someone. From time to time, they'd use the phrase "You are their older brother and you should be their role model." But what they were really saying was that, " You are the older kid so the other kids are your responsibility."

I assumed the role of a parent. I'd take my siblings to school, make sure they've crossed the road safely, come with them from school and mind you the school was very far from our home.

There's a time I lost our fare and I didn't know where I'd get money. I was a kid then. So, it was my responsibility to make sure my siblings got home. We had to walk all the way from school. It was me and my two siblings walking from school and I making sure they arrived home safe and sound because I had lost our fare which was childish.

It was a long and tiresome trek home. But fortunately, we arrived safe and sound but we were beyond exhaustion. My siblings were too tired and hungry. I told them not to tell anyone about us walking home but you know kids, they couldn't keep their yappers shut.

My uncle was so furious of my childish behavior and gave me a sound beating. I was also tired and hungry and now in pain. That day leaves a tear in my eye. Since then, I never lost our bus fare and I tried not to do anything childish. I also had to make sure they have done their homework and taken a bath. And most of the time I had to take their punishment and humiliation when we all did something foolish so as "to serve as an example." I guess one could say all that was meant to toughen me up and make me responsible, but at the expense of a normal childhood.

Sometimes I would find it hard to play with other kids because maybe it was 'childish' or if I did, I had to be on the lookout lest my uncle and aunts found me doing that. I also had to make sure my siblings didn't play until too late or I'll get a punishment.

My father found a stepmother eventually and she would come and visit but she also stopped. She didn't move in with us. After a while they had a daughter of whom we did not see as often too. For a while I stopped caring about my father or my biological mother or my stepmother.

We moved to my father's paternal home because my uncle and aunts had things to do now and they could not take care of us anymore. We could at least get to stay with my grandmother whose care was better than my uncle's and aunts'. But still, I couldn't entirely stop being responsible for my siblings. I was ten years old when we moved to my grandparents'. Life was not easy for me and I envied how my siblings coped so fast, played excitedly and made friends so easily while I just watched them. My mother tried to reach out a couple of times. She'd call during our birthdays to wish us happy birthdays but after a while she got tired.

As years went by, I thought not growing up with my mother would somehow affect me but I felt that if I accepted that I would be discrediting my grandmother who had been there as a mother figure so I thought I was fine and I stopped thinking about my mother altogether.

I didn't know I miss her until one day I called her. I was so excited to hear her again but the call didn't last one minute and afterwards my father called to ask about the call. I felt betrayed and I stopped try to reach my mother again because I knew that every time, I'd try to reach her she'd tell my father so I did not see that appeal of that.

I don't suppose my life could be miserable because of that though. Daddy issues is a thing but mommy issues? I really don't think so. So, despite all that; my parents fighting, mother leaving and not having strong bonds with my stepmother, I don't think it's that bad. I still have my grandmother. But from time to time I still feel like my siblings are my responsibility even though they are teenagers now. This has actually led me to get fits of rage every time they did something wrong even if it was not a big deal and sometimes, I would end up being violent, which I know is not good.

My grandmother sometimes relies on me to look after them still. Sometimes it is just too much for me but I cannot complain. My siblings don't seem to be affected by whatever happened and I think that is good, because going through that rollercoaster of emotions can be draining. But I also can't tell them what I have been going through, they wouldn't understand.

The Scars of Rape

With tears at the corners of my eyes, I began to recount.
A story of pain no words could amount.
My lips quivered, my hands trembled in dread,
My heart thundered as I relived what I fled.

The nightmare unfolded, the anguish laid bare,
But all I received were cold, empty stares.
"What were you wearing? What time was it?" they said,
"How well did you know him? Was it all in your head?"

Their words sliced deep, their judgment unkind,
Nullifying my truth, distorting my mind.
I saw the blame dancing in their gaze,
Each glance another spark to my fiery haze.

So, back to my shell, I silently retreated,
With shame as my shadow, my spirit defeated.
Self-loathing hung around me, a heavy chain,
And despair became my constant refrain.

Suicidal thoughts served at each day's meal,
Self-harm my routine, my body to feel.

I count the days, unsure of how long,
With no will to endure, no strength to be strong.

To the deity above, prepare my space,
In case I arrive early at your eternal place.
Forgive me in advance for the choice I might make,
For this burden, this pain, is too much to take.

Yet still, I remain, though the journey is rough,
Some days I shine bright, some days not enough.
I balance on threads so fragile, so thin,
Waging a battle I don't always win.

No one warned me healing would feel this way,
A winding road with storms that stay.
That scars don't fade with the passing of time,
And the echoes of pain don't reason or rhyme.

Some days, I recount without shedding a tear,
But the ache still lingers, sharp and clear.
I grieve for the girl I used to be,
The one who lost her innocence, her glee.

I long to whisper into her ear,
"It's not your fault; you've nothing to fear."
I wish I could wrap her in a warm embrace,
Shield her from the world's cruel face.

But now, when you see me, quiet and small,
And wonder why I've built such a tall wall,
When you ask why I distrust the sons of men,
Do you not see the wounds reopening again?

You tell me, "You're grown now; it's time to move on."
You dismiss the scars I've been leaning upon.
Every nudge toward marriage makes my heart pound,
The ringing in my ears, a deafening sound.

I stand frozen, words fail to come through,
I wish I could say, "It's not time, not yet, it's too soon."

The months have turned into long, weary years,
Yet societal pressure feeds my fears.
"Why are you waiting?" they ask with a grin,
But they don't see the battle I wage within.

So, this time, I kneel and humbly pray,
Hoping the deity above hears what I say.
I ask for a miracle, a bold request,
To pull me from this anguish, to grant me rest.

Let me find the light I've been longing to see,
The courage to trust, the strength to be free.
I, too, dream of a family someday,
To feel love's warmth, to find my way.

I cry out for healing, for peace to take hold,
To banish the shadows, to escape this cold.
Happiness feels like a distant shore,
But I believe, I hope, there's something more.

To the deity above, I plead my case,
Make haste, for I'm losing this endless race.
Restore my hope, let joy reside,
Heal the wounds I've carried inside.

I, too, deserve to find my place,
To feel the sun's gentle embrace.
So hear my cry, my desperate plea,
Grant me peace and set me free.

By Priscilla Kimani

Lessons From Life's Most Challenging Seasons

Life’s journey is often marked by trials that test our limits and shape our character. Among these trials, some are deeply painful and life-altering, such as the experience of family separation, the weight of overwhelming responsibility, or the devastating impact of sexual violence. Yet, even in the darkest moments, there is the potential for resilience, healing, and the power to rebuild. This article explores the profound lessons learned from adversity, including the importance of mental health, support systems, and the path to personal empowerment.

The Impact of Early Separation: Navigating Rejection and Isolation

Childhood is a time when stability and love are crucial for development. However, for many children, life takes an abrupt turn due to family disputes or other circumstances that lead to separation from their parents. Such separations often place children in unfamiliar and unkind environments, where they must navigate rejection, hostility, and a lack of emotional support.

For those who face this reality, survival becomes an instinct. It teaches resilience but also reveals the societal need to better protect children from emotional neglect and ensure they are supported through transitional periods.

The Silence and Trauma of Sexual Violence

Among the most harrowing challenges an individual can face is the trauma of rape. Sexual violence leaves deep emotional scars, often compounded by societal stigmatization and the silence that surrounds the topic. Victims of rape are frequently left to grapple with feelings of shame, guilt, and fear, which can hinder their path to recovery.

Breaking the silence around rape is vital for healing and prevention. Survivors must be reassured that they are not defined by what happened to them and that their voices matter. Communities must work tirelessly to create safe spaces where victims can seek help without judgment, and perpetrators must be held accountable to ensure justice and deterrence.

For educators, caregivers, and community leaders, this is a call to action to promote awareness, challenge harmful myths about sexual violence, and provide survivors with the resources they need to heal.

Education as a Path to Empowerment

Education often serves as a beacon of hope for those enduring adversity, including survivors of sexual violence. Yet, the trauma they carry may manifest as challenges in learning, disengagement, or behavioral struggles. Educators and institutions must adopt trauma-informed approaches, ensuring that schools are places of safety and understanding.

For survivors, access to education can be transformative, providing the tools needed to reclaim their power, independence, and sense of purpose.

The Burden of Responsibility on Young Shoulders

For many children, especially the eldest in fractured families, responsibilities come early.

Acting as caregivers or breadwinners often places immense pressure on young shoulders. While such experiences instill maturity and resilience, they can also rob children of their childhood and exacerbate stress or feelings of inadequacy.

For parents, guardians, and community leaders, it is essential to create balance, ensuring that children learn responsibility without being overwhelmed by it. Providing emotional and practical support can significantly ease their burden.

Healing from Trauma:
The Journey Toward Forgiveness and Freedom

Whether it is the trauma of sexual violence, family separation, or other forms of adversity, healing is a deeply personal journey. At the heart of this process is forgiveness; not as a means of excusing harm, but as a way of freeing oneself from the weight of pain and resentment. For survivors of rape, forgiveness may not be directed toward the perpetrator but toward oneself.

The process of healing often involves therapy, self-compassion, and the acknowledgment that one's worth is unshaken by external events.

Mental Health and the Inner Child

Trauma, especially from childhood or sexual violence, leaves scars that may linger into adulthood. The concept of the "inner child" reminds us of the unresolved emotions and wounds we carry. Healing this inner child requires confronting painful memories, practicing self-compassion, and seeking professional support when necessary.

Therapists, counselors, and support groups play an integral role in helping individuals process their experiences, rebuild their sense of self, and cultivate emotional resilience.

The Power of Community and Support Systems

In any narrative of hardship, the presence of supportive individuals whether friends, family, mentors, or professionals can make a world of difference.

Communities must take collective responsibility for creating environments that prioritize safety, empathy, and inclusivity.

Programs and initiatives that address issues such as sexual violence, mental health, and childhood trauma can provide essential lifelines for those in need. Empowering survivors to share their stories and lead advocacy efforts not only aids their healing but also inspires systemic change.

Breaking the Silence: Educating for Change

Rape and other forms of abuse thrive in environments where silence and ignorance prevail. Education is a powerful tool in breaking these cycles. Schools, workplaces, and community organizations must incorporate comprehensive education on consent, healthy relationships, and respect.

Raising awareness about the prevalence and impact of sexual violence, alongside teaching prevention strategies, empowers individuals and communities to challenge harmful behaviors and support survivors effectively.

Hope for a Better Future

While the scars of adversity may never completely fade, they can be transformed into sources of strength and purpose.

Survivors of trauma, including sexual violence, often emerge with a deeper understanding of their resilience and a desire to advocate for others.

By prioritizing mental health, fostering inclusivity in education, and building compassionate communities, we can create a world where every individual regardless of their past is supported in their journey toward healing and empowerment.

In sharing these stories, we find a shared humanity. In addressing the silence, we find our voices. And in creating change, we find hope for a future free from violence and filled with understanding, compassion, and opportunity.

REBUILDING

In the aftermath of broken trust, individuals often find themselves grappling with the emotional fallout in ways that are not always healthy or productive.

The pain caused by hurtful words, accusations, and betrayals doesn’t always fade with time; in fact, it often becomes woven into the fabric of who they are.

When this happens, the individual may unknowingly resort to negative coping mechanisms or defense mechanisms as a way of protecting themselves from further emotional pain.

For instance, some may retreat inwardly, becoming emotionally distant or detached from others. This withdrawal is a form of self-preservation, as they may fear that opening up to others could lead to more hurt or rejection. They build emotional walls that keep others at arm's length, not because they don't want to connect, but because they have come to believe that connecting with others only makes them vulnerable to being hurt again. This coping strategy might seem safe in the short term, but it often creates isolation and loneliness, preventing them from experiencing the support and love that is necessary for healing. Over time, the person may find that they feel more disconnected, trapped in their own emotional prison.

Other individuals might engage in the defense mechanism of repression. Instead of confronting the pain head-on, they may suppress their emotions, attempting to bury the hurt and pretend it doesn't exist.

They might push the feelings down until they can't feel them anymore. While this strategy can work temporarily allowing the person to function in their day-to-day life, it often leads to unresolved emotional issues. These repressed feelings can resurface unexpectedly, manifesting as anxiety, depression, or emotional outbursts. The act of repression, while seemingly protective, often leads to deeper emotional turmoil in the long run.

Similarly, individuals may develop a tendency toward self-blame, internalizing the pain of the betrayal as something they deserved or brought upon themselves. This belief can lead to self-destructive behaviors, like neglecting one's well-being or engaging in unhealthy relationships. The person might start to believe that they are unworthy of love or respect, reinforcing the negative narrative that was created by the hurtful words spoken to them.

Self-blame becomes a form of defense; if they can blame themselves, they can make sense of the pain, even if it's an unfair and damaging perspective. Another common defense mechanism is avoidance, where individuals actively try to avoid anything that might remind them of the pain they have experienced.

This might involve avoiding certain people, situations, or even thoughts that trigger the hurt. While avoidance provides temporary relief from the emotional intensity of the pain, it also keeps the individual from processing and dealing with the underlying emotions. The pain doesn’t go away; it simply gets buried deeper, only to resurface at unexpected moments.

Some individuals, feeling the weight of broken trust, may also resort to externalizing their pain through anger. This anger might not necessarily be directed at the person who caused the hurt, but rather, it could be directed at the world in general. They may become irritable, frustrated, or lash out at others, believing that they have been wronged.

Anger, in this case, is a defense mechanism that allows the individual to channel the hurt into something that feels more manageable. However, over time, this constant state of anger can be exhausting and destructive, leaving the individual emotionally depleted and disconnected from those around them. In extreme cases, individuals may turn to substance abuse as a way to numb the emotional pain.

Whether through alcohol, drugs, or other harmful behaviors, these substances provide temporary escape, dulling the intense feelings of hurt, betrayal, and self-doubt. Yet, just as with other negative coping mechanisms, this form of escapism only prolongs the healing process and can lead to even more serious consequences, including addiction, health problems, and further emotional disconnection.

These defense mechanisms whether withdrawal, repression, self-blame, avoidance, anger, or substance abuse are all attempts to protect the individual from the overwhelming emotional pain of broken trust. They provide short-term relief but prevent the individual from truly healing.

Instead of allowing the emotions to flow and process, these defenses keep them locked in a cycle of avoidance and emotional suppression. Unfortunately, while they might seem like protective measures, they often prevent growth, prolong suffering, and make it harder to move forward. Healing, however, is possible. It requires a willingness to confront the pain, to feel the emotions, and to allow oneself the space to grieve the loss of trust.

Only by recognizing and processing the hurt can the individual begin to free themselves from the grip of negative coping mechanisms. It means allowing oneself to be vulnerable again, to trust again, and to rebuild one's sense of self-worth free from the negative beliefs imposed by betrayal.

By acknowledging and addressing these defense mechanisms, the individual can start to take steps toward healthier ways of coping. This might involve seeking professional help, engaging in self-care practices, or simply being gentle with oneself as they navigate the healing journey. The goal is to break the cycle of self-doubt and unhealthy coping, and to find a path forward that leads to true emotional freedom and self-compassion.

In the aftermath of broken trust, individuals often find themselves grappling with the emotional fallout in ways that are not always healthy or productive. The pain caused by hurtful words, accusations, and betrayals doesn’t always fade with time; in fact, it often becomes woven into the fabric of who they are.

When this happens, the individual may unknowingly resort to negative coping mechanisms or defense mechanisms as a way of protecting themselves from further emotional pain.

For instance, some may retreat inwardly, becoming emotionally distant or detached from others. This withdrawal is a form of self-preservation, as they may fear that opening up to others could lead to more hurt or rejection.

They build emotional walls that keep others at arm's length, not because they don't want to connect, but because they have come to believe that connecting with others only makes them vulnerable to being hurt again. This coping strategy might seem safe in the short term, but it often creates isolation and loneliness, preventing them from experiencing the support and love that is necessary for healing.

Over time, the person may find that they feel more disconnected, trapped in their own emotional prison. Other individuals might engage in the defense mechanism of repression. Instead of confronting the pain head-on, they may suppress their emotions, attempting to bury the hurt and pretend it doesn't exist.

They might push the feelings down until they can't feel them anymore. While this strategy can work temporarily allowing the person to function in their day-to-day life, it often leads to unresolved emotional issues. These repressed feelings can resurface unexpectedly, manifesting as anxiety, depression, or emotional outbursts. The act of repression, while seemingly protective, often leads to deeper emotional turmoil in the long run.

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REBUILDING SELF WORTH

Have you ever witnessed someone, someone you care about, repeatedly lowering their own self-worth? Perhaps they've settled for less than they deserve, trapped in a cycle of unhealthy relationships, unsure of their own value, yet more than worthy of something greater. You might wonder, "How can they not see how beautiful, talented, and capable they are?" and yet, despite all the potential, they continue to allow themselves to be pulled back into situations that diminish them. You watch as they struggle, caught in a web of insecurity, doubt, and dependency, unable to break free from the patterns that hold them hostage. It's painful to witness, as you know that deep down, they are worthy of so much more.

You might have even tried to intervene, offering advice, words of encouragement, or warnings, urging them to recognize their worth and make changes. But despite your best efforts, they seem unable or unwilling to heed the call to step into their full potential. They keep coming back, crying out in pain, seeking solace in your presence, even though you've told them time and again that they deserve better. They may question their worth, their appearance, their talents, all while you can see their inner beauty shining brightly, hidden beneath layers of self-doubt and fear.

This is a heartbreaking situation, not just for the individual, but for those who care about them. It’s a painful paradox: watching someone so capable, so deserving, continue to settle for less than they deserve.

The weight of their low self-worth seems to pull them back into relationships or circumstances that serve to reinforce the negative beliefs they hold about themselves. And as they spiral, they may find themselves stuck in a cycle, unsure of how to break free, no matter how many times they’re told they are worthy of more.

The root of this behavior often lies in deep-seated insecurities, often shaped by past experiences, trauma, or repeated negative reinforcement from others. Perhaps they've been told they aren't enough, been ignored or rejected, or have failed to experience the love and validation they need to recognize their own value.

Over time, these external messages become internalized, and they begin to believe that they are unworthy of anything better, even when they deserve the world.

This struggle is not a simple one. It is tied to their perception of themselves, their self-image, and the narrative they've created about their worth. The idea of rebuilding self-worth is not something that happens overnight. It requires a conscious effort to challenge these ingrained beliefs and replace them with the truth: that they are worthy of love, respect, and happiness not just from others, but from themselves. It's a process of unlearning the negative thoughts that have been ingrained for so long and relearning the importance of self-compassion, boundaries, and self-empowerment.

When someone is caught in this cycle, it's often because they have been conditioned to accept less, to seek validation outside themselves, and to believe that they must endure pain or settle in relationships to feel worthy of love. But true self-worth comes from within.

It’s not about what others think or say about them; it’s about how they view themselves. They must learn to see themselves through the lens of compassion and love, recognizing that they are deserving of kindness, respect, and joy just as they are.

Rebuilding self-worth involves many steps: learning to set healthy boundaries, learning to say no when something or someone doesn't align with their values, and most importantly, learning to love themselves unconditionally. It means acknowledging their strengths and achievements, however small they may seem, and celebrating their worth in every form. It also means seeking help when needed, whether through therapy, self-help resources, or the support of trusted friends and loved ones who will uplift them rather than reinforce negative patterns.

Ultimately, the journey to rebuilding self-worth is about shifting from a place of insecurity and self-doubt to one of confidence and self-assurance. It's about recognizing that no one else can define their value, and that they are worthy of everything they desire happiness, love, and fulfillment.

It's about shedding the layers of negativity and stepping into their true power. For those who care about someone going through this, it's important to offer unwavering support. Encourage them to see their own worth, to step away from situations or people that diminish them, and to embrace the possibility of growth and healing. Be patient with them, but also firm in your belief that they are capable of transformation. Because sometimes, all it takes is for someone to believe in them until they can believe in themselves.

NAMING AND WORKING THROUGH THE PAIN

Building self-worth begins with a crucial step: naming the pain and working through it. Often, individuals carry emotional scars that go unacknowledged for years.

These are the pains from past relationships, disappointments, failures, and even the harsh words or actions of others. They accumulate in the quiet corners of our hearts and minds, sometimes unnoticed, but always there, influencing our sense of self and our decisions.

Naming the pain is the first act of reclaiming power over it. It means acknowledging the hurt, the betrayal, the rejection, or whatever form the pain may have taken. Often, individuals may shy away from facing this pain, thinking it will be too overwhelming or too difficult to handle. But the truth is, only by naming it can we begin to heal it. Denying or ignoring the pain doesn't make it go away; it only pushes it deeper into our subconscious, where it can fester and manifest in unhealthy ways.

For many, the pain is tied to a specific event or relationship perhaps it was a toxic relationship that left emotional scars, or a painful breakup that shattered their sense of self-worth. It could also be childhood wounds, the neglect or criticism that still echoes in their minds, shaping how they view themselves.

Whatever the cause, naming it allows them to separate themselves from the pain, to see it for what it is: an experience they endured, not something that defines who they are.

Once the pain is named, the next step is working through it. This doesn't mean rushing to move past it or pretending it doesn't hurt.

Working through the pain requires patience, self-compassion, and a willingness to face what is uncomfortable. It's about allowing oneself to feel the hurt, not as a permanent fixture, but as a part of the process of healing. Feeling the pain is an essential step in the journey toward self-worth because it creates space for growth.

Often, individuals may try to bypass this emotional work, using distractions like work, social media, or even unhealthy coping mechanisms to numb the pain. But these are only temporary fixes, and the pain always finds its way back. Working through the pain means confronting the emotional wounds head-on, whether through journaling, talking with a therapist, or leaning on a trusted friend.

It’s about giving oneself permission to grieve, to process, and to heal, at their own pace.

This process of naming and working through pain is also a practice of self-compassion. It’s important to recognize that the pain doesn’t mean someone is weak or unworthy it simply means they’ve experienced something difficult. And as painful as it may be, it doesn’t define their entire story. It is a chapter, not the whole book.

As individuals work through their pain, they learn that their worth is not tied to the hurts they’ve experienced but to their ability to rise above them.

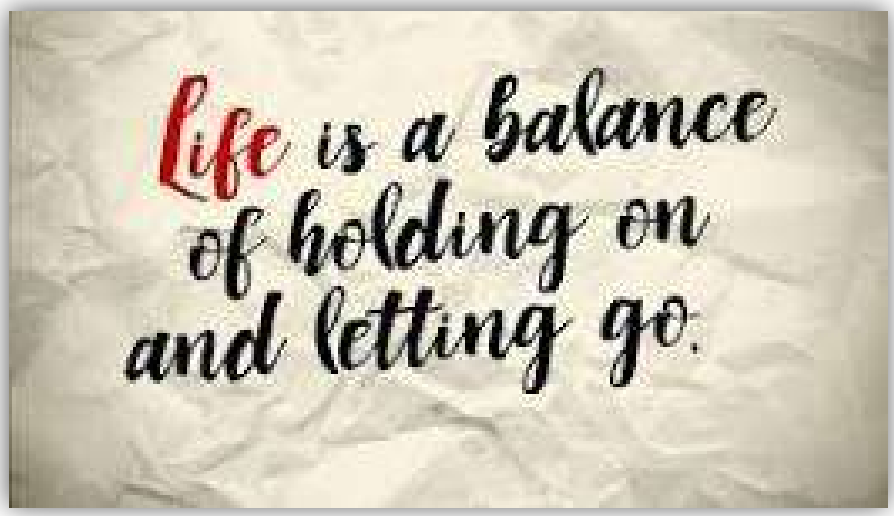
Over time, as individuals become more self-aware, they often reach a point of clarity. They begin to "wake up" to the truths they had been blind to before. Looking back, they may wonder, *how could I have missed this?* They might realize they were settling for less, accepting things that no longer align with their worth. They may see how they allowed toxic relationships to drain them or allowed their past pain to define their future. This newfound awareness is often both liberating and frustrating, as they wish they had understood their value sooner.

But this “waking up” is also a sign of growth. It shows that they have moved through the pain and are now ready to build a stronger, healthier version of themselves.

Through this process, individuals begin to reframe their story. They start to see themselves not as victims of their pain, but as survivors, capable of healing and growing. By naming the pain and working through it, they regain control over their narrative and start to build a healthier, more resilient sense of self-worth.

CHAPTER 3

HOLDING ON, LETTING GO



HOLDING ON

Have you ever been caught in that agonizing space between holding on and letting go?

The moments stretch endlessly as you replay every memory, every word, every promise made in the fragile bloom of love. You sit, staring at the phone, your heart a battlefield of conflicting emotions; love clinging tightly to the memories, reason whispering to let it go.

Indecision wraps itself around you like a heavy fog. What if you let go and realize you made a mistake? What if you hold on and continue to sink into a deeper abyss of pain? The questions circle relentlessly, each one more painful than the last.

For many, this is the reality of being in a toxic relationship. It's not just about the pain you feel, it's about the fear of the unknown, the "what-ifs" that keep you chained to someone who makes you question your worth, your beauty, and your ability to find happiness elsewhere. This is where Dolly found herself. Day after day, she revolved on the edge of a decision that felt impossible.

She wondered if John could change, if the man she fell in love with was still in there somewhere.

She clung to the good times, the promises, and the fleeting tenderness, even as they were drowned out by the criticisms, the control, and the emotional scars he left behind.

Dolly's story is not just hers; it's the story of anyone who has ever questioned their strength, doubted their worth, or feared that letting go meant losing a part of themselves. Her journey through indecision, pain, and ultimately, self-discovery shows the depth of human resilience and the power of choosing yourself.

BALANCING MEMORIES AND NEW BEGINNINGS

The delicate balance between cherishing the past and forging a new path is a struggle that defines the human experience. The past, rich with memories, lessons, and traditions, provides a foundation upon which we build our identities. It is a source of comfort, a guidepost reminding us of where we have been and the values that have shaped us. Yet, to move forward, we must also embrace change, allowing ourselves to evolve beyond the familiar.

Too strong a grip on the past can anchor us in stagnation, while an unchecked rush into the future can sever us from the wisdom that history offers.

There is a profound beauty in honoring the past without becoming trapped by it.

The stories of our ancestors, the traditions passed down through generations, and even our personal histories hold treasures worth preserving. These echoes of the past provide us with resilience and wisdom, a map of mistakes and triumphs that can illuminate our journey. However, clinging too tightly to nostalgia can distort our perspective, making us fearful of the unknown and hesitant to embrace the possibilities that lie ahead.

Forging a new path requires courage. It means stepping away from well-trodden roads to create something uniquely our own. The future is uncertain, filled with risks and challenges, but it also holds the potential for reinvention and discovery. True growth occurs when we learn to integrate the lessons of the past into the fabric of our evolving selves. It is not about discarding what came before, but rather about weaving it into a narrative that propels us forward.

The balance lies in discernment; knowing when to honor tradition and when to break free from it.

It requires an open heart, one that respects history while embracing transformation. In this dance between remembrance and reinvention, we find our truest selves, capable of both treasuring what was and embracing what will be.

THROUGH THE RAILS

One sunny afternoon, my mother and I were at a boutique on the first floor of a commercial building. She stepped out briefly to grab something from the ground floor. Being a curious child who had just mastered walking, I decided to follow her, blissfully unaware of the tragedy waiting ahead. As I peeked through the guard rails, searching for her, I tripped and fell straight through the rails to the ground floor. I remember screaming in pain as my mother rushed to my side. That was the day I broke my first limb, at just three years old.

My mom called my dad, who in turn reached out to a friend with a car, and they rushed me to a nearby hospital. The physician confirmed that I had fractured my left thigh bone. Unfortunately, the hospital lacked the necessary equipment for my treatment, so I was referred to Thika Level 5 Hospital.

The hospital's ambulance arrived quickly, and before long, I was admitted. After X-rays and pain medication, my leg was placed in a plaster cast to immobilize the fracture and ensure proper alignment. At three years old, I had no grasp of the medical intricacies. All I knew was that I'd have to wear the cast for six long weeks.

Restlessness came naturally to me as a hyperactive child. Being confined in a plaster cast felt like a prison sentence. Yet, my curiosity prevailed, and I dragged my plastered leg around despite my parents' objections. When the six weeks were up, we returned to the hospital to remove the cast, but the news was far from good: my bone had healed incorrectly. It had formed a malunion, a crooked alignment. My hyperactivity during the healing process, or what my mom always called "fagafaga," was the culprit.

The next step was corrective surgery to realign the bone. The physician took no chances this time. After re-breaking the bone, I was placed in a larger cast, one that extended from my waist to my leg, severely limiting my movement. What I thought was tough before now felt unbearable, but it was necessary. Thankfully, it worked, and on my next check-up, the cast came off for good.

Life returned to normal for a while. I started kindergarten and enjoyed my childhood adventures. But the accidents weren't done with me yet. One weekend, I visited a friend within our neighborhood. Time slipped away as we played, and I realized I'd stayed out past curfew. Trying to make up for lost time, I opted for a shortcut through a small opening in our side yard fence. My two friends helped lift the barbed wire so I could crawl through. As I made my way to the other side, my right arm slipped into a hidden metallic plate on the ground. I pulled back quickly, hearing a loud crack. Another bone was broken, and another round of screaming followed.

This time, my dad was the first to respond, rushing out from our front porch. My mom joined him, and together they carried me to the hospital. First aid was promptly administered, and my arm was placed in a splint before being immobilized in a cast. A few weeks later, my arm healed, and life moved on.

Looking back now, I marvel at how carefree I was despite those experiences. I played pranks with my classmates, letting them write and draw on my cast when they visited. I thought nothing of those incidents for years until 2021.

That year, I began experiencing discomfort around my left knee. The memories of my childhood accidents came flooding back. Suddenly, I understood the fear of falling that had shadowed me for years. The anxiety over injuries, which I had dismissed as minor quirks, revealed itself as lingering trauma.

Today, that fear influences even the simplest activities. I avoid jumping over a small trench on my way to work, opting for a longer route with a concrete bridge. The thought of tripping haunts me. A near fall from a matatu doorframe once caused me to abandon a favorite pair of shoes for months. Even stepping on a chair to reach a high shelf triggers intrusive thought of falling.

Childhood trauma, like mine, often remains unprocessed, hidden behind the façade of innocence. Accidents are one type, but other forms include abuse, neglect, domestic violence, loss, and bullying. These experiences shape us in ways we may not recognize until much later. Healing the inner child requires reconnecting with those buried emotions and offering ourselves the compassion we needed as children.

Dear Self: You are okay. You are safe. You are strong.

My inner child needs to heal from the fear that limits her. She wants to learn to trust her body again, to live fully without being held back by the past. What does your inner child need to heal from?

By Joan Kamau Njeri

While memories are invaluable, they should not become chains that prevent us from moving forward. There is a delicate art to honoring our past while ensuring it does not define or confine us.

Many people struggle with the weight of memories, especially those tied to moments of profound joy or deep sorrow. A cherished past can become a refuge, a place where we long to linger because it feels safe and familiar. Conversely, painful memories can become burdens, shape our fears and limit our ability to embrace new experiences. Learning to honor memories without being bound by them means acknowledging their significance without allowing them to dictate our future.

One of the key steps in this process is recognizing that memories are a part of us but not the whole of us.

They serve as lessons, inspirations, and sometimes warnings, but they do not have to be limitations. A person who has experienced great love in the past, for example, may hesitate to open their heart again for fear of loss. Someone who has endured failure may resist new opportunities, haunted by the possibility of repeating past mistakes. However, when we view memories as guiding lights rather than as rigid boundaries, we allow ourselves the freedom to grow beyond them.

Honoring memories also means preserving them in meaningful ways rather than clinging to them out of fear of losing them. Journaling, storytelling, and traditions can keep the essence of the past alive without making it an anchor.

Rituals, such as celebrating the life of a lost loved one or revisiting places of personal significance, can serve as ways to pay tribute without becoming stuck in the past. By doing this, we ensure that memories serve as enriching experiences rather than obstacles.
Another essential aspect of this balance is learning to be present. *When we become too consumed with what was, we risk missing what is.* Life continues to unfold, offering new experiences, relationships, and lessons.

If we constantly measure the present against the past, we may fail to appreciate the unique beauty of each new moment. Embracing mindfulness; being fully engaged in the here and now allows us to carry our memories with us while still moving forward with open hearts and minds.

Ultimately, honoring memories without being bound by them is an act of self-liberation. It is a way of respecting our personal histories while allowing ourselves to evolve. *The past should serve as a foundation, not a prison.* By carrying its lessons forward with grace and gratitude, we empower ourselves to step boldly into the future, ready to create new memories while treasuring the old.

HEALING

What caused our suffering may remain a part of our story, they do not have to define our future. Letting go of pain does not mean forgetting what happened; it means choosing to move forward, carrying only the wisdom we have gained rather than the wounds that once held us back.

One of the most challenging aspects of healing is understanding that not everything was within our control.

So often, people blame themselves for circumstances that were never truly theirs to control whether it was the actions of another person, an unexpected loss, or the cruel twists of fate. It is easy to replay painful events in our minds, wondering what we could have done differently, how we could have prevented the hurt. But the truth is, some things happen regardless of our best intentions, and holding onto the pain only deepens the wound.

Healing begins when we accept that the past cannot be rewritten, but the future is still ours to shape. The things that broke us did not destroy us. We are still here, still capable of joy, still deserving of love. It is important to remember that pain, though it may feel overwhelming in the moment, is not a permanent state. It is a storm that eventually passes, leaving behind a sky that is clear and open once more. Better is always out there; better days, better opportunities, better relationships, better versions of ourselves.

When we hold onto pain too tightly, we give it power over us. We allow it to dictate our choices, our relationships, our willingness to trust and hope. But pain is not meant to be a life sentence. It is meant to be a teacher.

Every hardship carries a lesson, and while the experience itself may have been painful, the wisdom gained from it can serve as a guiding light. Perhaps a betrayal teaches us the importance of self-worth and setting boundaries. Perhaps a loss reminds us to cherish every moment. Perhaps failure teaches us resilience and the courage to try again. When we shift our perspective, we begin to see pain not as a curse, but as a chapter—one that, while difficult, helps shape the person we are becoming.

Letting go does not mean ignoring our pain or pretending it never happened. It means facing it, understanding it, and then making the conscious choice to move beyond it. It means deciding that we will not allow what hurt us to hold us back from experiencing happiness again. It means refusing to let the past steal our present or our future.

It is also essential to recognize that healing takes time. There is no shortcut, no instant fix. But with each day, each small step forward, the weight of pain becomes lighter. With patience and self-compassion, we find that the things that once seemed impossible to overcome begin to loosen their grip on us.

Better is always out there. Life has a way of surprising us, of offering new beginnings when we least expect them. Just because we have known pain does not mean we are destined to live in it forever. The world is vast, filled with new experiences, new people, and new possibilities. There are still sunsets to watch, laughter to share, love to give and receive. There is still joy waiting to be found.

At the heart of it all is this truth: We are more than our pain. We are more than the things that have happened to us. We are strong, we are resilient, and we are worthy of happiness. And when we finally release the pain of the past, we open ourselves to a future filled with endless possibilities.

Life is a story, but it is not a fixed one. Though we often feel like the past has carved an unchangeable path for us, the truth is that we have the power to revise, reshape, and rewrite our own narratives. The experiences that have shaped us whether painful or joyful do not have to define our future. We are more than our worst moments, more than our struggles, and more than the mistakes we have made or the pain we have endured.

Rewriting our narrative is about taking ownership of our lives, about refusing to let past hardships dictate what is possible for us. It is about embracing hope even when the past has been filled with disappointment, choosing growth even when change feels daunting, and stepping into the freedom of knowing that we can redefine ourselves at any moment. The pen is in our hands, and we alone have the power to write a new chapter.

BREAKING FREE

For many, the past feels like a heavy burden, an unshakable shadow that follows wherever they go. Painful memories, failures, betrayals, and regrets can whisper that change is impossible, that we are stuck in an endless cycle of repetition. But the truth is, the past only has power over us if we let it.

One of the most important realizations in life is that not everything was within our control. Sometimes, things happen to us that we never asked for; loss, heartbreak, injustice.

It is easy to carry the weight of these experiences, blaming ourselves, replaying the "what ifs," and convincing ourselves that we are broken beyond repair. But in reality, we were never meant to carry that burden forever.

Letting go does not mean forgetting what happened, nor does it mean pretending that the pain did not exist.

It means acknowledging it, understanding it, and then making a conscious choice not to let it control us. It means deciding that our past does not define us; our actions moving forward do.

Rewriting the narrative starts with breaking free from the belief that we are prisoners of our past. It starts with recognizing that every single day is an opportunity to begin again, to turn the page, to create a different ending than the one we once imagined.

EMBRACING HOPE

Hope is often misunderstood. Some see it as naive optimism, as wishful thinking that ignores reality. But true hope is not about denying hardships. It is about believing that hardships are not the end of the story.

It is the belief that no matter how many times we have been knocked down, there is still a chance to rise again.

Hope is what allows us to keep moving forward even when we cannot see what lies ahead. It is the voice that whispers, “There is more waiting for you,” when everything around us suggests otherwise. Without hope, we remain stuck in the same patterns, afraid to reach for something better. But when we embrace hope, we open the door to new possibilities.

Even when we cannot yet see how things will change, we must trust that they can. No matter how long we have lived under the weight of the past, better is always out there. It is waiting in the friendships we have yet to make, the opportunities we have yet to seize, the love we have yet to give and receive. Hope reminds us that the world is vast, that life is full of second chances, and that we are never truly out of options.

THE BEAUTY OF GROWTH

Growth is rarely comfortable. It often comes in the form of discomfort, struggle, and painful lessons. But it is through these very challenges that we find our strength, our resilience, and our true selves.

The hardest moments in life often teach us the most profound lessons. Heartbreak teaches us what kind of love we truly deserve. Failure teaches us perseverance. Betrayal teaches us the importance of self-respect and boundaries. Loss teaches us the value of every moment. These lessons, painful as they may be, become the building blocks of our evolution.

Rewriting our narrative means recognizing that growth is not about erasing the past but about using it as fuel for transformation.

It means seeing ourselves not as victims of our circumstances, but as survivors, as warriors who have endured and emerged wiser. We may not have chosen our struggles, but we can choose how they shape us. We can allow them to make us bitter, fearful, and stuck, or we can let them mold us into stronger, more compassionate, and wiser versions of ourselves.

CLAIMING THE FREEDOM

The most empowering realization in life is that we are never truly stuck. No matter how long we have walked one path, we can choose to take a new one. No matter how many times we have failed, we can try again. No matter how lost we have felt, we can find our way.

Rewriting the narrative means refusing to let the past define the future. It means giving ourselves permission to change, to grow, and to dream beyond our current reality. It means stepping away from old versions of ourselves that no longer serve us and stepping into the person we are meant to become. At any moment, we can decide to let go of limiting beliefs, to break free from toxic patterns, to choose love over fear, to choose courage over comfort. We do not have to wait for the perfect moment, for permission, or for everything to align. we can start now.

The beauty of life is that it is always unfolding. The story is never over. And as long as we are still breathing, we have the power to rewrite the narrative.

You Are More Than Your Past

You are not your mistakes.
You are not your failures.
You are not the things that happened to you.
You are not broken beyond repair.

You are a person in progress, a story still being written, a masterpiece still unfolding.

Embrace hope.
Pursue growth.
Step into your freedom.

Should you need help or assistance reach out via ***+254796037994***. Write to me via ***kinyanina52@gmail.com*** for feedback or requests.

READER ENGAGEMENT
What's Weighing your heart?

In life, we all carry wounds; some small and others that feel like they'll never fade. As you read *Shattered Trust*, I want to invite you end with a pause and reflect on what's been hurting you lately.

Is it the ache of betrayal, the loss of someone or something you held dear, or the weight of unmet expectations?

Maybe it's a silent pain you've carried alone, waiting for the right moment to be released. Take a moment to name it, either silently to yourself or by writing it down. What's been breaking your heart?

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Sometimes, acknowledging our pain is the first step toward letting it heal.