

The Happy Feminist Challenge

WORKBOOK



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DAY 1: WHAT IS HAPPINESS?

Today we learned there are two kinds of happiness.

1. Happiness as a temporary emotion of joy, pleasure, and contentment that you feel in your body.
2. Happiness as a way of describing an evaluation of the overall levels of contentment, satisfaction, and fulfillment you are experiencing in your life.

Today your exercise is just to get more familiar with the two types of happiness as you do — or don't — experience them.

You have two assignments today, should you choose to accept them.

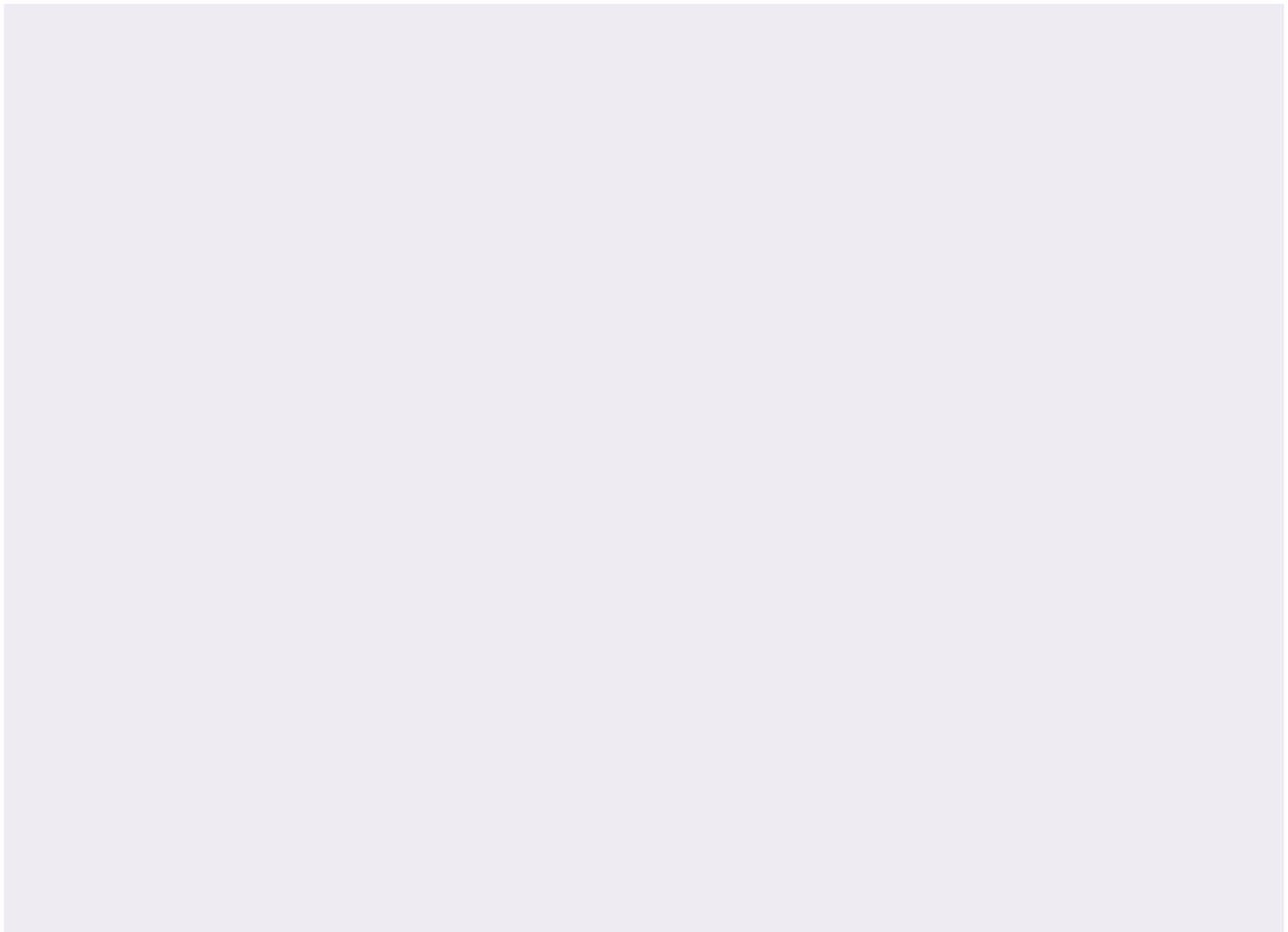


ASSIGNMENT 1:

First, notice any moments that you feel happiness in your body today. It may feel warm, expansive, light, or pleasurable.

Write down any such moments here. Include not only what you were doing, but what you were thinking at that moment.

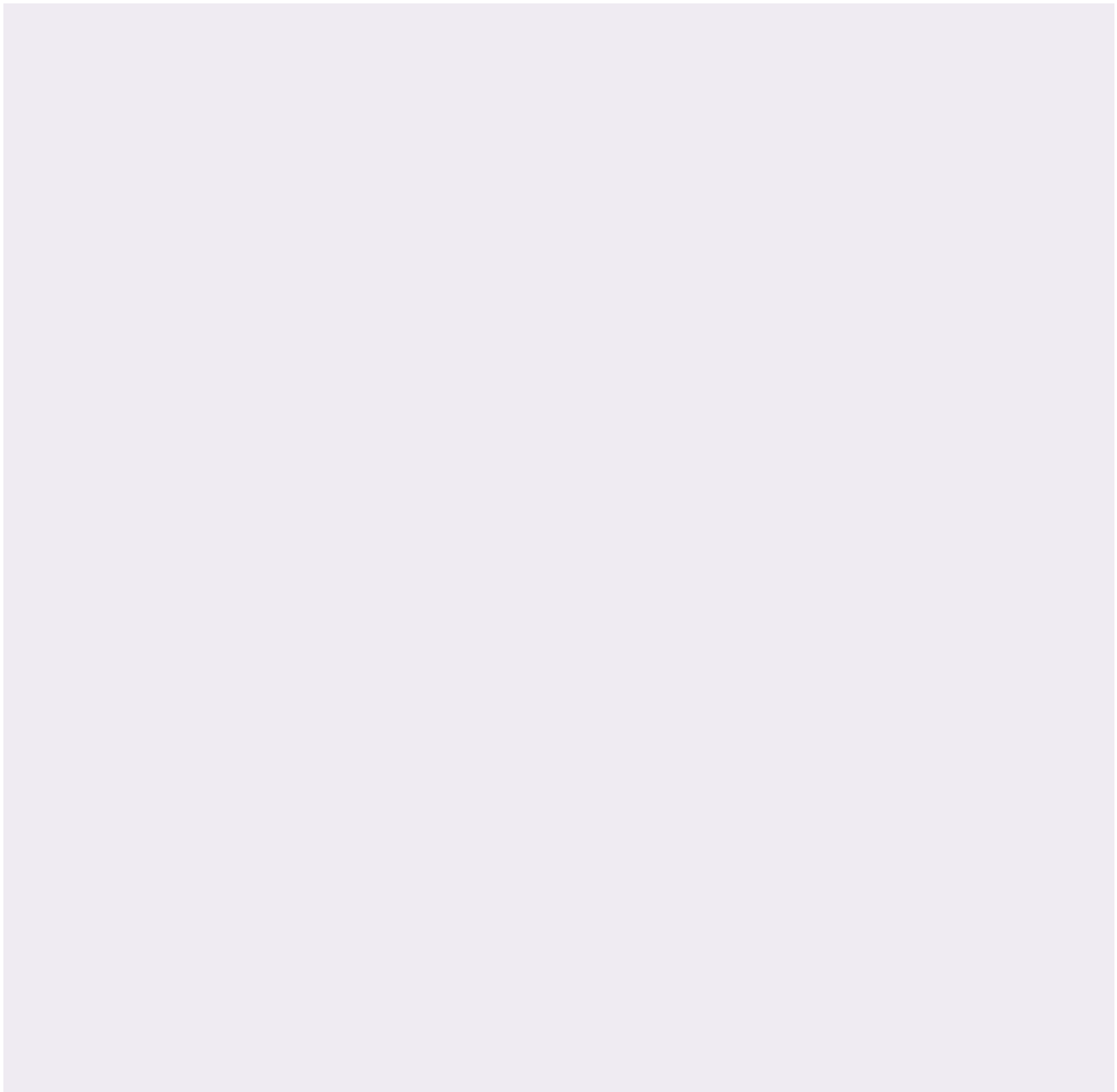
Example: *Snuggling with my kid watching a movie. I was thinking, "I just love this kiddo so much."*

A large, empty light purple rectangular box intended for the user to write down their moments of happiness.

ASSIGNMENT 2:

Spend a few minutes answering this question. Don't overthink, judge, or edit yourself — just write whatever comes to mind.

Am I happy in my life? Why or why not?



DAY 2: THE PRACTICE OF PLEASURE

Today we learned that pleasure is not a moral issue.

Pleasure is just an experience your mind and body are able to create. It's not good or bad, and it's not something you have to earn or deserve.

Women have a hard time allowing themselves to feel pleasure sometimes because, among other reasons, the entire edifice of Western Christian civilization is based on a story about how a woman's desire for pleasure ruined humanity for all time.

So today we are going to be practicing creating pleasure for ourselves, and allowing ourselves to enjoy it.

But we need to defuse at least the most intense of your brain's objections, or it won't be fun.



DAY 2: THE PRACTICE OF PLEASURE

So your assignment for today is simple — pick something pleasurable to enjoy, just because you enjoy it.

Examples might include: eating something delicious like the ripest peach or a chocolate truffle, taking a bath, reading a poem, sitting in the sun, having sex or giving yourself an orgasm, getting a massage, taking a walk without an errand attached, window-shopping, buying or picking flower for yourself ... anything that helps you connect to one or more of your senses and enjoy them.

The challenge is to try to be present and give yourself permission to experience the pleasure. If that is difficult for you, try some of the below cognitive hacks.

You can think or say a thought to yourself like:

"I have a permission to enjoy this," or
"It's safe to experience pleasure," or
"I'm allowed to feel good in my body," or
"You can enjoy pleasure and be a good person," or
"Pleasure is just a gift, it does not have to be earned or deserved."

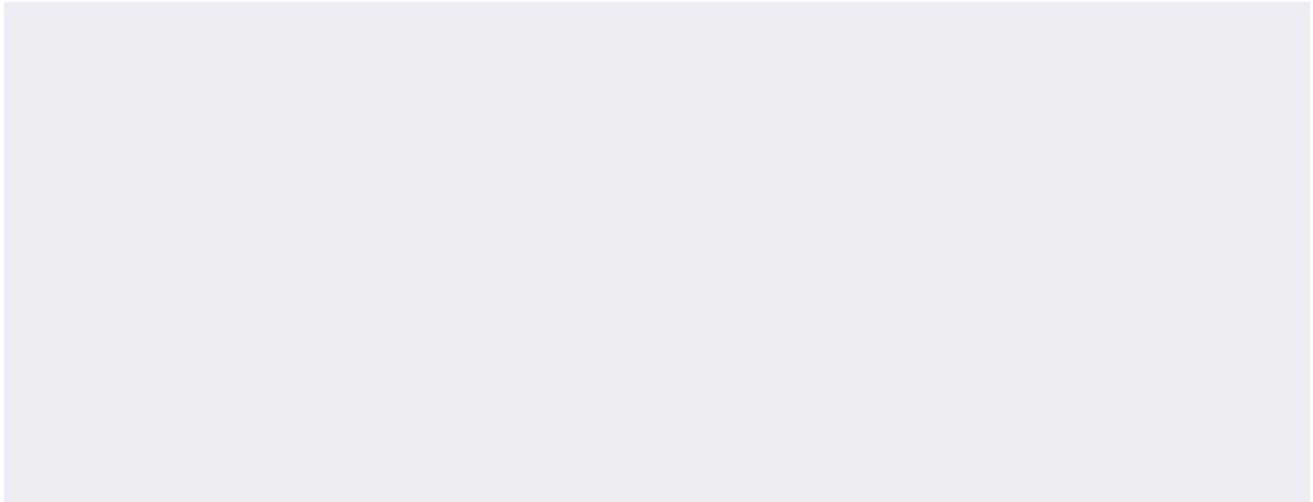


It can sometimes be helpful to imagine an animal or plant to give your brain a framework for what it might be like to feel pleasure without mental drama. Think of a cat stretching happily after a good nap, or a flower feeling the sun on its petals. These are just sensations that feel good to them (we think!) that they have not had to earn or deserve.

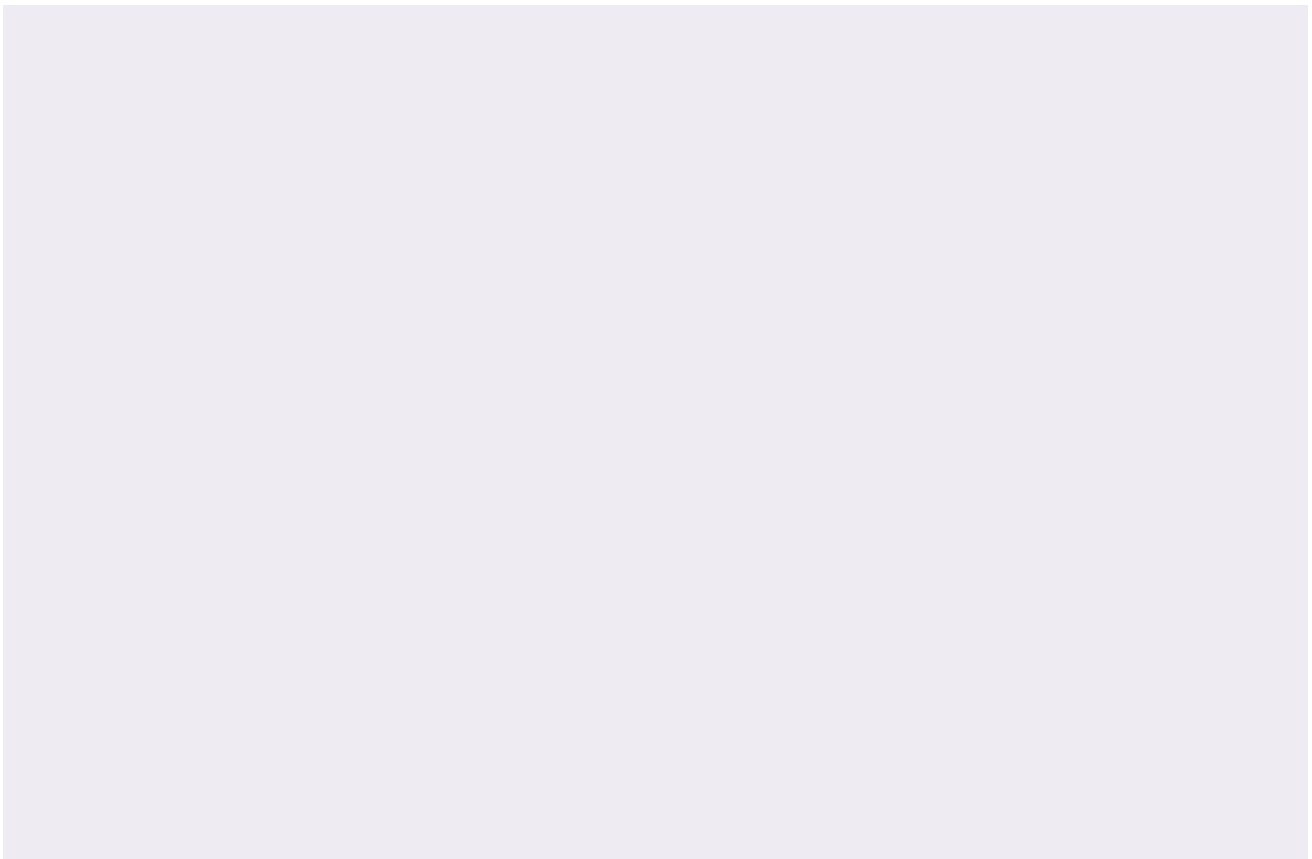
What is the pleasure activity you've chosen?

What thought are you going to practice?

What did it feel like in your body to focus on this pleasure? (Remember any feeling is ok! It could feel wonderful, or it could feel uncomfortable, or you might feel anxious — it's all just data for your growth!)



What thoughts did you notice come up?



DAY 3: REST

Today we learned that rest is not a moral issue. (Are you noticing a pattern?)

Rest is literally essential to your survival. It is a natural process during which your brain and body perform necessary cellular repairs, consolidate memory, and regulate your hormones.

But many women have a hard time resting because patriarchy has taught us that our value and worth come from serving everyone around us and capitalism has taught us that the most important thing in the world is to be productive.

Combine those two lessons, and it's no wonder women have a hard time resting.

Plus sometimes when you try to slow down, your brain just speeds up and it feels easier to distract yourself or go back to your task list rather than deal with your thoughts.

So today we are going to practice RESTING.

DAY 3: REST

This could look like actual sleep — taking a nap, or making sure you go to bed early even if there are dishes in the sink or more emails you could answer.

Or it might look like doing something you find restful instead of working or doing life tasks — like reading a book or magazine, chatting with a friend on the stoop, meditating (only if you actually enjoy this and it's not a "should" to you), or just lying on the couch staring at the ceiling for a while.

It could even be watching a tv show or movie, but this only counts if you're actually watching and engaged — scrolling your phone while you have tv playing in the background does not count. The point is to do something that allows your brain and body to slow down.

DAY 3: REST

If this is challenging for you, here are some thoughts you can practice:

"I have permission to rest," or

"It's safe to rest," or

"I can be a good person even if I rest," or

"Really productive people prioritize rest," or

"Rest is a biological necessity. It does not have to be earned or deserved."

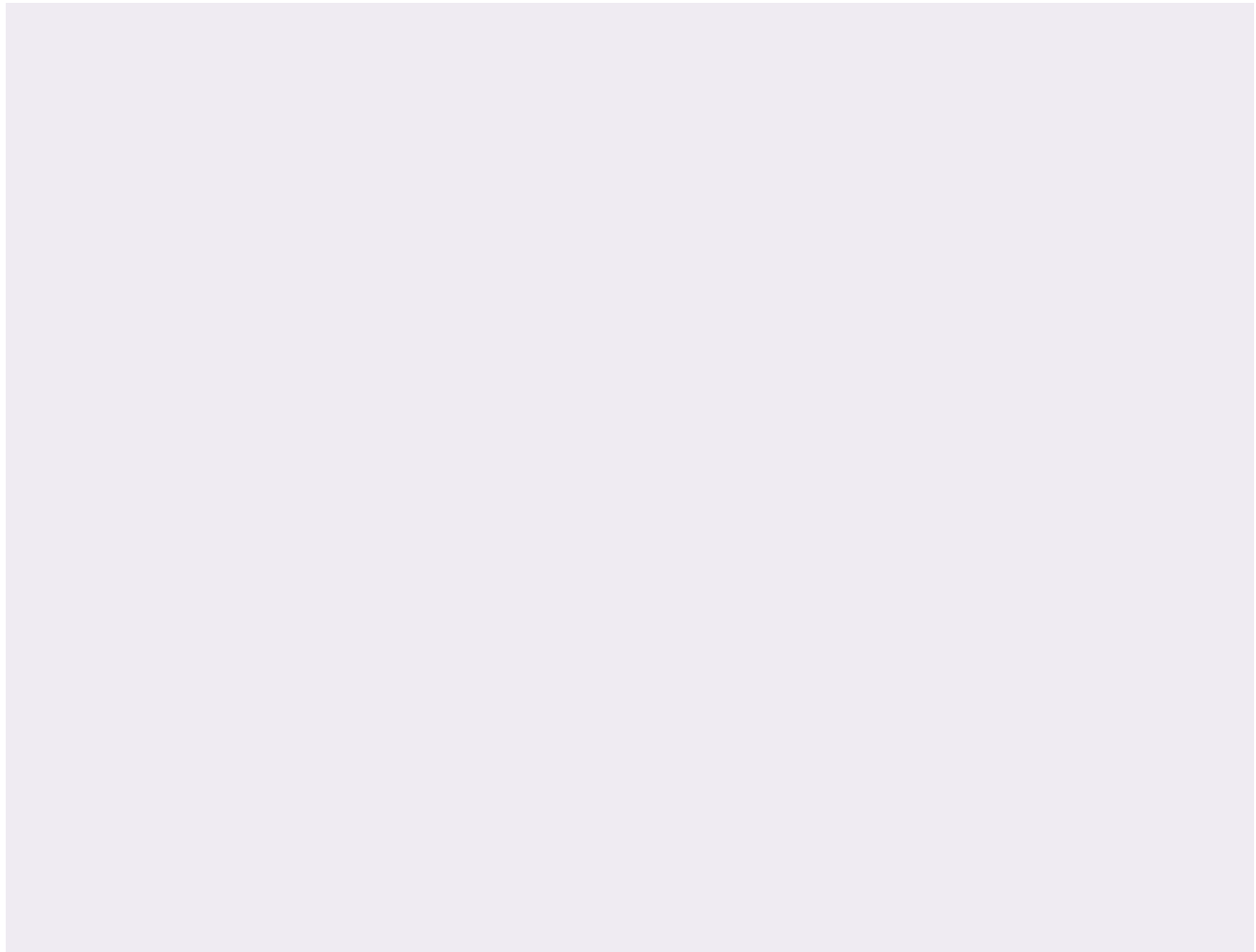
You can also go back to that technique of imagining an animal resting — when a cat or a dog takes a nap, they do it just because they are tired and it's the most natural thing in the world to rest. Underneath all that socialization, you are no different.



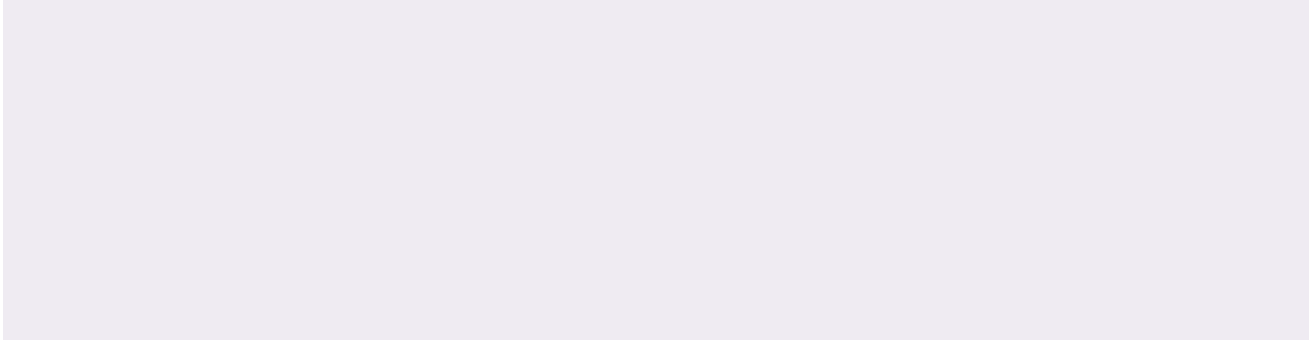
What is the restful activity you've chosen?



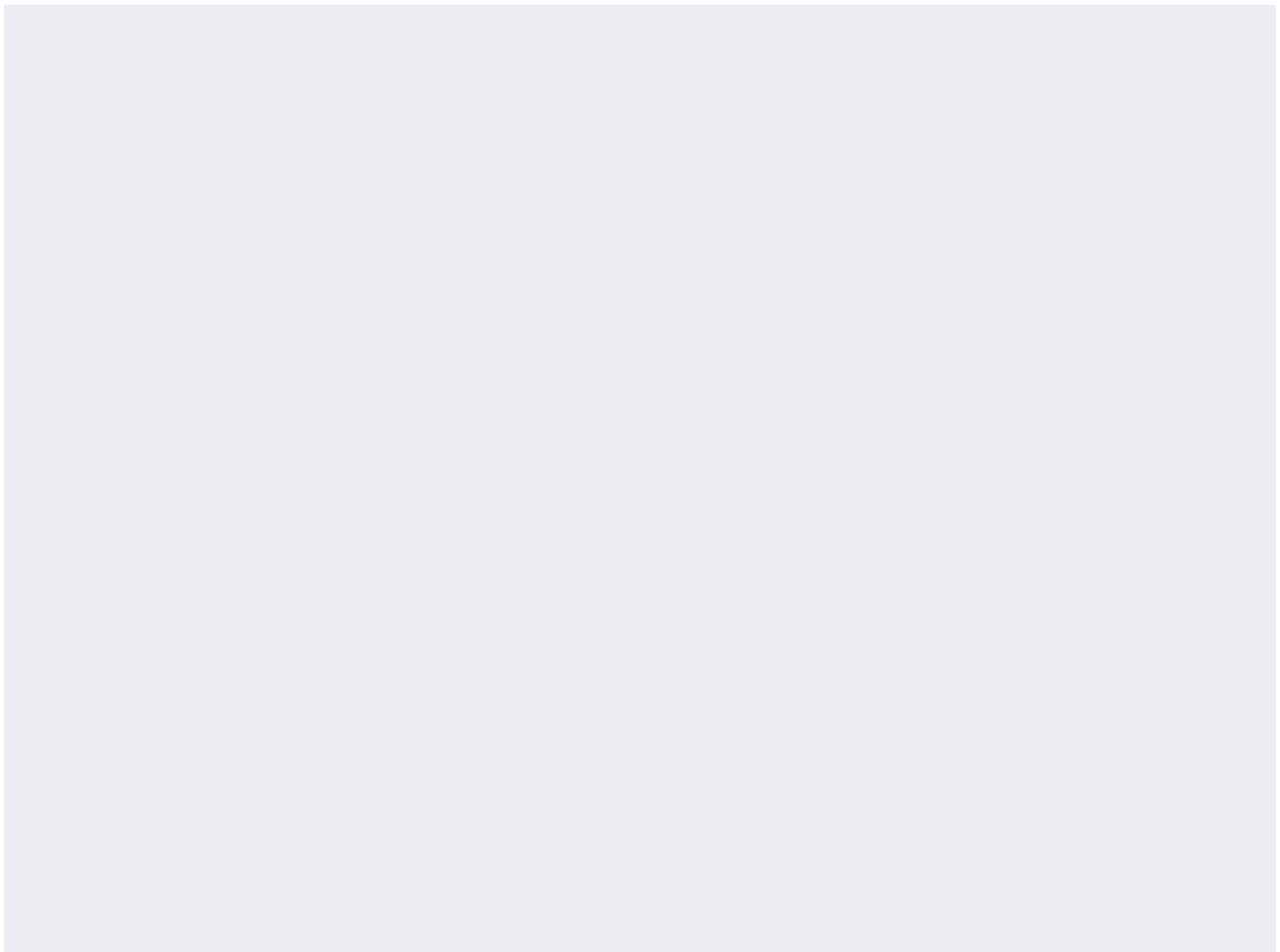
What thought are you going to practice?



What did it feel like in your body to rest? (Remember any feeling is ok! It could feel wonderful, or it could feel uncomfortable, or you might feel anxious — it's all just data for your growth!).



What thoughts did you notice come up?



DAY 4: CONFIDENCE

Today we learned that in order to create the big-picture happiness we want in our lives, we have to create more safety with ourselves.

In order to live a life you won't regret when you die, you have to be willing to do things differently, take risks, and go for what you want.

But it's hard to do that when you fear your own self-criticism and shame if you fail.

We think confidence is thinking we're amazing. But actually, it's just feeling safe with ourselves to try and fail.

We think we fear failure and rejection for their own sake.

But in fact, what we fear most is the mean thoughts we will have about ourselves. If we fail and our thought is, "I'm so proud of myself for trying," it feels a lot different than, "I'm such an idiot. I never should have thought I could do that."

So today you're going to practice creating confidence in a new way.

DAY 4: CONFIDENCE

Rather than try to think that you're amazing at something, you're going to practice thinking thoughts that create self-compassion and self-safety. And then see what happens to your confidence when you do.

Here are some examples of self-compassionate thoughts to try practicing today. That means literally saying them to yourself in your mind as much as you can today — or even out loud! You can also write them down 10 or 20 times to help your brain learn the idea, or set it to a little tune and sing it to yourself.

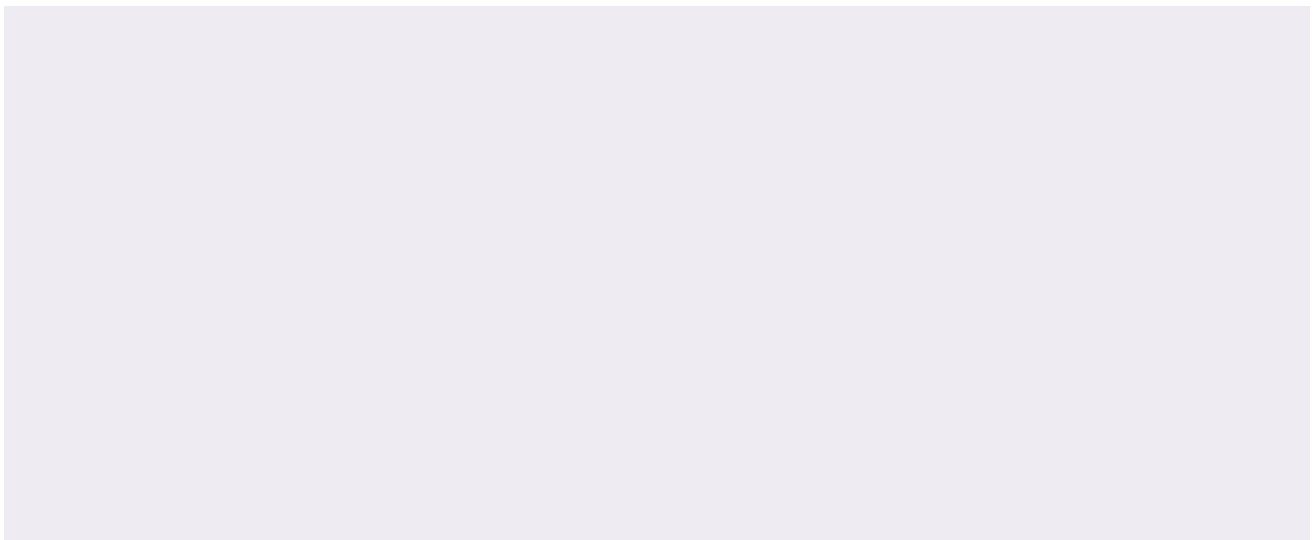
- *I am proud of myself for trying something even if I fail.*
- *I don't have to know something will work to be allowed to try it.*
- *It's more important to me to show up for myself than to succeed or get it right.*
- *I am a good person even if there are things about myself I struggle with.*
- *I can be a good _____ even if _____ (e.g., I can be a good mom even if I yell at my kids sometimes).*
- *I am a good person having a hard time.*
- *I am deserving of love even if _____ (anything about yourself you have self-critical thoughts about).*

DAY 4: CONFIDENCE

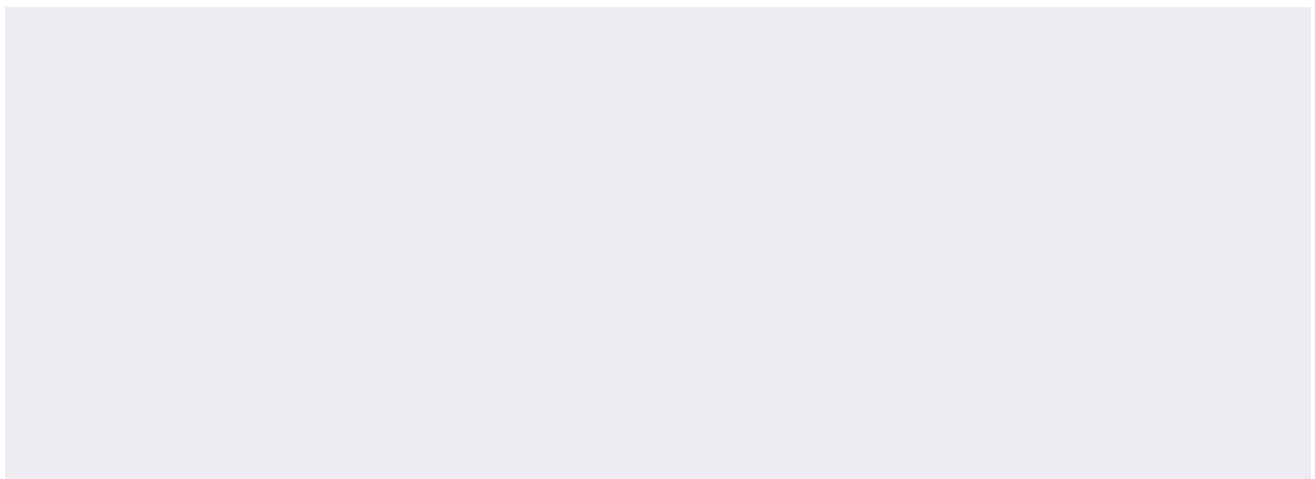
You can also create your own thought, as long as it's self-compassionate!

Come back and complete the following questions at the end of the day.

What thought did you choose?



How did your body feel when you practiced that thought?



What did you notice over the course of the day as you practiced?

A large, empty light purple rectangular box, intended for a user to write their response to the question above. It occupies the majority of the page area below the question.

DAY 5: RISK

Now that we've learned how to create a bit more self-compassion, it's time to actually take a risk.

Women are socialized to just wait for someone to reward us, to never do or ask for anything that might ever upset someone, and to prioritize not making waves above all.

But the life you want, the life you won't regret when you die, the good life well-lived, the big-picture happy life ... that life requires taking some chances.

Sometimes you have to make big moves out in the world — quit your job to start a business, trek the Andes, move across the globe.

Sometimes you just have to make big moves inside your own brain — break generational patterns you don't want to pass down, learn how to create confidence and happiness for yourself.

Either way, you have to be willing to try something new, and probably fail a lot at first.

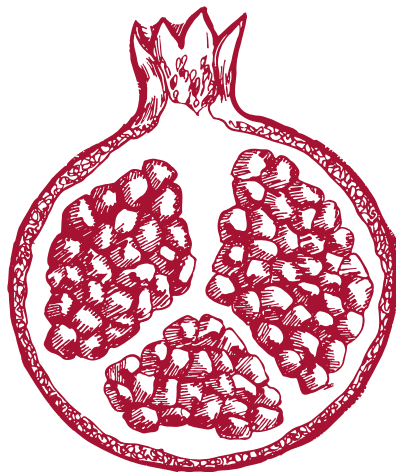
So today we're going to start small, and build on yesterday's lesson on self-compassion.

DAY 5: RISK

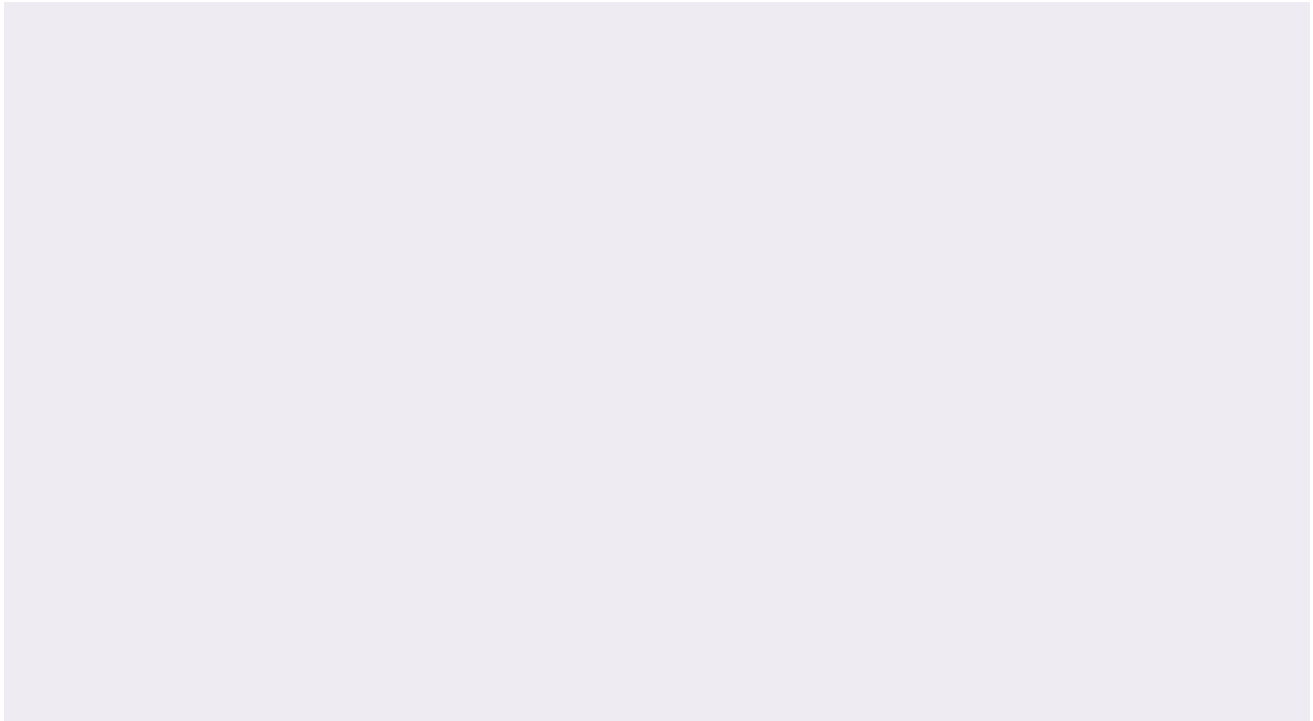
Your assignment is to ask for something — anything — that you're a little scared to ask for.

BUT, before you take any action, I want you to decide that you're proud of yourself for asking no matter what response you get. I want you to literally practice one or all of these thoughts (or come up with your own variation).

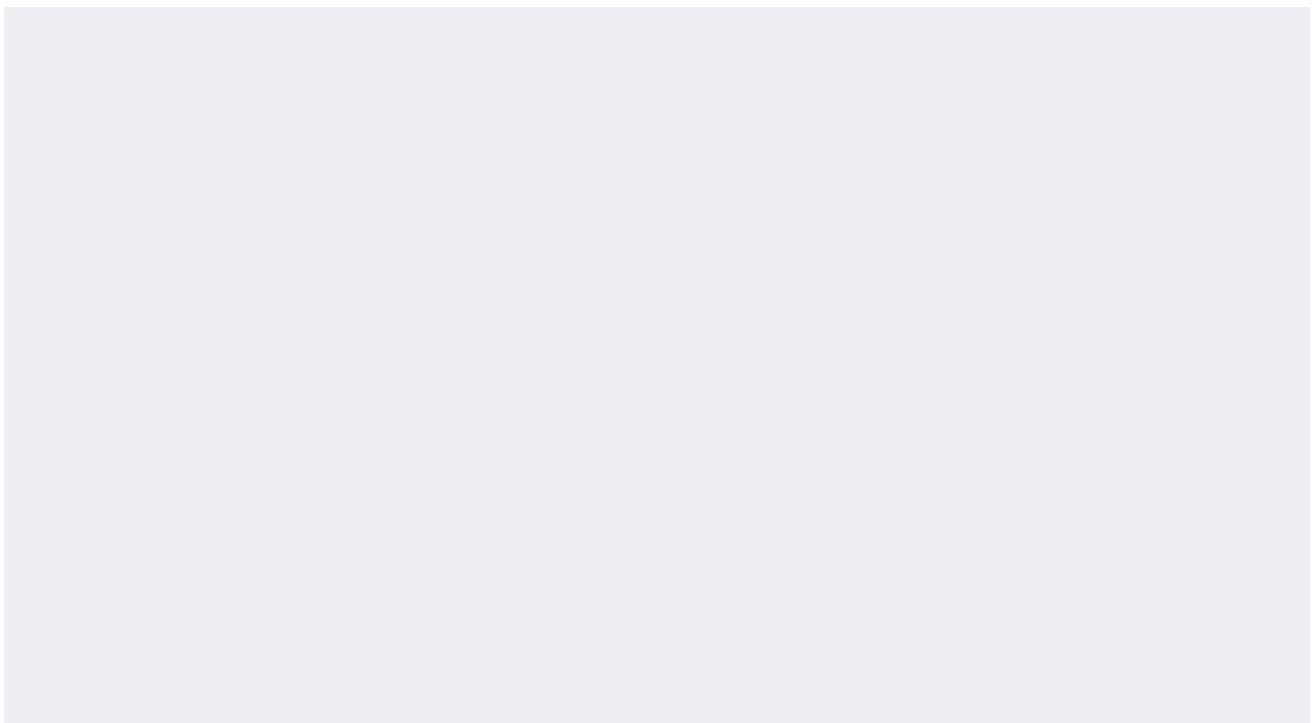
- *The goal of this ask is just to be brave.*
- *I'm proud of myself for asking no matter what the outcome.*
- *A yes or no are both a success, because the goal was to make the ask while being nice to myself.*



What are you going to ask for?

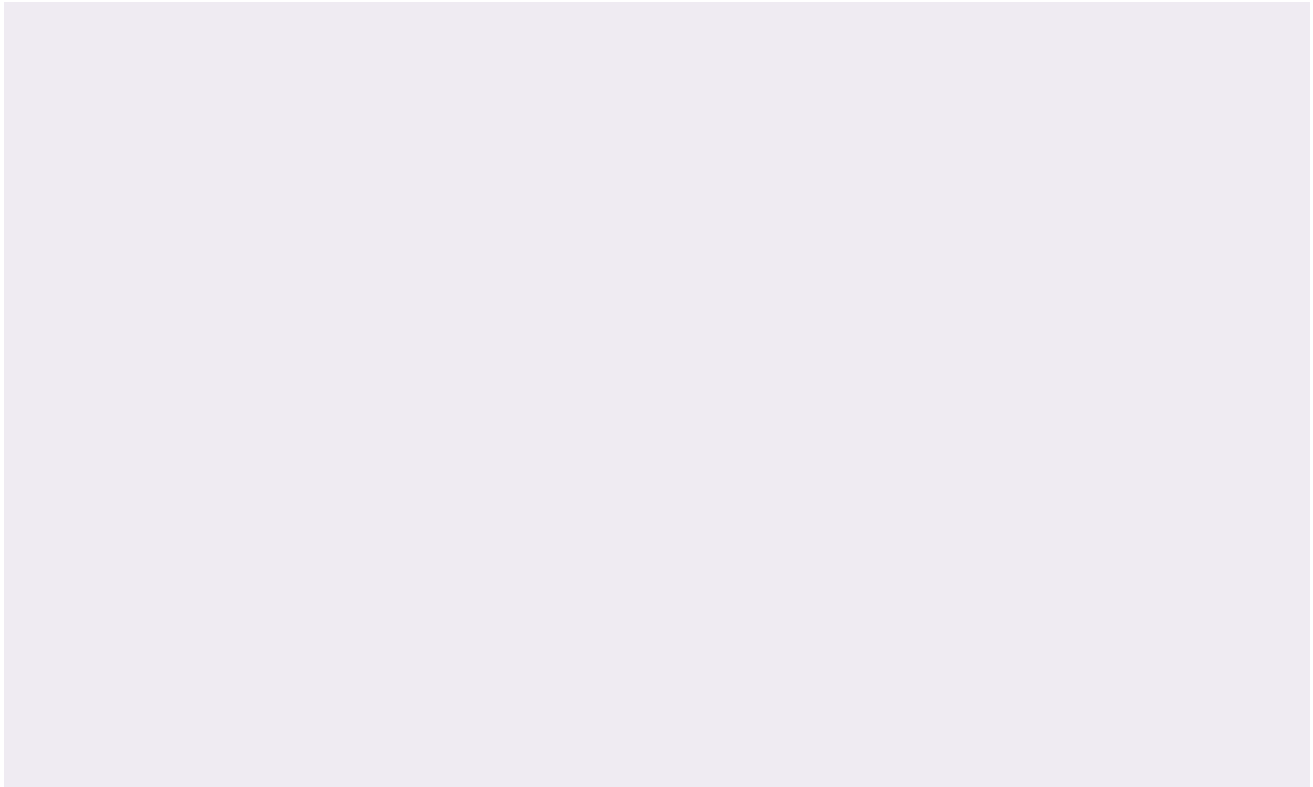


**What thoughts are you going to practice
before/during/after?**



After you've made the ask:

How did it go? What did you notice?



WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The next step to being a happy feminist for life is right here at this link:

<https://schoolofnewfeministthought.com/society-happy>

