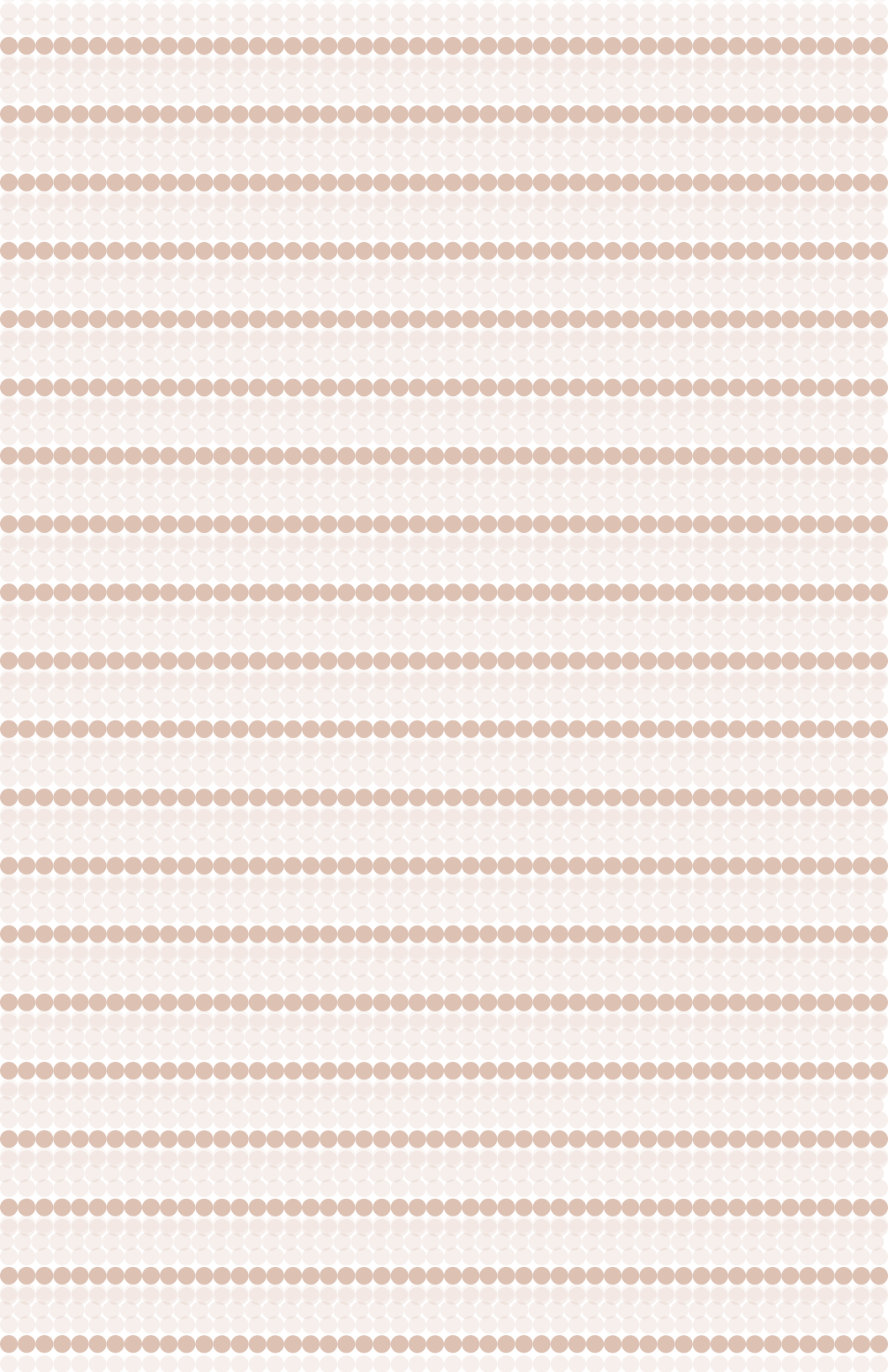


MY *Centered* LIFE

WORKBOOK



DOCTOR'S NOTE

Hey Mama!

I'm so glad you've joined me to get strong and centered. This manual was designed to help you focus on your own personal growth and development. We know that when we take good care of ourselves, we're better equipped to take good care of everyone else around us. It's possible to move from conflicted to centered, from surviving to thriving in motherhood.

Remember to ask your child's pediatrician or behavioral health specialist for help regarding specific questions you have about your child's development, needs, and behavioral challenges as they arise. And remember to ask your own health providers about your health, needs, and challenges as well.

The information on our site and in this manual is not intended to serve as medical advice and should never be used as a substitute for face-to-face, personalized advice from a medical professional.

You've got this, Mama!



Dr. Whitney

WHITNEY CASARES

M.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.

**Author, *The New Baby Blueprint: Caring for You and Your Little One* and
*The Working Mom Blueprint: Winning at Parenting Without Losing Yourself***

Host, The Modern Mommy Doc Podcast

Founder, Modern Mommy Doc



www.modernmommydoc.com



facebook.com/modernmommydoc



[@modernmommydoc](https://www.instagram.com/modernmommydoc)



info@modernmommydoc.com



[pinterest.com/modernmommydoc](https://www.pinterest.com/modernmommydoc)

emmm[®]
MODERN MOMMY
DOC





A Life That's Centered

So many moms I meet describe their days as chaotic and conflicted. They feel pulled in every direction, all at the same time. They're trying to do it all, but they often feel like they're not doing any of it as well as they'd like to. The answer? A life that's centered.

Creating a centered life starts with having a centered vision: a clear idea of what life would look like for you if you were living according to what mattered most to you.

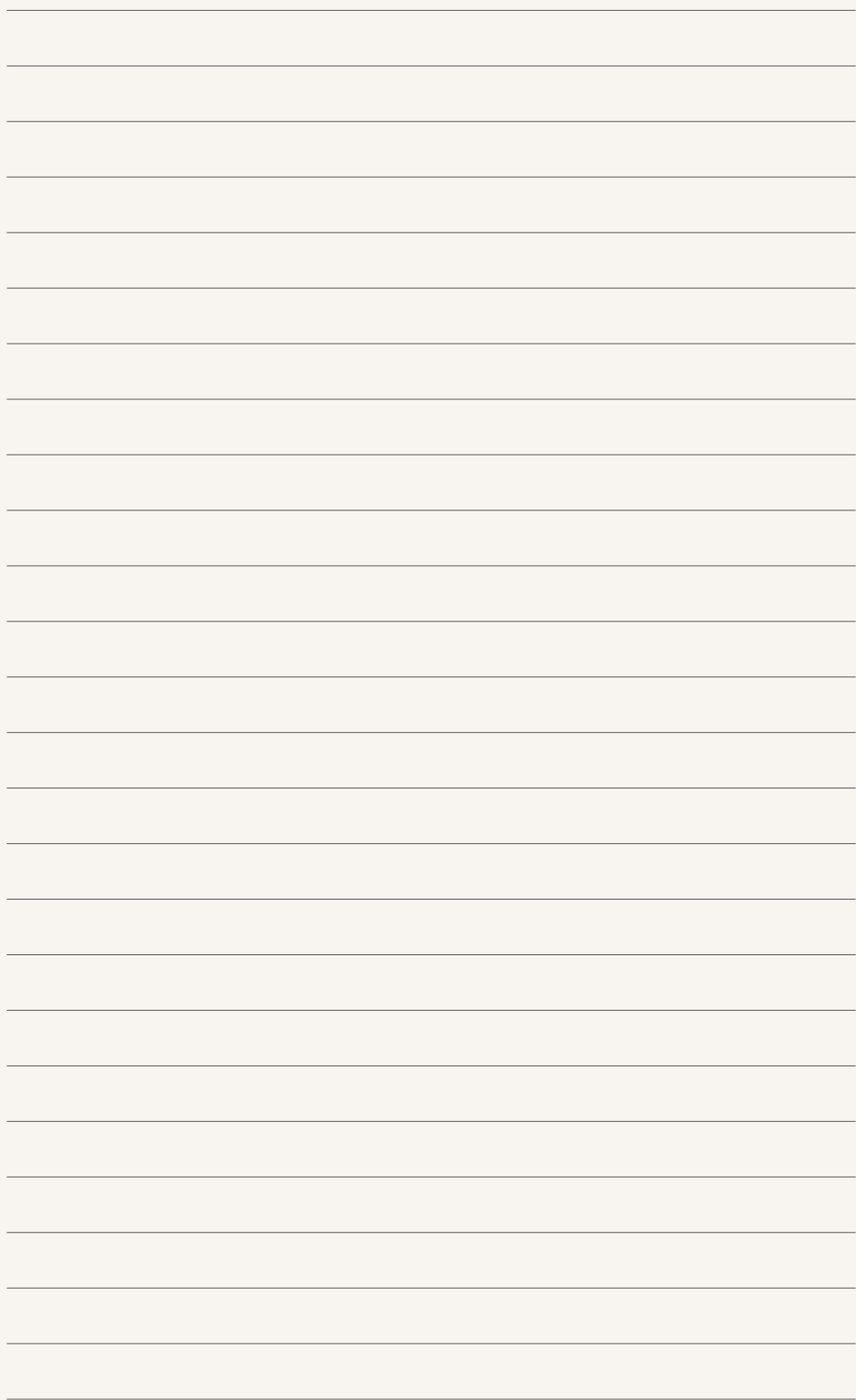


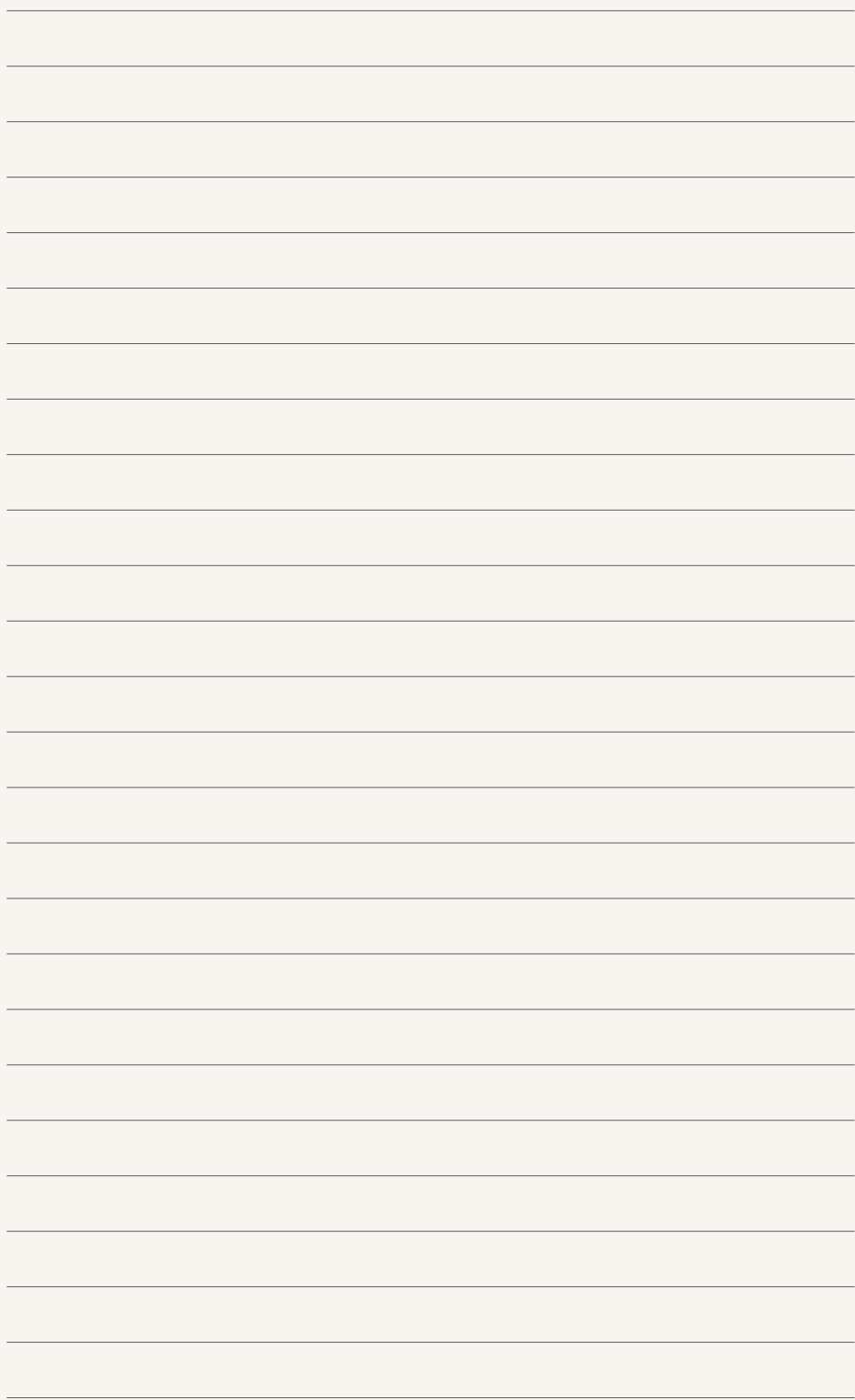
YOUR TURN

Close your eyes and sit in a comfortable position. Allow your body to relax. Imagine yourself five years from now. What does life look like for you? Who are you with and what are you doing? What do you see? What are you wearing? How does it smell? When you wake up in the morning, how does your world look? What do you do? Where do you go? How do you feel? How do you not feel?

Maybe what you saw was yourself in a new career or living in a new place. Maybe what you imagined was more of a feeling. Whatever you envisioned, write it down here. Give as much detail as you can.





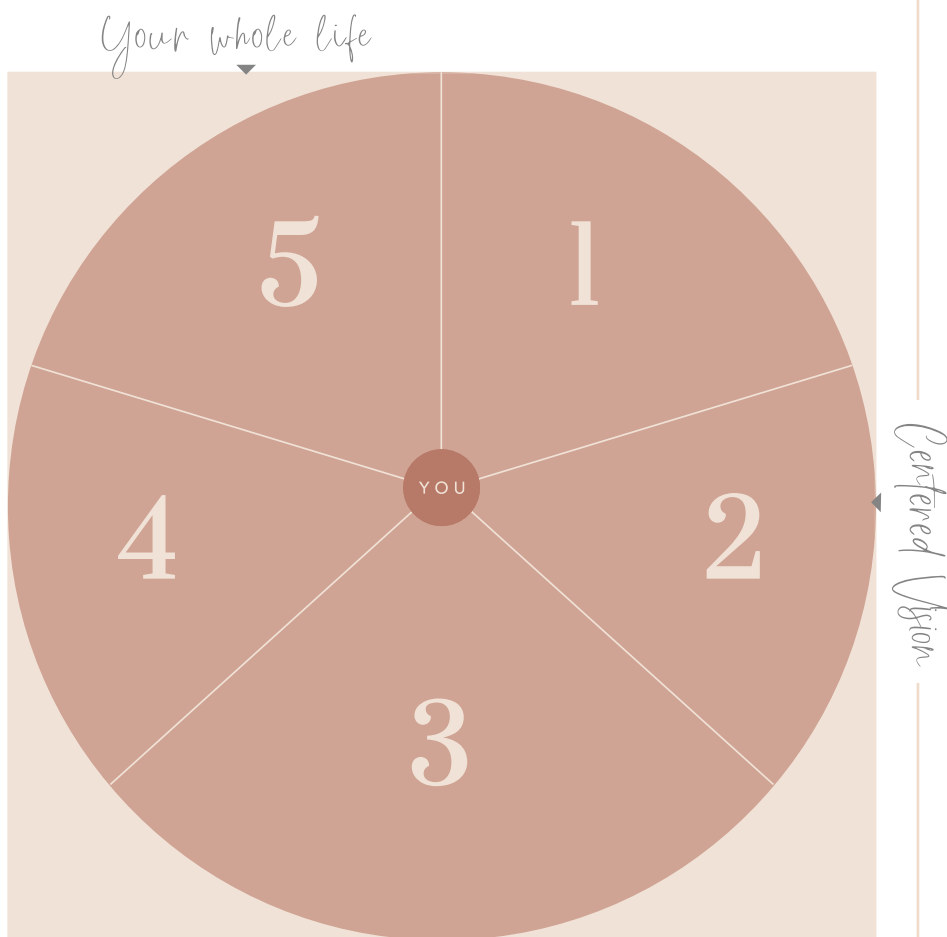


Center Points

• • •

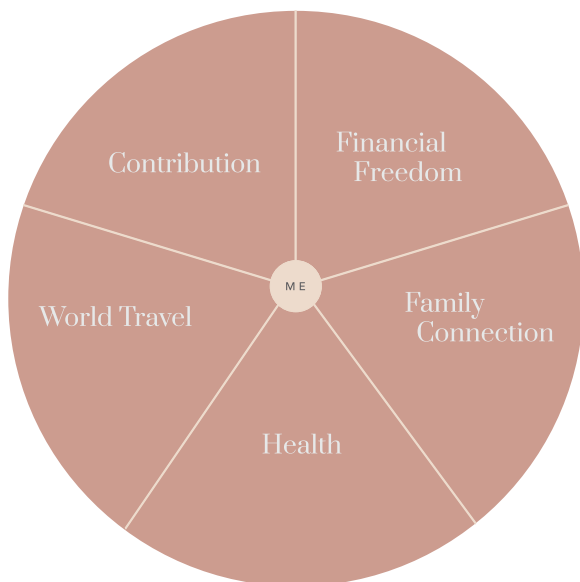
Let's imagine your vision as a circle and your whole life as a box around that circle.

Your centered vision is all the things that give your life purpose and that make you feel centered. As you reflect on the centered visioning exercise you just completed, let's identify five themes or components that make up that vision for your life.



These are My Center Points:

• • •



1 FINANCIAL FREEDOM

I am completely debt-free.

2 STRONG MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH

I'm in the best physical and mental shape of my life.

3 FAMILY CONNECTION

I am an exceptional wife and have a thriving marriage. I have deep connections and amazing relationships with each of my kids.

4 WORLD TRAVEL

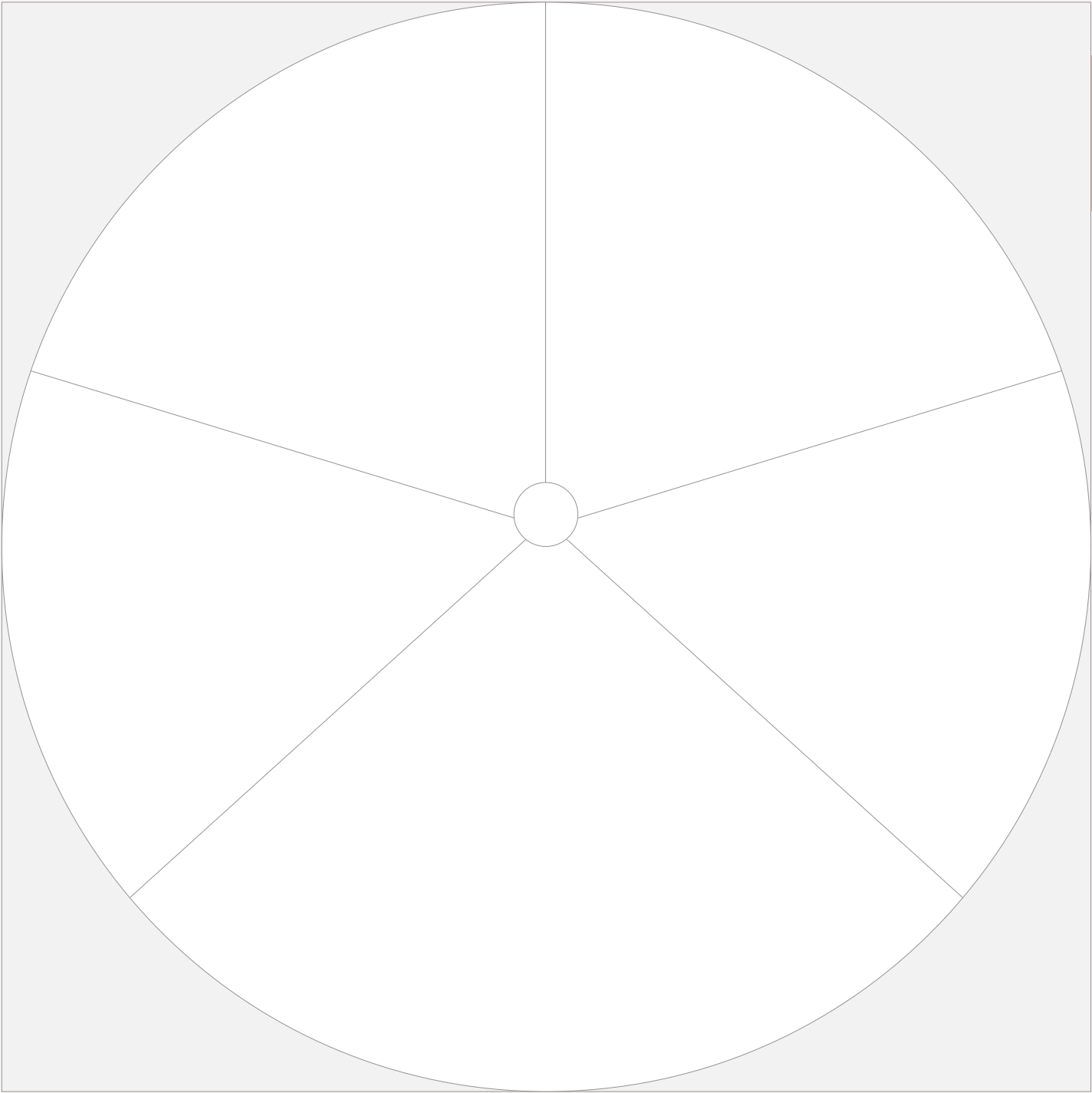
I work for myself as a speaker, blogger, and businesswoman, speaking and traveling around the world.

5 PASSIONATE, GIFTED CONTRIBUTION

I give my best talents compassionately and generously to inspire other women to create social-emotional wellness for themselves and their families.

[illegible]

**THESE ARE YOUR CENTER POINTS. THEY WILL EACH
HAVE THEIR OWN SPACE WITHIN THE CIRCLE.**



FILL IN
YOUR
CENTER
POINTS



What Doesn't Fit Inside the Circle?

All of these points have to work in conjunction with each other to create a truly centered life. We'll show you how to get started on this journey, but first we have to address everything outside the circle. In the corners of the box are where you put the things that have to happen in your life but that don't fit within your specific vision. (We're talking tasks, responsibilities, and obligations.)



The Non-Negotiables: These are the things that only you can do. It doesn't matter if you find them enjoyable or not — the fact is you have to do them, even though they don't necessarily have a place in your overall vision for your life.

EXAMPLES

Documenting patient notes at my office, answering personal emails, breastfeeding, etc.

The Swappables: These are tasks that have to get done, but they don't serve you. They can either be delegated to others or completely automated.

EXAMPLES

Grocery shopping, yardwork, bill pay, etc.

The Contaminators: These are the tasks or commitments that fill your schedule but aren't really necessary. They eat up your time and your family's time, keeping you unnecessarily busy.

EXAMPLES

Extra Committees/volunteer obligations, your child's fifth extracurricular activity, physical clutter/toys/gear, etc.

The Heartstrings: These are the tasks that are important to you — you may have to do them or want to do them — but they are definitely outside the circle containing your ultimate vision for your life.

EXAMPLES

Calling Grandma, health appointments, a trip to your in-laws, etc.

In order to make room for our centered life, we have to give less physical, mental, and emotional energy to the things that aren't part of our centered vision.

The Center Audit: Comparing Your Centered Vision and Your Center Points with Your Current Life

• • •

So just how close are you to living your vision? Let's figure it out by auditing the way you currently live your life. Fill out the journaling activity on the next page.



What percentage of your week do you feel joyful and content, and what percentage do you feel overwhelmed, burned out, and/or conflicted?

Where in the box do you spend the most time?

What overwhelms you most?

What keeps you from living a life that's more joyful and peaceful?

Most women have a hard time taking care of themselves regularly due to five primary factors:

CHAOS • BUSYNESS • TIME • MOM GUILT
INSTITUTIONAL & SOCIAL BIAS

Which of these factors impacts you the most?

Which of these factors impacts you the least?

Which of these factors are under your control?

Which of these factors are not under your control?

Reality Versus the Ideal

• • •

Christie is a business-executive coach. She spends all day guiding leaders personally and professionally as they make million-dollar decisions. One night, discussing life at a bar, she took a cocktail napkin and wrote out the major categories of life — kids, spouse, work, exercise, friendships, hobbies and sports, homemaking, travel and experiences, and appearance.

For clarification, exercise to me meant releasing endorphins, stress reduction, and meditation, whereas appearance included everything that goes into looking put together (including exercise for the purpose of having a good appearance).

Christie wrote them down in random order and then asked me to rank them in order in the left-hand column according to what I, in an ideal world, would spend the most time doing. "Rank them as a private, honest list, not based at all on what other people would think is the right way to rank them," she said.

In the next column, she asked me to rank what I thought I spent my time on.

Then, she told me to *compare* them.

MY IDEAL LIST:

1. Exercise and stress reduction
2. Kids
3. Travel and experiences
4. Hobbies and sports
(including writing and reading)
5. Partner
6. Friendships
7. Homemaking
(tasks such as laundry and dishes)
8. Appearance
9. Work



MY REALITY LIST:

1. Work
2. Homemaking
(tasks such as laundry and dishes)
3. Kids
4. Hobbies and sports
(including writing and reading)
5. Partner
6. Appearance
7. Friendships
8. Exercise and stress reduction
9. Travel and experiences



That comparison was scary, Mama. I didn't like at all how I was spending my time in the real world versus how I wanted to be spending it in my ideal world. So, I changed it. I switched it up.

Why?

Because joy, contentment, and centeredness lived at the top of the Ideal List. Stress and resentment found their unhappy home at the top of the Reality List. We will all spend a lot of time on the areas outside our centered circles at the corners of our boxes, but the trick is to give them less physical, emotional, and mental energy than what's inside.

How about you?



YOUR TURN

Your Ideal List:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Your Reality List:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

How closely does the ideal, centered life you visualized
match up with your current life?

What are some barriers you might face to making your
reality list more closely match your ideal list?

Outside the Circle: How to Address What Remains

IN ORDER TO MAKE ROOM
FOR OUR CENTERED VISION,
WE HAVE TO GIVE LESS
PHYSICAL, MENTAL, AND
EMOTIONAL ENERGY TO
THE THINGS OUTSIDE THE
CIRCLE.



THE NON-NEGOTIABLES

THE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T WANT TO

These are tasks that require efficiency and productivity.
We have to get them done, but with as little time or
effort as possible.

THE SOLUTION

Create systems and rely on smart organizational tools
that make it easier for you to accomplish the tasks.



THE SWAPPABLES

THE THINGS THAT HAVE TO GET DONE BUT THAT
SOMEONE (OR SOMETHING) ELSE CAN DO FOR YOU

THE SOLUTION

These are tasks that can be delegated to others or completely automated. They can be handed off to your partner, your kids (if they're old enough), others in your parenting village (friends/family members), professionals, or even technology (e.g., auto bill pay).

YOUR TURN

Where are you thriving when it comes to automating and delegating? Is there anything in the Swappables corner outside your centered circle you need to pass off?

Which household tasks do you have the hardest time completing consistently or take the most amount of your time (and are unpleasant or take time away from your priorities)?

Who else could do those tasks for you?

Are there household chores or responsibilities that other people are responsible for but that you would be more efficient at completing? Are there any cumbersome responsibilities on your plate that you need to trade for one you can do more easily and with more skill than someone else?



THE CONTAMINATORS

THE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO AND WANT TO DO BUT THAT DON'T FALL WITHIN THE CIRCLE

These are tasks or commitments that fill up your schedule but don't actually have to be accomplished. They eat up your time and your family's time and keep you unnecessarily busy.

THE SOLUTION

Perform a monthly audit to determine where you feel overwhelmed and stretched too thin. Commit to creating a physical environment and daily schedule that gives you space for reflection, re-evaluation, and mindful presence.

[illegible]

Monthly Calendar Activity

Use the calendar on the following page to write out activities you and your family have planned for the next month and coordinate the activity type with the following colors:

“Have-to’s”
IN RED
Obligatory or Stressful

“Want-to’s”
IN BLUE
Relaxing + Enjoyable

“Flexible”
IN GREEN
Unscheduled

Assess the balance of **RED** and **BLUE**. Are there **RED** activities you need to take away from your family calendar? Are there **BLUE** activities you need to schedule in?

When you look at your available time, are you happy with the way you’re spending it?



MONTHLY CALENDAR ACTIVITY

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday



THE HEARTSTRINGS

THE THINGS YOU HAVE TO DO AND WANT TO DO BUT THAT DON'T FALL WITHIN THE CIRCLE

These are tasks that are important to you but aren't necessarily part of your ultimate vision for your life.

THE SOLUTION

Designate a time for these tasks that works for you. Instead of cramming them into the nooks and crannies of your schedule when you're feeling obligated or guilty, mindfully choose times when doing them meets your and your family's needs.

What are your toughest Heartstrings?

Are there ways you can set aside times for the Heartstrings corner outside your centered circle without taking away from your centered vision?

• • •

Placing Yourself At the Center of the Circle

At the bull's-eye of your center points is one critical component: YOU. You can be your best navigational beacon, able to place more emphasis on one center point or another, even placing ALL of your energy in an area OUTSIDE your circle for short periods of time when it's appropriate, when you know yourself.

You can make space for yourself by doing three things: attending to the basics, practicing regular self-care, and cultivating self-love and self-kindness.





Creating a Daily Self-Care Ritual

The most joyful moms make concrete plans to reconnect with themselves throughout the week and to intentionally care for themselves in real, practical ways. Meditation gives us a framework for slowing down and learning to pay attention to our own inner voice.

One powerful way to meditate daily is to practice writing [Morning Pages](#) (first presented by Julia Cameron, author of [*The Artist's Way*](#)).

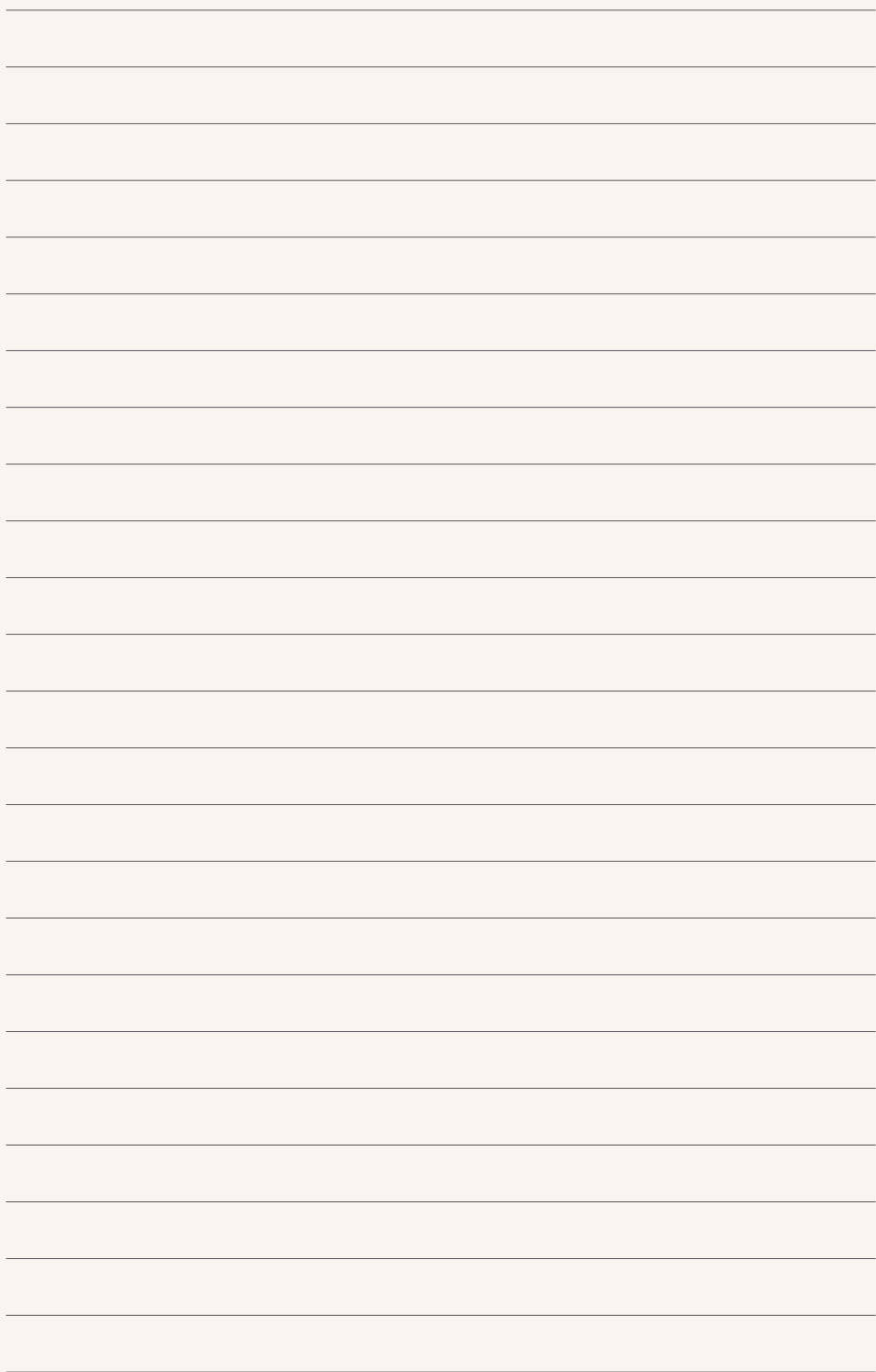
Morning Pages are three pages (written in actual pen on actual paper) of stream-of-consciousness writing that you complete first thing in the morning. What you write can be anything and everything — whatever comes into your mind — but it can be especially helpful as a re-centering and reconnecting exercise to start by writing what you're feeling.

Of course, you can meditate a variety of ways, and you can do the same type of writing exercises performed in Morning Pages at any time of the day, although completing them in the morning allows you to set yourself up for intentionality right at the start of each day.

[illegible]

Are there any non-traditional places you might be able to meditate (e.g., in your car on the way home from work, in the shower)?

Use this space to practice your own Morning Pages.



Creating a Weekly Self-Care Plan



Regular self-care is important for moms. When we take good care of ourselves, we can take care of all the other parts of our lives — including our partners, children, and households — with more intentionality, peace, and joy. When we spend time taking care of ourselves and doing the things that make us feel connected to ourselves (that meet our needs **WITHOUT** our having to consider anyone else's needs), we strengthen our internal compasses. This in turn makes it easier to make big decisions as well as the moment-to-moment choices that leave us feeling centered and content instead of conflicted.

You need time to be you, **JUST YOU**, throughout the week so you can reconnect to your centered vision, but also so you can reconnect to yourself as an individual who is separate from your role as a mom, partner, professional, or friend.

Plan on carving out one to two hours three days a week when you can focus solely on doing what you want to do. Maybe it's reading a book quietly on your porch or talking with a friend. Maybe it's something active. Only you know what you need to do to stay centered and energized throughout your week.

Of course, some weeks you won't get to your self-care plan at all, but if you can commit to three times a week most weeks, it will be often enough that you stick with it and it will become a routine. If you can get to your activity more often, awesome! But three times a week is a great start.

YOUR TURN

What is something you can do about every other day, almost every single week?

What might get in the way of taking care of yourself?

How will you handle barriers to taking care of yourself?

How will you give yourself grace if you fail or fall off the self care wagon?

SELF-CARE ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT

This is a guideline, something to come back to when life gets in the way and you have not taken good care of yourself in a good long while, or when you're first starting out. This is not about checking off boxes. This is about thinking about how much time you're willing to give yourself and what you would do with that time if you had it.

What if you're not sure what you need? Is it socialization, exercise, relaxation, or maybe just time to yourself? Take our self-care activity assessment to help determine what will fuel you.

I feel the most energized when I:

I feel the most drained when I:

I feel calm and relaxed when I:

Choose one:

I am most content when I am with other people - OR - I am most content when I have time to myself.

When I think back to myself pre-kids, the activities I enjoyed most were (list three):

If I had a week off of work with no obligations, I would :

I feel joyful when I'm:

My ideal getaway would be:

When I have time to be with my friends, I like it best when we:

When I'm with my partner, I like it best when we:

Keeping Commitments to Yourself

It's challenging to make sustainable changes in our lives, but we're more likely to succeed when, 1) we understand our long-term goals for ourselves and our families, and, 2) we have accountability.

HERE'S HOW



Set a reminder on your phone for two weeks from now with the dream you're working toward and your first goal you're tackling to get there.



Ask a friend to set a reminder for one month from now with the same.



Reciprocate! How can you help keep your friend motivated and encouraged on her own self-care journey?

Cultivating Self-Love *equals* Cultivating Self-Compassion

WHAT IS MINDFUL SELF-COMPASSION?

As moms and as people, we have to make space for ourselves, but not just by devoting time to practical self-care routines or by making the rest of our lives more streamlined, efficient, or productive. We also have to make space for our feelings, needs, and wants. That takes learning to be compassionate toward ourselves. We have to learn to treat ourselves like a best friend would or a motivational coach would.

This is hard for moms. We're used to treating ourselves like a mean drill sergeant would: harshly and critically. We're all already highly skilled at giving ourselves a hard time when we don't mother, show up in our work, or show up for ourselves the ways we want to. We're all too good at criticizing ourselves when we feel like we're failing in one area of life or another because we are pulled in so many directions.

Mindful self-compassion is about learning how to encourage ourselves in tough moments with kindness instead of criticism. Mindful self-compassion allows us to get through difficult situations, but it also allows us to make decisions about where we'll place our energy and efforts each day — in monumental situations and in small, seemingly inconsequential ones — without feeling so overwhelmed or conflicted by competing

priorities.

As parents, we learn to [emotion-coach](#) our kids: acknowledging their feelings and helping them identify their feelings, validating their emotions, and then helping them to problem solve when they get upset. We have to do the same for ourselves. When we practice mindful self-compassion as everyday dilemmas and stressors present themselves, we learn how to use mindful self-compassion during situations where the emotional stakes are a lot higher.

Mindful self-compassion was developed by Kristen Neff, Ph.D., and Christopher Germer, Ph.D. They define it clearly in [The Self-Compassion Workbook](#) as:

“Self-compassion involves treating yourself the way you would treat a friend who is having a hard time — even if your friend blew it, or is feeling inadequate, or is just facing a tough life challenge. Western culture places great emphasis on being kind to friends, family, and neighbors who are struggling. Not so when it comes to ourselves. Self-compassion is a practice in which we learn to be a good friend to ourselves when we need it most — to become an inner ally rather than an inner enemy.”¹

Self-Compassion Scale

Used with permission from [The Center for Mindful Self-Compassion](#)

The following statements describe how you act toward yourself in difficult times. Read each statement before answering, and to the left of each item indicate how often you behave in the stated manner on a scale of 1 to 5.

ALMOST NEVER

ALMOST ALWAYS

1

2

3

4

5

- _____ I try to be understanding and patient toward those aspects of my personality I don't like.
- _____ When something painful happens, I try to take a balanced view of the situation.
- _____ I try to see my failings as part of the human condition.
- _____ When I am going through a very hard time, I give myself the caring and tenderness I need.
- _____ When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance.
- _____ When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.

For the next set of items, use the following scale. (Notice the endpoints of the scale are reversed from those above.)



- _____ When I fail at something important to me, I become consumed by feelings of inadequacy.
- _____ When I'm feeling down, I tend to feel like most other people are probably happier than I am.
- _____ When I fail at something, I tend to feel alone in my failure.
- _____ When I'm feeling down, I tend to obsess and fixate on everything that's wrong.
- _____ I'm disapproving and judgmental about my own flaws and inadequacies.
- _____ I'm intolerant and impatient of those aspects of my personality I don't like.

HOW TO SCORE YOUR TEST

TOTAL (SUM OF ALL 12 ITEMS) _____

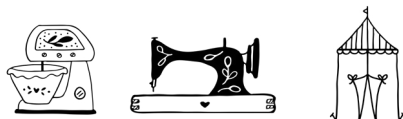
MEAN SCORE=TOTAL/12 _____

Average self-compassion scores tend to be around 3.0 on the 1-5 scale, so you can interpret your overall score accordingly. As a rough guide, a score of 1-2.5 for your overall self-compassion score indicates you are low in self-compassion, 2.5-3.5 indicates you are moderate, and 3.5-5.0 means you are high in self-compassion.

Let's take a look back at our Center Points



Setting Achievable Goals



If you want your life to look more centered in five years, you'll want to start living according to your center points now. That's where **SMART** Goals come in: Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time Sensitive. Now that you've addressed the outside of your centered circle (the "stuff" of life) and the inside of your centered circle (you), you're ready to work on the middle of your circle.

STEP 1: Pick one center point to focus on first. Pick the one that would make the biggest difference in eventually allowing your other center points to become your reality as well. Now, write the first goal you'll need to achieve to make that center point a reality. Make sure it's **SMART: S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**ealistic, and **T**ime Sensitive.

Specific: Make sure you have a concrete goal in mind. "I want to feel better about myself," is not a goal. It's a great reflection. It's a starting place, but it's just too ambiguous to set yourself up for success, because there is no way to tell if you've actually achieved your goal once you get there.

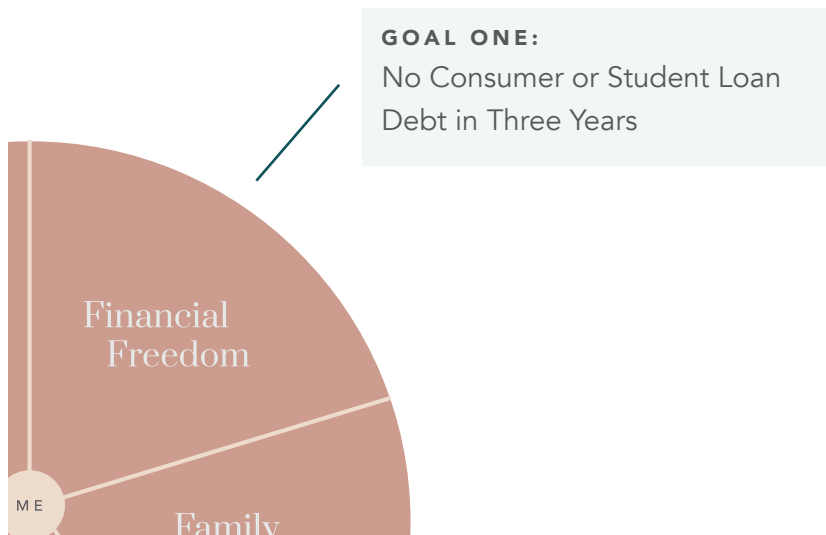
Measurable: Measurable goals have an outcome you can assess after a certain amount of time to determine your level of progress. That way, you know when you've met your goal and can set a new goal.

Attainable: If you set a goal that is too far out of reach, the chances of you reaching that goal are pretty slim. Instead, set a goal that is possible to reach. For example, an unattainable goal for me would be, "I will be a marathon runner next month." Instead, "I will complete a 10K run in three months," is more doable and therefore more likely to be achieved.

Realistic: Realistic goals are goals that are not based in fantasy. Instead, they are possible to achieve, even if it takes multiple, painful steps to get there.

Time Sensitive: Even with self-care goals, time is an important element. For example, "My goal is to write a children's book by one year from now. I'll do step X by one month from now, step Y by two months from now, and step Z by three months from now in order to achieve that goal."

So, going back to my center points, my first goal might look like this:



YOUR TURN

What's the first center point you want to address?

What's your first goal?

STEP 2: Set three mini-goals to achieve that larger goal.

Make sure the mini-goals are positive — things you will do, not things you won't do.

Example: I will bring my lunch to work every day. (Not, "I won't eat out at lunch.")

Go big if you can but make sure the goals are very specific here.
Example: I will reduce my childcare costs by fifty percent.

1.

2.

3.

STEP 3: Choose one mini-goal to focus on first.

Write out all the factors you'll need to consider to make that goal happen. This is where you'll want to dig deep on potential pitfalls that could trip you up or think outside the box about how you might make it happen. Once you've worked out the details to get to that goal and have started to make a change, move on to the next goal, still within that dream.

What are potential barriers that will get in your way?

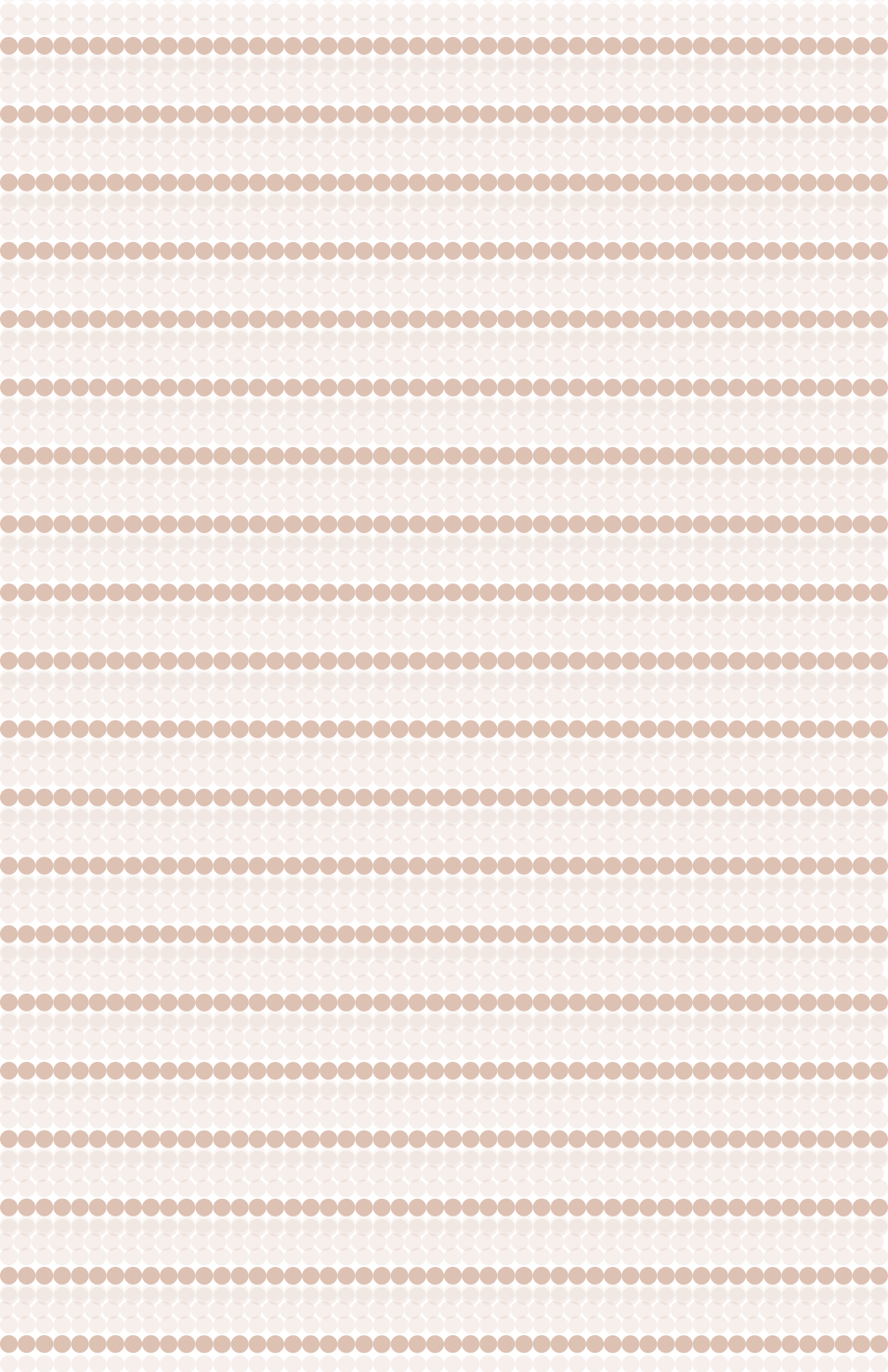
How will you deal with those barriers?

STEP 4: Once you’ve achieved that mini-goal, move forward to the next mini-goal within that larger goal.

My next goal:

As you continue to work on each center point, and to make space for and become better attuned to your own feelings and needs, you’ll be able to decide where to focus your attention next.

My next center point to address is:





Doctor's Note

Living a centered life is possible with a healthy mindset, a commitment to self-attunement, a dedication to prioritizing what matters most to you, and the support you need to develop consistency.

You can have a life that's centered, not conflicted — a motherhood experience that's aligned, strong, and steady. We're here to guide you toward a more grounded, vibrant existence. Explore www.modernmommydoc.com for more ways to bring your best life into focus.

We're in your corner, Mama!



Dr. Whitney

WHITNEY CASARES

M.D., M.P.H., F.A.A.P.

**Author, *The New Baby Blueprint: Caring for You and Your Little One* and
*The Working Mom Blueprint: Winning at Parenting Without Losing Yourself***

Host, The Modern Mommy Doc Podcast

Founder, Modern Mommy Doc



www.modernmommydoc.com



[@modernmommydoc](https://www.instagram.com/modernmommydoc)



[pinterest.com/modernmommydoc](https://www.pinterest.com/modernmommydoc)



[facebook.com/modernmommydoc](https://www.facebook.com/modernmommydoc)



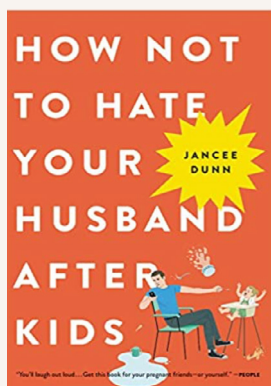
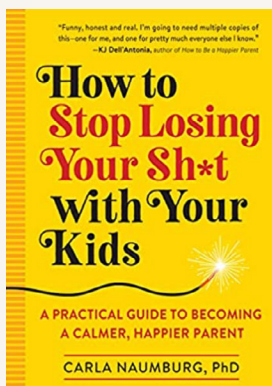
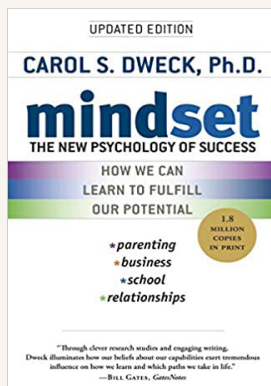
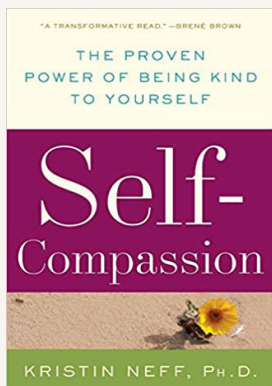
info@modernmommydoc.com

emmm[®]
MODERN MOMMY
DOC

This list of books and websites is interactive! Click on the titles to view.

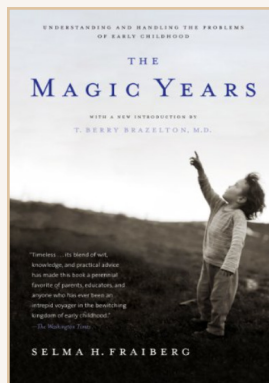
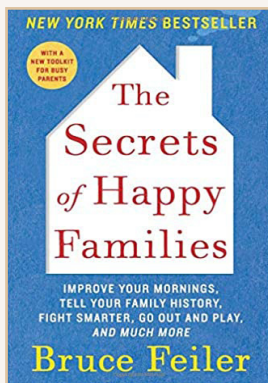
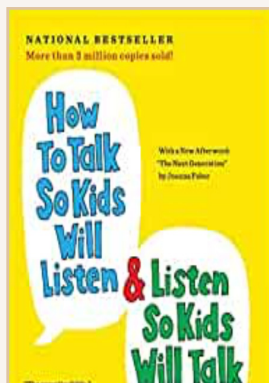
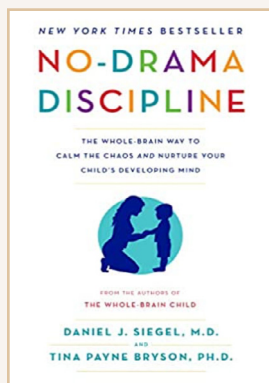
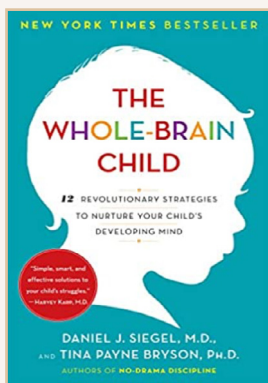
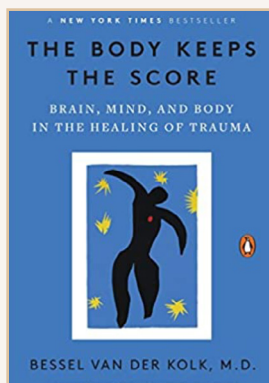
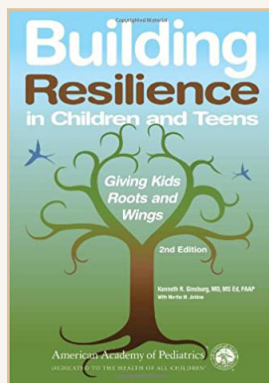
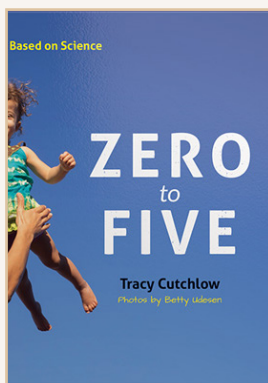
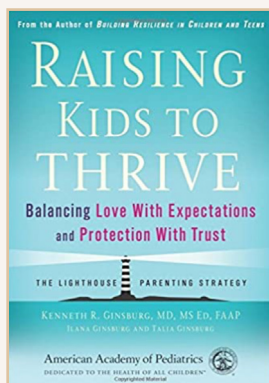
Taking Care of Mamas

BOOKS:

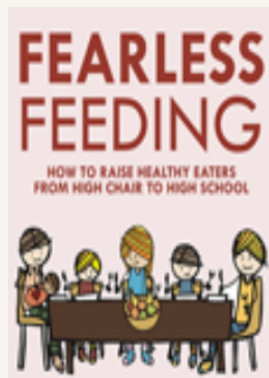
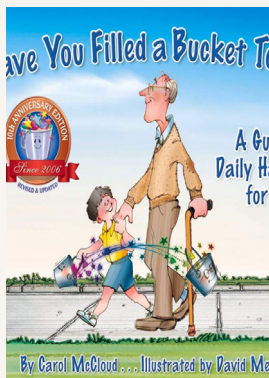
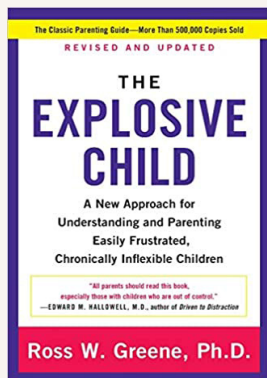


Taking Care of Kids

BOOKS:



RESOURCES



ONLINE:

[Barre3](#)

[The Gottman Institute](#)

[Think Kids](#)

[Doctor Amy LLC](#)

[Common Sense Media](#)

[Fostering Resilience](#)

[Modern Mommy Doc](#)

[The Center for Sex and Couple's Therapy](#)

[YoYoYogi Online](#)

[The Mom Project](#)

[Mindful Mamas Club](#)

[Alavita Nutrition](#)

[The Balanced Life Online Pilates](#)

[The Practical Sort](#)

[Entropy Organized](#)

[The Center for Mindful Self-Compassion](#)

[Kristen Genzano Therapy](#)

This 2-week pass provides free, unlimited access to 100+ offerings on YoYoYogi's online platform: YoYo on the Go!! Enjoy full-length yoga classes, fitness classes, and stretch outs as well as guided meditations at home, on the road, or wherever you may be!

PROGRAM REFERENCE

1. Kristen Neff, Ph.D., and Christopher Germer, Ph.D., *The Mindful Self-Compassion* Workbook, pg 10-11.