



Daily Steps Towards Confidence After Trauma

A Gentle Guide for Women Ready to Thrive Again

By

Ruth Salmon

Helping women rebuild lives and thrive after rape

Healing after trauma isn't about big leaps or pretending you're fine. It's about small, kind steps that quietly remind your body and mind: you are safe now, you are strong, and you deserve a life that feels good again.

I've expanded the ideas I share on social media into this free guide so that you have some practical methods to help. Use one section at a time, at your own gentle pace. Take what you need and leave the rest.

Do re-read the information at different moments of angst as you'll likely find different tools will speak to you at different times of need.

Monday - A Gentle Start to the Week

Mondays can still arrive with a heavy weight of dread and exhaustion. For me, one small shift made a real difference: beginning the day with one quiet kind act toward myself, such as sitting with a cup of tea, no rushing, no phone, just a few peaceful minutes.

- Choose one gentle boundary today. It might be saying no to a draining conversation, limiting doom scrolling by just ten minutes, protecting your morning quiet time, or stepping away from noise that feels too much. Boundaries aren't selfish — they create the safe, calm space your nervous system has been craving.

Over time, these small protections help you feel steadier and more in control of your own day. Start with something tiny; even the smallest boundary is a powerful act of self-respect.

Tuesday – Building Inner Strength

In the early days after the trauma I often felt that I was on my knees, mentally. What helped me most was gently reminding myself: I have survived, I am here, and if I train my mind and heart I can learn to feel safe again, one breath at a time.

- When anxiety or overwhelm rises, try this simple private practice: gently tap two fingers on your chest (over your heart) and mentally or softly say “I am here.” It only takes a few seconds. This action brings you back into the present moment and sends a quiet message of safety to your body. Practise it a few times throughout the day until it becomes the first tool you remember to use when you feel yourself become anxious.

I always visualise a river with stepping stones, each time I say “I am here” it is one step across the river to reach the grassy beautiful bank on the other side. If your mind wanders off into bad or fearful memories or thoughts don't worry, just come back to saying “I am here” and carry on with the journey across the river, taking one breath and one stepping stone at a time and notice how the anxiety has disappeared.

Wednesday – Midweek Motivation

I once believed I would never laugh freely or be confident ever again. I taught myself to be grateful for good things that I did or good things that happened in my daily life, even small things like making breakfast or taking a short walk. Those little moments slowly added up and helped rebuild my sense of confidence.

Try these three gentle practices this week:

- 1. Move your body; stretching, walking, or dancing. helps release stored tension.
- 2. Speak to yourself with the same warmth and kindness you would offer a dear friend.
- 3. End the day by noting one thing you're proud of, no matter how small.

Tiny wins train your brain to notice progress instead of pain.

Thursday – Handling Triggers

Triggers can be everywhere and are great at hitting you just when you're starting to regain your confidence – a smell, a sound, a certain look or place could send my heart racing. Over time I learned triggers don't have to control the whole day.

- When a trigger arrives, pause and gently say (out loud or quietly) “In this moment I am safe.” Let those words reassure you. Visualise those stepping stones across the river and continue with the phrase, “In this moment I am safe” Cross the river on those stepping stones reciting “In this moment I am safe” By the time you reach the other side the anxiety will have calmed and you will feel safer.

Friday – Celebrating Small Progress

If you have put some of the above tips and methods into each day this week feel proud of yourself. It might feel uncomfortable, you may never have felt proud of yourself, or may never have had anyone tell you that they are proud of you, so be gentle with yourself.

- Think of all the things that you have done right this week, how many times you overcame any triggers and made yourself feel safe. Be proud of what you've achieved in a few days.
- Start each morning with a quick moment of gratitude. It doesn't need to be a big thing – simply “I'm grateful I made my bed this morning” or “I'm grateful for the warm water in my shower.” At the end of the day, write down three things you did well or are grateful for, however small. This builds real evidence that you are moving forward and helps quiet the inner critic. Continue this practice at the end of every day.

Saturday – Rest and Reflection

Weekends can feel tricky with more time alone in your thoughts. Remember: rest is not lazy. It is an essential, kind part of healing.

- Give yourself full permission to do less today. One nourishing activity is plenty – reading a book, taking a warm bath, listening to music, or simply sitting wrapped in a soft blanket with no expectations or to-do list. You have already come so far. Today, let yourself just be.

Sunday – Looking Forward

Plan for the week ahead to reduce any anxiety around upcoming events

- Take a few minutes to think about your plans for your week ahead. Are there any things that are causing you anxiety that you might not even have realised yet? Are you thinking of excuses as to why you can't go somewhere or meet someone? Look at all the tools you have learnt in these pages. Is there anything you can use to help yourself feel more confident? Progress isn't always loud or fast – it's often quiet and steady and about being prepared.

You are not alone on this path. These tips come from my own healing journey after overcoming rape and the many conversations I've had with other women on the same road.

Use what feels helpful and leave the rest. That has always been my philosophy — take the pieces that resonate with you right now and let the rest go. Healing is personal, and only you know what you need in each moment.

If you would like more structured support to go deeper and keep building the confidence that lasts, my online courses are here when you feel ready. They were created to walk alongside you with the tools that helped me start truly thriving again.

Visit www.healingwithphotography.com to explore the courses.

With warm wishes and belief in your healing journey,

Ruth Salmon– Coach helping women rebuild lives and thrive after rape

