

TRAUMA WHISPERS BEFORE IT ROARS

Companion Workbook

Chapter 2: The Anatomy of a Whisper

Pre-publication Draft – Print single page/ no duplex for additional writing space

This is a living document.

Changes will be implemented as suggestions arrive.

Changes made since last update:

- Early and advanced reader (free) copies printed prior to launch date of 8/12/26 may not match the page numbers noted in the workbook. Readers may need to look for the content on neighboring pages.
- Added Why We Do This Work and This Chapter Was Intended to Help You... sections

Last updated: October 1, 2026

How to Give Feedback

Complete this chapter packet, then visit the OneEmprima.com/TraumaWhispers/ or use the QR code on page 21 of your book to access the online feedback form and share your thoughts.

Let us know what helped in the book or workbook, what felt unclear, where you needed more room, and what you want to see included in the future editions of the book or companion workbook.

Why We Do This Work

Chapter 2 is where the listening gets precise.

In Chapter 1, you noticed that your body has been speaking. Now you learn what it is saying, and how loud it has become.

Effort isn't the problem. Accuracy is.

You can spend a decade in therapy, fill stacks of notebooks, and read every book on the shelf and still feel stuck. Not because you aren't trying. Because you may be aiming at the wrong target. Some of what you call trauma may be discomfort, disappointment, or the ordinary friction of being human. Some of what you dismiss as "no big deal" may be exactly what your body has been carrying for decades.

I lived in that second category for years. In fifth grade, Mrs. Ditmar called me to the front of the classroom and made me say the word decimal over and over while the class laughed. My face burned. My body braced every time she said my name. No one would have called it trauma, including me. But my nervous system learned that speaking up gets you humiliated and being visible makes you a target. That lesson followed me into my jobs, my relationships, and the moments when my voice mattered most. Years later, I came home from deployment with no passage waiting for me. Only the expectation that I would pick up exactly where I left off, at the same pace.

This chapter asks you to sort honestly. Name your boulders and your pebbles. Separate what was acute, what was chronic, and what was complex. Trace a roar back to its earliest whisper. Build a Roar Scale in your own nervous system's language. Then imagine the ceremony your body never got.

You don't have to prove your pain was big enough. You only have to be accurate about what it did to you.

That is where a whisper stops being noise and starts becoming information.

Awareness & Alignment Prompts

1. Did you recognize something you have called trauma that may have been discomfort, disappointment, grief, rejection, or the ordinary friction of being human?
2. Did you recognize an experience you have been minimizing because it did not seem “big enough” to count?
3. List one to three events that were acute (a single, identifiable event)?
4. List one to three traumas that are/were chronic (repeated slowly enough that you began treating them as normal)?
5. List one to three traumas that feel complex (layered together so tightly that separating them is difficult)?

Additional Journal Prompts

1. Think of a time when your body or life forced you to stop. Begin with the roar: the breakdown, illness, panic, shutdown, outburst, exhaustion, the trip to the emergency room, or moment you could no longer keep going. Now trace it backward.

What did the growl look like in the hours, days, months, or years before?

What murmurs did you normalize?

What was the earliest whisper?

What prevented you from responding when the signal was still quiet?

EXERCISE 1

Design Your Roar Scale™, *page 66*



Where are you on the Roar Scale?

Every nervous system speaks a language. Like physical pain, a level 10 for one person may not look like a level 10 for someone else. Two people can reach the limit of what their systems can hold and respond in completely different ways.

For one person, a 10 may include thoughts of self-harm and the need to contact a crisis line. For someone else, it may look like a panic attack, complete shutdown, dissociation, an intense pain flare, uncontrollable anger, or being unable to speak, move, think clearly, or care for themselves. One person may become visibly distressed. Another may grow quiet, numb, or unusually calm.

Both can be a 10.

Your number reflects how close your system is to its own limit, not whether someone else appears to be struggling more. This is not a severity contest, and your number is not based on how dramatic your experience appears from the outside. It reflects how close your nervous system is to its own limit. Do not lower your number because someone else appears to have it worse. You are mapping your capacity, not comparing your pain.

The lower numbers will also look different from person to person. A 1–2 does not have to mean pain-free, perfectly still, cheerful, or completely relaxed. Someone living with chronic pain may still feel regulated while pain is present. A neurodivergent person may move, fidget, stim, or think quickly while feeling fully grounded. The question is not, “Do I look calm?” It is, “How much access do I have to myself right now?”

Sometimes bad sleep or gut issues are the measurement. Sometimes it is the tone of your voice, the tension in your shoulders, the number of unanswered messages on your phone, or how much effort it takes to get through the day.

Map what each level actually looks *and* feels like in you, not what you think it is supposed to look like. Your Roar Scale belongs to your nervous system and should be specific to you. You can measure range or stages of clarity, attention, body signals, gut health, movement, temperament, patience, voice, communication, consumption stimuli, capacity, language/profanity, etc.

If you can feel what is happening inside your body, notice how your breathing, jaw, throat, chest, stomach, hands, muscles, temperature, or energy changes at each level. If sensing inside your body is difficult, use the evidence available to you. Your sleep may change. Your appetite may shift. You may scroll more, speak faster, withdraw from people, lose track of time, become more sensitive to sound, or struggle to complete ordinary tasks.

Section 1 · Before the Roar | Chapter 2 · The Anatomy of a Whisper

You may use descriptive words, colors, sensations, behaviors, weather patterns, a scale of happy-to-sad emojis, or examples from your life. You can write, draw, circle, color, or create symbols. Your nervous system speaks a language that is unique to you.

The goal is to recognize your system sooner, while it is still whispering. And it's okay to refine your scale as you evolve in the book.

1-2: THE QUIET

3-4: THE WHISPER

5-6: THE MURMUR

7-8: THE GROWL

9-10: THE ROAR

Optional: If you are comfortable sharing this with a trusted person, maybe a spouse or a close friend, ask them what they notice when you are moving through these levels. As external observers, they may pick up on cues before you do.

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EXERCISE 2

Mapping the Accumulated Weight of Trauma *page 52*

A boulder is usually easy to recognize. They arrive as one identifiable life-changing event: a major death, sexual assault, major car accident, battlefield deployment, major natural disaster, or sudden loss. Those can carry the weight of a boulder.

Other traumas accumulate through experiences that may appear small or insignificant when viewed one at a time. This exercise is not asking you to decide which experiences were “bad enough” to count as one or the other compared to other people. A few pebbles in your pocket may not feel heavy. A hundred of them can change the way you stand. But it isn’t just the quantity. Return to page 53 and examine the five things that matter. A jagged pebble in your shoe is much different than a smooth pebble in your pocket and can do a lot of damage despite size. Something small to one person can be painful for another. No judgment because context matters.

The Boulder

Inside the boulder, name one Big “T” experience you recognize as a major event in your life. If no single event comes to mind, you can leave the boulder blank. If you have multiple, list them. We will dive deeper in the next two chapters.

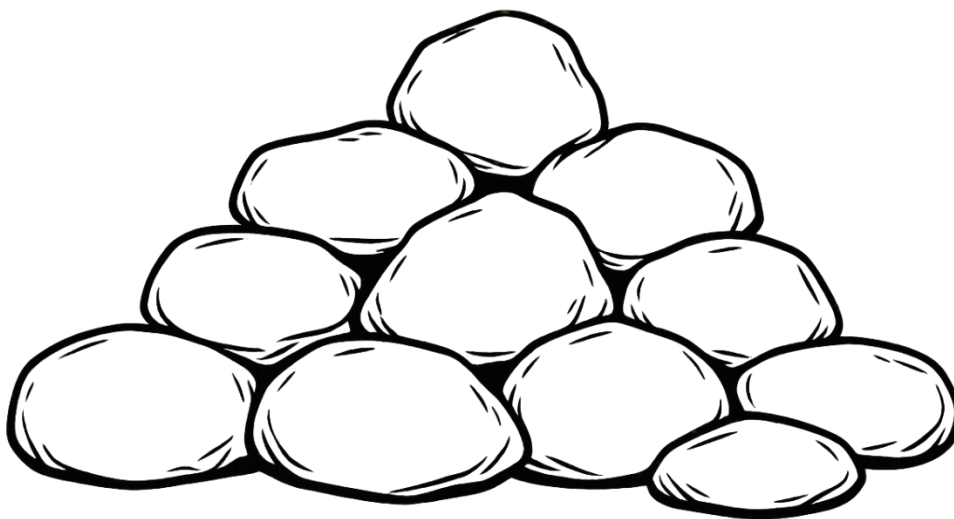
My boulder(s):



The Pebbles

Inside each of your invisible pockets are pebbles. On their own, they are usually not altering your life, but enough of them overtime might change the way you walk through life. This is not meant to be an all-inclusive, life spanning list. We will be diving deeper in chapters 3 and 4. Just name about ten so you can see how an accumulation of little things can erode your well-being.

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ A “decimal story” moment you still remember | ☐ Having to earn rest, love, or approval | ☐ Chronic workplace stress |
| ☐ Repeated criticism or dismissal by a critical parent or spouse | ☐ Small betrayals that accumulated | ☐ Chronic microaggressions |
| ☐ Always being the responsible one | ☐ The death of a pet | ☐ Interrupted sleep |
| ☐ Never being asked what you needed | ☐ Financial pressure | ☐ Moving homes/jobs frequently |
| | ☐ Caregiving without support | ☐ Always being expected to adjust and make due |



EXERCISE 3

The Ceremony Your Body Needed, *page 62*

If your nervous system could create its own ceremony of release and return, what would that look like?

This is not an invitation to appropriate a sacred ceremony from a culture that is not yours nor is it a request to step outside your comfort zone. It is an invitation to listen to the ritual your own body may crave and find what is unique to you, your culture, your beliefs.

Where would it happen? In a candlelit room? At an ocean, forest, lake?

What would your body need to do? Dance, shake, cry, sing, breathe, move in silence, drum, march, or stomp rhythmically against the ground?

Who would be invited? Trusted friends? Parents and grandparents? Wise elders of your community? Deceased ancestors? Members of your support group? Who could witness your release without trying to direct or fix it?

What time or day? At dusk, on a full moon, at sunrise, on a particular calendar day?

What would you be ready to lay down and pick up? What would mark the boundary between what happened to you and the life you are returning to? Will you have a symbolic equivalent of a martial arts colored belt or a guidon that changes?

Finally, **how would your body know the ceremony was complete?** Would there be a loud gong (sound-based) or a bridge to cross over (action-based)?

What would help your nervous system understand:

The battle is over. You are safe to come home.

Write or draw the ceremony your nervous system has been waiting for. Include sounds, feelings, colors, spaces, people, or whatever makes sense to you. Or maybe you create a dance, song, canvas painting, formal ceremonial protocol, or use some other expression.

P.S. It's expected that you come back to this exercise and refine it as you evolve through the book.

EXERCISE 3 (continued)

This Chapter Was Intended to Help You...

...get accurate. You separated discomfort from trauma and looked at the experiences you may have been minimizing because they didn't seem "big enough" to count. You sorted what you carry into acute, chronic, and complex, and named the boulders and pebbles that have been shaping the way you walk through life.

You traced a roar back to its earliest whisper and asked what kept you from answering it while it was still quiet. You built a Roar Scale that belongs to your nervous system, not anyone else's, and you began designing the ceremony your body has been waiting for.

You are not being asked to rank your pain against anyone else's. You are being asked to measure your own capacity honestly.

Chapter 2 was not intended to make you a victim.

It was intended to make you accurate, so you can hear your body while it is still whispering.