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WORKBOOK

By Bethany Webster



A LETTER FROM BETHANY

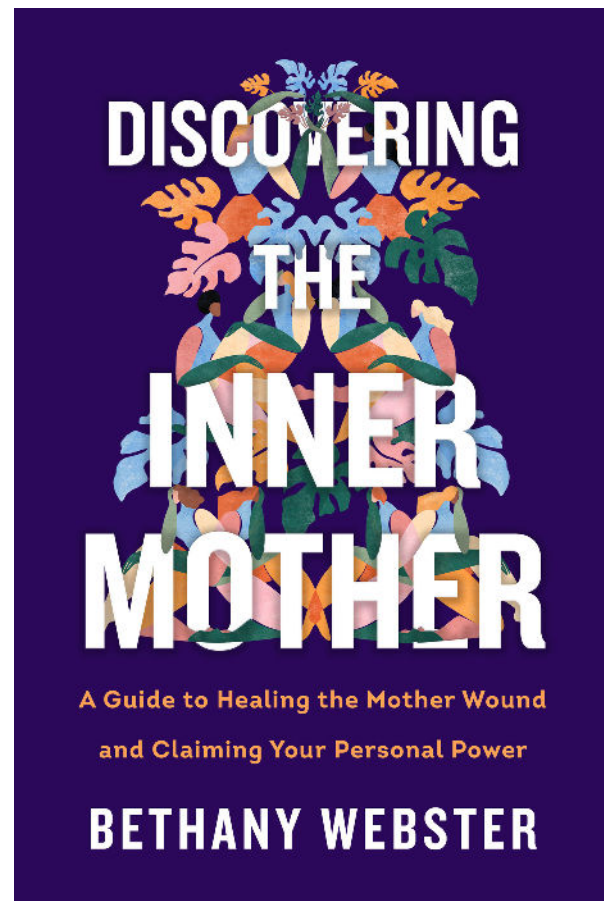
Thank you for pre-ordering my book “Discovering the Inner Mother: A Guide to Healing the Mother Wound and Claiming your Personal Power.”

I’m so thrilled to offer you this special pre-order bonus, my private masterclass, where you can learn more about my work, the concepts you’ll experience in the book, and some exercises in this workbook, to help you apply them to your own life. My hope is that you will begin to discover and develop your own Inner Mother, allowing you to cultivate the inner safety necessary to become the unstoppable woman you’re meant to be. Let’s begin!

Be fierce,



WRITER, TRANSFORMATIONAL COACH,
INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER



THE "TWO WINGS" OF INNER MOTHERING: TENDERNESS & FIERCENESS

To begin your journey I'd like to introduce you to what I call the "two wings" of Inner Mothering. They are Tenderness & Fierceness.

TENDERNESS:

WE ALWAYS want to begin ALL interactions with our inner child with lots of tenderness, empathy and compassion.

Being tender includes taking exquisite care of ourselves, comforting, soothing, affirming, being patient, embracing messy feelings, being lovingly curious and attentive to the inner child, being a safe place for her to rest, be seen, celebrated, honored, uplifted, safe, etc.

To be tender also encompasses allowing ourselves to be imperfect, to take our time, to follow our own pace, to be our unique selves, making space for joy and play, and allowing ourselves to be creative!

Here are some tender affirmations you can say to your inner little girl:

- I love you exactly as you are.
- All your feelings are OK with me.
- You are good, lovable and whole.
- You never did anything wrong.
- Your suffering is not your fault.
- You are worthy because you exist.
- You are a miracle!
- I love taking care of you!

- Your needs are OK with me.
- I don't need anything from you.
- You can rely on me and receive.
- I'm here for you always.
- There's nothing you could do to make me not love you.

FIERCENESS:

This one can be really challenging for those of us who had to survive through being a “good girl,” but embracing fierceness is imperative to become a confident and free woman.

Fierceness may look like: Being truthful with ourselves even when it's uncomfortable, for example, reminding ourselves that our mother will not change even though we may still long for that.

Fierceness is also staying present with our feelings instead of numbing out, avoiding or disassociating. Doing things like making sure we go to doctor's appointments, eat healthy food, setting firm boundaries, speaking our truth to friends and family, following through on our commitments to ourselves, clear communication, noticing when we're blending with the inner child and differentiating as much as possible.

Lovingly fierce things to say that help the inner child:

- Even though this feels similar to the past, you are no longer stuck, trapped anymore. I am here as your Adult Self to keep you safe.
- The way Mom treated you was because of her OWN wounds and issues, they were not a reflection of your worth.
- No one can ever harm you that way again. Now you have me as your Adult Self, your Inner Mother, to protect you, keep you safe and honor you.
- Unlike what we were taught by Mom, it is safe to say No, to set boundaries and speak your truth.

The Inner Mother is both tender AND fierce!

Both of these qualities keep us in balance and in our power as sovereign beings who are owning our worth. Inner mothering is a practice to make sure we get a good dose of both of these expressions of love. As we do, we go from being subservient to sovereign, more capable of owning our power and feeling the freedom and joy that comes from growing inner safety.

Back to you: Which of these is your inner child needing most today?

INNER MOTHERING TO MANAGE YOUR TRIGGERS

The process of healing the mother wound, getting to the root of our triggers and liberating ourselves from childhood pain is a process that is long, messy, unglamorous and multi-layered. For those of us with trauma and abuse in our history, professional support is key; working long-term with a skilled psychotherapist well-experienced in attachment wounds is crucial to lasting healing and transformation.

A process to support you in triggered moments...

Here's a process that you can use to practice on your own to increasingly become more aware of the deeper emotions that triggers may be bringing up for you and how to work with them. (I use myself and my inner child as an example for illustration.) This process may feel awkward in the beginning but gets easier over time with consistent practice.

1. Acknowledge the feelings that are coming up for your inner child.

When feeling an overwhelming emotion, pause, take a breath, name the feeling, and connect with your inner child.

Example: "Little Bethany, I see you're feeling really sad right now. You're not alone. I'm here with you in this sadness. It's OK to feel what you're feeling. I've got you."

2. Identify the Original Situation of the past.

Reflect and inquire into what past painful situation the feeling is arising from. A question to ask yourself is: What situation from the past does this emotion remind me of? When did I feel this way as a child.

Example: “I realize that this sadness reminds me of the despair I felt when I was stuck in my childhood home and my parents were constantly fighting. I felt really unsafe, but there was no safe adult to run to. I was really anxious and afraid.”

3. Empathize with the feelings of the past that are coming up for the Inner Child.

Once you have some sense of the situation of the past from which the feelings are arising, validate the legitimacy of these feelings in that context of the past. Empathize with the inner child, mirroring back the feelings and where they come from. Let the feelings flow.

Example: “Ah, I see how this sadness you’re feeling about being stuck at home due to the pandemic is bringing up deeper sadness about how you were stuck at home as a kid. That makes total sense to me. I can see how the mandate to self-quarantine would remind you of constantly being sent to your room when Mom and Dad would fight for hours and you would feel really afraid. No one came to comfort you. No one came to reassure you. Of course, you would feel sad. Your feelings are totally normal and natural in this situation, given your childhood history.”

You can also say things like:

- I’m so sorry you went through that. It wasn’t your fault.
- You didn’t do anything wrong. You were an innocent child.

- Mom and Dad had their own wounds and challenges and could not give you what you needed. Even so, you have always been good, lovable, whole exactly as you are.
- Your emotional needs are healthy, normal, and were totally appropriate in that situation.

4. Differentiate the Present from the Past.

Reassure the inner child that while this current situation FEELS very similar to the old situation, it's actually very different. Provide evidence of how he/she is SAFE NOW.

“Little Bethany, while this situation of self-quarantine understandably feels very similar to the past when we had to endure traumatic loneliness as a kid, stuck in our room, the truth is that now is very different from back then. You are no longer trapped. We have freedom and many choices even while at home. No one can overpower or abandon you anymore. I'm here as your adult self, Big Bethany, to keep you safe, reassure you, protect you, and remind you that those days of despair and powerlessness are over because you survived childhood. All your feelings are welcome now. I'm here for you and I love you no matter what.”

Other things you can also say:

- Your feelings are all OK with me.
- I love supporting your freedom and individuality.
- I have plenty of support in my own life. I'm here for you.
- You don't have to support me. I'm the adult and you are the child. You get to receive.
- You get to be a child now, and focus on growing, learning and exploring. You can rest in me.

5. Provide a Positive Vision.

The Inner child needs to have a positive, nurturing vision of the present and future to trust that life is safe, despite past experiences. Explain in simple language that the pain of the past is over and the future will continue to get better and better. No matter what happens in the outer world, she will always be safe within you.

Example: “Little Bethany, life will continue to get better and better as we heal from the past and allow all our emotions to be felt. Those emotions are showing us what happened in the past. We no longer need to fear them in the future. They already happened. And so it’s safe now for us to step into the future expecting good things and healthy connections. I’m always here with you to keep you safe and support your freedom. All is well.”

6. Take an Empowered Action that anchors the positive Vision.

The last step is to take some concrete action that is affirming and demonstrates the truth of the positive vision. It could be as simple as doing something that was not possible to do as a child, perhaps setting a boundary, saying what you really want, or even walking out the door to show that you are free to make your own choices.

Example in the context of feeling trapped: “Little Bethany, we’re not trapped anymore. Look, we can choose to go outside right now, take a walk and feel the sun on our skin.” Another example of an action could be confirming with the person I share a home with, my partner, that she does not expect me to endure her emotional distress for her, that she understands that she is responsible for her own feelings. Having her lovingly confirm this helps Little Bethany feel, in a visceral way, that the present is very different from the past when she had to endure the weight of her parents’ constant distress. She increasingly internalizes the truth that now she is loved and free.

WE HAVE TO LEARN TO MOTHER OURSELVES TO BIRTH A NEW WORLD

We have to learn to mother ourselves to birth a new world. The practice of inner mothering helps us to transform our childhood algorithm for inner safety, changing our primary reference point from external to internal, liberating us to show up as our most sovereign, empowered selves.

Growing up, I learned that being a “good person” meant always saying yes to helping people with their problems. I had learned that a noble person puts others first and works very hard. I had no model for boundaries or how to say a healthy No. My parents were so overwhelmed and absorbed in their own problems that there wasn’t much soothing, presence, or emotional reassurance. I felt like a small adult; it wasn’t until decades later that I realized I had never actually identified as a child. I was rewarded for over-achieving, being very mature for my age, handling adult problems, and discussing adult issues. Merging with what my parents expected of me was equivalent to survival. Having limits, needs, or being confused or upset were cause for withdrawal or humiliation. To survive, it’s as though I turned off that internal signal for when I was reaching a limit or boundary.

As a young woman, the only time I really allowed myself to rest was when I would have no choice but to collapse in exhaustion. I was so high-functioning that I did not see myself as a trauma survivor. I was praised for my achievements and helpful personality. I was so out of touch with where my limits were and conditioned to ignore them for love and approval. My normal mode was pushing, striving, and struggling for the next thing. Parentification had warped my expectations for myself; they were way out of proportion to what I could comfortably attain and when I couldn’t meet them, I felt shame.

As an adult, it's been enormously empowering to listen to my exhaustion, to learn to hear those signals that a limit is approaching and act accordingly, slowing down, stopping, or saying no on a regular basis. It's taken a long time to see my limits NOT as a personal shortcoming, but as a neutral fact of being human.

So, what is your "Window of Tolerance?"

This phrase was coined by author and psychiatrist Daniel J. Siegel, M.D. to describe that sweet spot in which we are not overwhelmed (hyper-aroused) and not spacing out (hypo-aroused) to cope, but generally feeling calm, comfortable, and connected. We feel in control, safe, grounded, emotionally regulated, and able to easily soothe ourselves.

A fact of being human is that all of us have a limit in which we go outside our window of tolerance and for trauma survivors, it can be smaller than average.

Historically, women have long suffered from—and yet have been expected to collectively pick up the slack—for dysfunctional institutions that are not set up to honor us.

Whether the institutions be marriage, healthcare, education, religion, or governments, they depend on the females' willingness to do what must be done, to please and provide for our families, to somehow fill the gap against incredible odds. One could say the world rests on the backs of tired women, especially tired, poor women of color. On a more macro level, in America, it seems that all that "caring professions," such as childcare, teaching, nursing, and housekeeping are "feminized," meaning populated mainly with under-paid women dealing with substandard conditions.

What would happen if millions of women started to honor their window of tolerance?

Here's some mantras you can state to your Adult Self to begin owning your window of tolerance:

- I accept my limits and honor them. I get to say no without guilt.
- Honoring my limits is a form of self-love.
- Honoring my limits is my responsibility and I'm always at choice.
- My worth is not tied to people liking me or how much I do for them.
- It's OK if my limits don't match up with others. I honor my own separate experience.
- I refuse to push or force myself to do things that feel outside my Window of Tolerance.
- Only I can know what my limits are, no one else can decide that for me.

Things you can say to your inner child:

- "Your feelings make total sense to me. Of course, you would feel this way given what you've been through."
- "You're not powerless or trapped anymore, even though it may feel like it in moments. We always have choices now."
- "I'm with you now as your Inner Mother to help you, to speak out for you and protect you."
- "You're not alone anymore. You don't have to handle things on your own. I'm here to help and support you every day."
- "You can rest in me. I'm your Adult Self and I'm here to do the adult stuff. You can be a child now."
- "I'm always with you. You'll never be abandoned again."
- "There's more than enough care and reassurance for you now."
- "I love taking care of you. Your needs and feelings matter to me."

INNER MOTHERING AS THE WAY TO UNDO PATRIARCHY'S INFLUENCE ON YOUR LIFE

We all grew up in an atmosphere in our homes which reflected, to some degree, the wider patriarchal views of the culture. How did these show up in your family?

- Prioritizing men over women
- Domination, power-over
- Suppression of feelings is normalized
- Expression of feelings is seen as inherently weak or bad
- Feeling shame for having needs
- Feeling shame for resting or slowing down
- Need to produce to feel valued
- Violation of boundaries
- Sense of scarcity of money, time, love, energy
- Feelings of isolation and disconnection
- Objectification, not seeing people as people
- Obedience and compliance are demanded
- Violence is seen as powerful
- Lack of empathy is admired
- The dynamics of domination and submission are romanticized/ eroticized
- Whatever is perceived as feminine is looked down upon
- Male is considered the default human being
- Racist beliefs that “White is right”
- Heterosexuality is the norm and ideal
- Sickness or disability is seen as personal failing

13 ELEMENTS OF SOVEREIGNTY

1. Self-definition: You are your ultimate authority of truth and what's right for you.
2. Boundaries: Nurturing the self is priority.
3. Skilled at enduring the discomfort that comes with growth.
4. Knowing that you are sacred, life is sacred, your body and nature is sacred.
5. Practicing Inner Mothering: An indestructible "Bubble of Belonging" to oneself.
6. Honoring your body and its limited window of tolerance.
7. Owning your right to remain centered in your own being, no matter what's happening.
8. Resilient in the face of change: Inner safety allows you to allow chips fall where they may.
9. Knowing your worth cannot be earned. It is inherent, established, not up for debate.
10. Your pain is entrusted to you to help you grow and evolve; not sources of shame. Feeling the dignity and rejoicing in the wisdom that comes with healing traumatic wounds.
11. Recognizing patriarchal behaviors in yourself and pivoting away from them. Refusing to self-fragment and self-abandon. Each situation is an opportunity to shed oppressive patterns.
12. Discernment: Taking your time to reflect, having healthy skepticism and a critical lens backed by self-worth. Not easily seduced by illusions of fantasy, rescue, perfection or of "us versus them."
13. Nourishment in Community: Finding and nurturing mutual support with other women on the path of embodying their sovereignty.

BONUS:

Questions for moms to reflect on to honor themselves AND clear the way for their daughters

Many women who are mothers often ask me how they can prevent breaking the cycle of passing along the mother wound to their own children. I always respond by saying that the most important thing you can do for your own children is to commit to healing the Mother Wound and discover your own inner mother. Through the practice of inner mothering, your inner child begins to feel more seen, nurtured and safe which allows you to gradually show up more empathic and emotionally present for your own children. It's a win-win! Below are some questions for reflections for moms who are doing the brave necessary work of healing themselves and clearing the way for future generations.

- What did I need from my own mother that I did not get? In what ways may I be unconsciously projecting these needs onto my daughter or other people?
- Am I getting the mothering and nurturing I need in my daily life? If not, how can I get those needs met? (friends, experiences, tools, professional support)
- Am I neglecting my daughter's emotional needs? Do her emotional needs make me uncomfortable? If so, which ones? What do they bring up for me
- Am I asking my daughter to mother me in any way? If so, what are some ways I can get the support I need so that I don't put this burden on my daughter?
- Do I feel any rage or resentment about being a mom? If so, what are some safe and healthy ways I can process and work through that?

- Do I feel at all jealous or threatened by my daughter? If so, why? How does this manifest in my daily interactions with my daughter? How can I find a safe, healthy way to process that?
- What limitations did I have to accept about myself as a young girl my daughter's age? How did that impact my life? How can I support my daughter in not accepting those same limitations.
- How can I demonstrate to my daughter that I value myself?
- What comes up for me when I reflect on my daughter having more opportunities than I did?
- In what ways might I be passing along that belief in limitations? How might I turn that around?

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