

A COMPANION WORKBOOK

# *Held.*

*On the griefs that often go unmet and the  
small ways we can hold them.*

*A space to slow down with what you're carrying.*

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**tkb** STRATEGIES

# How to use this workbook.

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This workbook is a companion to the brochure *Held*. You don't need the brochure to use it. You don't need anything except some quiet time, something to write with, and a willingness to be honest with yourself.

## A few things worth knowing:

Approach this workbook from a place of curiosity. There are no right answers, and you don't have to finish. Some pages will make sense for you, others won't. Skip what doesn't fit and return to what does.

There is no right way to do this practice. The four sections: Name It, Ceremony, Witness, and Body, can be done in any sequence. You might find that one section calls you back several times while another stays untouched. That's information. Try not to attach judgment to it.

Take your time. The prompts are designed to be lived with for a few minutes, not answered quickly. If you finish a page quickly, revisit it later. You might find you have more to explore.

If something opens up that feels too big for the page, pause. Close the workbook. Call a friend, a therapist, a coach, or a chosen family member. The point of this work is not to push through. It's to make room.

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SECTION ONE

*Name  
It.*

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*Some losses are obvious. The unnamed ones are  
often the heaviest.*

# What you might be grieving *without calling it grief.*

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Some losses are obvious. Others move through us without ever getting named, and the unnamed ones are often the heaviest. Read slowly. Sometimes a single word is enough.

**You might be grieving:**

- A relationship that ended without anyone knowing it began
- A version of yourself you had to set down to stay safe
- Years of your life spent surviving instead of living
- A person who is still alive but no longer in your life
- A future you were promised, or promised yourself, that didn't arrive
- A community, a place, an era that doesn't exist anymore
- A welcome you didn't receive
- An elder who didn't survive long enough to know you
- Something you can't name yet but feel in your chest

*If any of these landed, write the specific thing here. Not the category, the actual thing.*

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*If something else came up that isn't on the list, write that instead.*

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# Trying the sentence.

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There's a sentence that can shift things: *"I think I might be grieving  
-----."*

It's a small sentence. It doesn't fix anything. But it changes how the body experiences what it's holding.

Try it now, with whatever came up on the previous page. Write the full sentence three times, with three different things. They don't have to be related.

**01**

*I think I might be grieving...*

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**02**

*I think I might be grieving...*

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**03**

*I think I might be grieving...*

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*Notice what happened in your body as you wrote. Not what you think about it, what your body did. Did anything tighten? Loosen? Move?*

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SECTION TWO

# *Ceremony.*

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*Witnessing — even by yourself — is part of how  
grief moves.*

# The losses that didn't *get acknowledged.*

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There are anniversaries the world celebrates: birthdays, weddings, deaths, and holidays. And there are anniversaries the world doesn't see: the day you stopped pretending, the day someone stopped speaking to you, the day the version of yourself you'd been performing finally fell apart, the day you realized something was already over.

These experiences deserve to be acknowledged because witnessing grief, even by yourself, is part of how grief moves.

*Take a moment. What unwitnessed experiences live in your body?*

**Date or season**

**What it acknowledges**

**Date or season**

**What it acknowledges**

**Date or season**

**What it acknowledges**

# Designing a *small ceremony.*

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Pick one of the dates from the previous page; the one that pulls at you most, or the one you've avoided longest.

A ceremony can be small. It does not require an audience or adherence to a particular religious tradition. It requires only that you

**Some forms a ceremony can take:**  
be present with what's being honored.

- Lighting a candle and sitting with it for a chosen length of time
- Writing a letter you don't intend to send
- Cooking and eating something the person or place loved
- Walking a route that holds the memory
- Putting an object somewhere visible for a day or a season
- Saying a name out loud
- Sitting in silence for as long as feels right

*What date are you witnessing?*

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*What form will the ceremony take?*

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*When will you do it? Be specific. A vague "soon" is not a ceremony.*

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*What do you want to say, even silently, while you're doing it?*

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SECTION THREE

# *Witness.*

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*Every grief needs a witness. Different griefs need  
different witnesses.*

## Choosing who can *hold what.*

Not every grief needs a therapist, but every grief needs a witness. The trouble is, we often bring grief that needs witnessing to people who can't witness it. They love us, but they minimize. They mean well, but they fix. They listen, but they make it about themselves. This is not a failure of love. It is a mismatch of capacity. Different griefs need different witnesses.

*Think about three things you're carrying right now. For each one, ask: Who in my life can actually witness this?*

**What I'm carrying**

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**Who can witness it**

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**Who cannot (and that's okay)**

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**What I'm carrying**

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**Who can witness it**

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**Who cannot (and that's okay)**

---

**What I'm carrying**

---

**Who can witness it**

---

**Who cannot (and that's okay)**

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*If a row came up empty under "who can witness it," that is not a personal failing. It is a sign that this grief might need a professional witness: a therapist, a coach, a support group, a spiritual director, rather than a relational one.*

## Asking to be witnessed.

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The hardest part is often not finding a witness. It is asking.

Many of us were trained, by family, by culture, or by survival, to hold grief privately. To not burden others. To be the strong one. To process alone.

Asking to be witnessed is a skill. It is also a kind of trust.

### A PRACTICE SENTENCE

*"I'm carrying something heavy. I don't need you to fix it or have answers. I just need to not be alone with it for a few minutes. Is that something you can do right now?"*

This sentence does three things: it names that something is heavy, it lowers what's being asked of the listener, and it allows them to consent or opt out.

*Who in your life might you say this to in the next two weeks?*

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*What might you adjust about the sentence so it sounds like you?*

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*What's the smallest version of asking that feels possible? It can be a text message. It can be five words.*

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SECTION FOUR

# *Body.*

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*The body keeps faith with what mattered.*

# What your body has *been telling you.*

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The body keeps faith with what mattered. Tears, anger, numbness, exhaustion, these are not symptoms to fix. They are messages. Most of us were taught to override these messages. To push through. To get back to work. To not make it a thing. This page is an invitation to listen instead.

*Take a breath. A slow one. Then notice:*

## **Where in your body are you holding tension right now?**

*Not where you think you should be holding it, where you actually are. Jaw, shoulders, chest, gut, low back, hips, throat. Be specific.*

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## **When did this tension start?**

*If you can't pinpoint a date, name a season or a chapter.*

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## **If this tension could speak, what would it say?**

*Don't think too hard. Write the first thing that comes.*

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## **What does it need from you that it isn't getting?**

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# Permission.

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A closing reflection. Read each one slowly. Notice which ones make you want to look away, and which ones settle into you. Both are information.

*You can underline, circle, cross out, and add to. This page is yours.*

- Permission to be seen on your own terms.*
- Permission to rest without earning it.*
- Permission to set down what was never yours to carry.*
- Permission to belong without performing.*
- Permission to grieve what didn't get to happen.*
- Permission to outgrow the version of yourself that kept you safe.*

*Which one do you most need to give yourself today?*

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*What would it look like, in concrete terms, to actually take that permission this week?*

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# Close the circle.

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Grief work is important work, and you've taken a big first step.

Some of what you wrote may stay with you. Some of it may not. The point was not to produce something, but to make room.

If something opened up that feels like it wants more space than this workbook can hold, that's worth honoring. Coaching, therapy, spiritual direction, peer support, chosen family; there are many ways to keep going. You don't have to know which one yet.

What you've already done, slowing down, naming, witnessing yourself, is the work. It might not feel or look impressive. Be gentle with yourself. It's worth it.

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*With care,*

*Tekoah Boatner*

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*If you'd like to continue the conversation, you can reach me at [hello@tkbstrategies.com](mailto:hello@tkbstrategies.com) or read more at [tkbstrategies.com](http://tkbstrategies.com).*

*This workbook is offered freely. If it's been useful, the most valuable thing you can do is share it with someone else who might need it.*