7 Ways to Step into Worthiness

by Lailey Jenkins
worthy

[wur-thee] -thi·er, -thi·est, noun, plural -thies.
adjective
1. having adequate or great merit, character, or value: a worthy successor.
2. of commendable excellence or merit; deserving: a person worthy to lead.

...that’s YOU!
Before you read another word...

**an invitation:**

Commit to exploring and being kind to yourself in your most difficult moments...

What does that look like?
I am grateful to my clients, friends, colleagues and mentors for their willingness to explore, be curious, and their gracious collaboration with me on the ultimate creative journey... life!

Disclaimer: Remember you are not alone—feelings of unworthiness are universal feelings for all of us at one time or another. If you need to, get the help of a therapist or coach to help with sorting things through.

This is intended to spark your curiosity, self-compassion and is a call to conscious awareness.

It is not a substitute for treatment.

The examples used in this document are a compilation of stories and not based on a single person’s journey. Any identifying details have been changed.
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I share these stories because it is epidemic that people doubt their abilities and feel unworthy of belonging, confidence and courage. If you are here reading this, FIRST know that you are not alone. Many are looking for ways to cope with incredible challenges and stresses in this ‘age of information’.

Sitting quietly, I wait...

It is a woman in front of me. She has come to me for help with ideas about a career.

I ask her to tell me about her strengths—what is she good at?

She cannot answer because she says she feels there is nothing she can call her own. She left herself behind years ago to care for her family and home. Caring for four children and a husband, she has little time to call her own.
On a different day...

The man in front of me has tears in his eyes. He is struggling for words. He is middle aged and handsome. Very accomplished in his career but feeling empty.

He taps into a feeling that is causing pain.

“I am never with my family. I do more than they ask of me at work always. I am exhausted. I am never good enough.”

And another day.

It is a young man in front of me this time.

He has come to see me because he feels he does not want to live. He struggles to say why. He has been rejected from all the colleges he applied to. (It happens, trust me.)

He cries, “I am a failure. I don’t even want to live anymore.”

I was recently working with a young new entrepreneur on her management of time. She was feeling the ‘ten way tie’ for what she should be focusing on in her business.

We added up how long each ‘to-do’ item on her list took. After keeping a log for a week, she realized she had an average of 28 hours on her to-do list a day! This resulted in her feeling behind before she even rolled out of bed!

Too many of these kinds of days and your morale begins to plummet. When these days turn to years, you begin to feel sick.
Tools to Stay Present & Step into Your Worthiness

What follows are ideas about ways to stay present and step into feeling worthy.
This is dedicated to helping you rest easy in the belief that “I matter.”
It is full of ways to step into knowing that what you have to offer this world is of value.

When we feel worthy, we create our surroundings accordingly.

We create healthy habits.

We form healthy relationships.

We make healthy choices.

It is easier to find flow and create.

Stepping into worthiness is about owning where we are right here and right now, with all our gremlins, lizards and toadhood, our higher self our lower self, all the commitments, overwhelm, and imperfections all rolled into one spectacular package. YOU!!
When we let go of what others think and own where we are with our darkness and our light; our shortcomings and our talents we can begin to find that place of being enough.

It is about that spectacular package (YOU) having merit and value, regardless of your success and challenges.

It is about standing in your value (with your flaws) your humanity and your vulnerability and giving yourself the grace to bear witness to you and having the courage to take action.

Worthiness is fluid.
Like energy.
Some days we have more of it and some days we have less.

Worthiness is about stepping out of our comfort zone and taking small risks; creating rituals to support us in our most vulnerable moment so that we stand in our ability to savor our successes and our own unique talents.
Intention: The Touchstone of Worthiness

When we make choices about what we would like to call in for ourselves in any given situation, it leaves us feeling more grounded, clear and even more powerful than if we leave our situation up to chance.

The caveat is that our brain needs to believe whatever intention we set for ourselves. It has to have our energy in it.

There is not one quick fix for stepping into worthiness but a multi-faceted approach, which includes being clear about our intentions. Particularly after we experience a ‘shame spiral’ or some other event, which takes us out of feeling worthy.
Practice right now setting an intention for yourself.

*Begin with:*

“I intend that the next time I am challenged with not feeling good enough I will...”

Fill in with what you intend to do (an example is I will write down three ways that I am good enough.....) By finding evidence that you believe in the thought that you are good enough, you are strengthening the belief and reconfiguring your brain to think healthier thoughts.

Intention is a de-clutterer because in setting your intention about anything you are asking yourself to call in what you really want, thereby letting go of everything else.

Crafting an intention requires you to think about what you want and make a decision. **You have to decide what you want.**

In the crafting of your intention you are declaring yourself to be worthy of setting the intention and calling in the outcome of your heart’s desire.

When you are facing a challenge in your life—finals, a divorce, unemployment, a job interview, job learning, move, death of a loved one, etc.—experiment with crafting an intention for the next five minutes.

*Begin with:*

“In the next five minutes I intend...”
Let setting your intention throughout your day become a practice.

When you veer away from it come back without judgment and re-center and re-commit to your intention.

YAY!!!

You are re-committing to feeling worthy in the process.
Get Grounded

If you have ever seen someone experiencing a moment where things are not working out, you may notice that they are absently staring. They stop being able to access their internal resources. They may feel hot and tingly and their face may flush. They may not respond to questions or comments.

When we are triggered by shame or anger we are temporarily taken offline from ability to think clearly. We stop being able to access our prefrontal cortex in our brain. This matters because our cortex acts as the CEO center of our brain. It organizes and prioritizes and delegates. When we are unable to use our cortex our amygdala takes over.

Our amygdala is an older part of our brain that warns us of impending danger. It houses the “fight or flight” or “freeze” part of our brain.
This is why when we are triggered—meaning the amygdala is running the show and either fight, flight or freeze is activated—we are not really fit to communicate.

**We need time to cool down.**

**We need time to ground.**

Based on research by John Gottmann, we have learned it takes a half an hour or so to cool down and bring your prefrontal cortex online again.

These are exercises to help you connect with your cortex and your ability to stay present. **Grounding connects you to the earth and is a way to expand your awareness so that your body and mind are connected.**

We have to have our prefrontal cortex online to access our worthiness. This means we have to come back to the present moment and notice when we are overloaded.

**Becoming aware when we are not grounded and re-aligning is part of the journey into worthiness.**

Feel free to try these exercises and notice how you best re-connect with yourself in the moment.
Head Tap

Tap yourself on the head. If you triggered or feeling overwhelmed in a crowd just feel the top of your head and tap it. This immediately brings you into your body so you can begin to breathe and notice.

*Ask yourself:*

“What do I need in this moment?”

To feel worthy you have to be home physically in your body.
The Space Between Your Toes

Another technique to bring you home to your body and ground is to imagine the space in between your toes.

Practice this while you are driving, exercising, or grocery shopping. Often just a momentary focus on the space in between your toes will be enough to bring you into your body and re-connect with your center.

See if you are able to hold space and notice the spaces in between both your left and right toes...
Rooted to the Earth

Imagine you are a plant and feel your feet becoming roots in the earth. This will connect you to your body. When you do this, you become grounded.

Imagine planting yourself the way a tree might be rooted deep in the earth.
The more you practice becoming grounded the more you might notice the moments where you leave.

Your attention and presence check out in seconds and only when you bring your awareness to your body do you notice that you are coming back after checking out.

Make this OK. No judgment. No shame. No blame.

Be open and curious.

Practice grounding in places where chaos reigns. Shopping malls and schools are wonderfully chaotic places. Find a place where there are many people with differing agendas and practice grounding—it could be a PTO meeting, a club, during a lesson, at a traffic light, carpooling, meetings, or at the gym.

Practice grounding in loud places.
Who is Your Harshest Critic?

We cannot begin to step into feeling worthy without first becoming aware of how we don’t feel worthy.

This is not a journey for the faint of heart. Know that it is recommended you not go this journey alone. Get the help you need. Friends. Family. Coach. Therapist. A healing team. Find people you feel comfortable talking to.

**Shame is a universal emotion.** Everyone with the exception of sociopaths feels shame. It is unavoidable.

Once you understand shame and how you react when you are in it, you will tap into your own resilience and power and you will be able to step into feeling worthy.

You will know how to reclaim your worthiness and confidence in short order, when you learn what sends you into a shame spiral.

For now though, notice what you are saying to yourself in the moment. This will lead to noticing what happens when you are in shame.
What do you say to yourself when things go wrong?

Do you say something like:

“God, I am so dumb. Or that was such a dumb thing to do....”
“I swear I will never get this. Everyone is better at it than me”
“I don’t have an artistic bone in my body”
“Everyone understands but me”
“Most people make more than I do...”
“I don’t deserve to have something so nice...”

If you are like most people something here will sound familiar...

We are very hard on ourselves. Often we are not even aware how hard we are on ourselves.

**Becoming aware of self talk and our shame are the keys to worthiness and freedom.**

By giving ourselves unconditional kindness and comfort while embracing the human experience, difficult as it is, we avoid destructive patterns of fear, negativity, and isolation. —Kristin Neff
Self-Talk Exercise

Take a sheet of paper and divide it into two columns.

In the first column write down as quickly as you can without thinking: **10 things you would like to try or do.**

As you do this, if you have a negative thought, an inner critic, write down what it says to you.

Maybe it goes something like this:

**ACTIVITY:** Skydiving

**SELF-TALK:** “Ha! You are too old and too scared.”

**ACTIVITY:** Get a motorcycle license

**SELF-TALK:** “Dah! That’s a pipe dream.”

For most of us this exercise will soon introduce us to our inner critic. When I work with clients they learn to be open and curious about what the inner critic has to say and then find ways to engage their critic in conversation.

It would go something like this:

**SELF-TALK:** “You will never finish that and it will never be good enough to submit.”

**ENGAGE:** “That may be but I am doing it anyway!”

If we try to suppress the critic it will come back at us with a vengeance—reinforced and stronger.

**Often it is better to engage with it than deny it exists.**
10 Life Comforts

Now make a list of at least **10 things that comfort you**. Let this be a list of things and practices that bring you joy.

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We all have moments when we feel flawed and unlovable. In those moments we are often experiencing the feeling of shame.

Shame is universal. We all feel it at one time or another. When we feel it we are also feeling unworthy.

**Shame takes us out of worthiness.**

This can be paralyzing. Sometimes we can become paralyzed for days, months or YEARS.

Feeling shame is an overwhelming experience. It floods our prefrontal cortex with cortisol and other biochemicals and takes us out of our ability to process and implement.

Our amygdala becomes like our default processor. This is one of the oldest parts of our brain and it is non-verbal and has basically three modes, fight, flight or freeze. This is not helpful if we need to access our language and processing. We are not reliable when our
amygdala takes over. According to research done by John Gottman, it takes 20–30 minutes for our prefrontal cortex to come back online from being triggered.

This is why when we are feeling shame it is very important to not text, drive, interact, send emails, talk, or try to process or problem solve.

We are not fit for human interaction when we are feeling shame or anger.

Give yourself 20 minutes to sort through what is happening.

We all feel shame. We all have shame triggers. Learning to deal with shame is not easy. It requires curiosity. To be curious means suspending judgment.

It requires self-compassion and connection to a trusted friend.
A close friend, relative, or teacher may be able to listen to your situation and help. If there is no one, contact a coach or if you need a therapist to sort through your shame triggers and worthiness issues. Make sure your professional is trained in treating shame.

We have to let in the light. Sharing our shame with someone who is safe for us to share is the important part of the journey to worthiness.

When we put shame in the dark with judgment, secrecy and blame it grows like a wild fire. When we shed light on it by talking about it douses shame with empathy.

Consider that empathy is the antidote to shame.
Shame Triggers Exercise

For most of us when we experience shame we experience physiological changes that are noticeable.

- We feel our face flush
- Our armpits sting
- Our skin becomes blotchy
- We can’t think
- We feel overwhelmed with fear
- Our stomach churns
- Our chest constricts.
- We want to bolt out of the room.
- We want to lash out and hurt someone.
Draw what shame feels like for you.
Use markers and crayons being as descriptive as possible.
Write what shame feels like for you.
Cultivate your awareness.
Cultivate Resilience

When I work with clients, there are many ways we approach the topic of resilience. We work to change self-talk and negative thinking, develop emotional intelligence, cultivate critical awareness, learn to wrestle deeply with problems while keeping an eye to the solution, but there is one step that is crucial.

When my clients do this there is an ease that comes that helps to lay groundwork for all the other habits.

**Inoculate to “failure”. Easier said than done right?**

Take the word ‘failure’ out of your vocabulary and replace it with ‘learning.’

No longer when you get a ‘D’ on a paper is it failing. It is learning.

When the boss says you are not producing your quota in the necessary amount of time you are learning how your job is changing.
Try this:

“I am failing at this.....”
How do you feel?

Now try:

“I am learning this.....”
How do you feel?

One opens us to possibility and growth and one labels us without hope.

Connect to Support

Stay connected to your support. Grow a support circle of people you can count on.

Use this group (and it may be 1 or 2 close friends) to share frustrations and successes. Be there for each other. We are hard wired for connection and being in relationships.

A good exercise for this step is to plan an outing with someone you consider in this circle of trust.
Cultivate Awareness

This means become aware of yourself. Assume responsibility for your happiness and your problems.

Learn how you react when you are triggered. Do you attack? Do you blame others? Do you withdraw? Do you name call yourself and others? Do you seek approval?

Just notice. For many of us we rush to judgment. Becoming aware means you are open and curious. It means you are in choice and conscious. It means you let go of doing it perfectly.

Suspending judgment expands awareness.

A good exercise for this is to journal regularly what you notice and experience.

Do this for 10-15 minutes a day over a month and watch your awareness grow.
Five Easy Observation Exercises

- Go to a coffeehouse and write a story using your surroundings as material.
- Take a small box and fill it with 7 things from around the house and describe what is in the box.
- Have a 5 minute conversation and write out what you heard and what you said.
- Write down ways you are not in alignment with yourself in a day.
- Practice repeating what you hear others say for a day.... Begin with “so let me see if I understand what you said” and repeat what you heard them say.

These exercises will expand your awareness skills.
Grow Compassion for Yourself

The idea that we treat ourselves as we treat our best friends is foreign to most people. That is exactly what I am inviting you to do. We all have moments where we doubt our ability, our worthiness, where we feel like we are not good enough. We hear that voice that says “whoooooooweeeee just who do you think you are?”

We try to get back on track and focus but doubts swirl around us.

Usually our feelings manifest on the physical plane. When we are anxious we may feel as if it is hard to swallow, or like we have gravel in our stomach. Although our bodies have no language they are talking to us all the time.

Notice how you are feeling and if you are feeling really shaky and uncertain just notice that is where you are feeling this in your body. For sure you are not alone. This feeling is very common.

Often we are just too busy to notice unless our physical pain is great. We spend a great deal of energy trying to avoid paying attention to our emotions. It is only in the noticing though that healing takes place.

Notice what you say to yourself and notice what happens when you say it.

When you need to give yourself compassion in the moment put your hand on your heart.

This is a way to connect directly with your inner wisdom.

To give compassion in the moment try putting your hand on your heart and saying something kind to yourself.

Say something like, “I am doing the best I can in this moment.”
Here are some other things you can practice saying:

“I am learning”
“I am allowed to make mistakes”
“Mistakes are how we learn”
“I am inoculating to failure and giving myself a break”
“I am all right”
“I give myself love and compassion right here, right now”

Or try asking this question:

“If I really loved myself what would be my next small step here?”

Your body will tell you the answer. It may begin in a whisper so just take the time YOU need and listen.

This is a practice and like anything the more you practice compassion the more it grows.
Take some time and think about a few kind things you can say to yourself.

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Calling in the Allies: Connecting with Your Creativity

Finding your creative rhythm and taking action in making something is a way to step into feeling worthy.

When we are creative, we are more connected to ourselves, more resourceful, happier, funnier, more delighted, more patient.

We have more in our tank of resilience and more focus.

It is a way to find your joy and does not need to be shared if you prefer not to. Although many clients I work with find that sharing the creative process amplifies fun!

Many of the people I work with say, “But I don’t have a creative bone in my body.”

I don’t believe it.

As long as you are breathing you are creative.

I believe you are capable to tapping into your source in a way that allows you to feel stronger and more worthy.
We each have unique ways of tapping into our creative potential. It may be welding art, glassblowing, writing, home organizing, dance, theater, filmmaking, and number crunching, leading, running the PTO, theology, astrology. There are as many ways to tap into your potential as there are people. **Find something you are interested in and give it a try!**

**Write down 10 things you have always wondered about and not tried.**

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Do this **without stopping** so you don’t have time to censor yourself.

Thoughts of perfectionism, comparing yourself to others or not feeling good enough might stop you from taking action. This is really normal. See if you can find a way around this though by making the step small enough to allow you the grace to continue. **Baby steps will get you into feeling more worthy.**

**You are good enough!!**

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Imperfection Rocks!

We live in an age of information. It is easy to be lulled into a place of not taking action. Perfectionism, self sabotage, fear are common deterrents to action.

Remember part of resilience is reframing failure. There is no failure only learning. We learn by taking action in the direction of our dreams.

Lower your expectations and take a small step in the direction of something you are longing to do, make, or create.

Watch what happens!

Remember: Imperfection rocks! Do it imperfectly.
Notice the Shame Spiral

Your worthiness is shaken. You are in a shame spiral.

What is your first step?

1. Ground

Find a way to ground yourself in the present moment.
Take stock of where you are and what is happening.

2. Notice

What is happening to your body? Your pulse may be elevated and you may be feeling flushed.
The feeling rushes in: “Not worthy.”

3. Call in the allies and tap into:

- You are not alone
- Your critical awareness
- Your resilience
- Your circle of trust
- An intention (This could be: I intend to be kind with myself and connect with someone I trust for support.)
- Your creativity (Draw, paint, write, cook, make something)
To Your Creative Light,

Lailey Jenkins is President and Founder of Lead Creatively Inc. She is on a mission to help her clients tap their creative potential and take action so they can lead creatively.

Acknowledgments

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A RISING TIDE FLOATS ALL BOATS
Our journey as a human being living wholeheartedly is one of embracing the creative spirit. When we allow our passion an outlet doing something we love to do, it allows us to deeply experience other facets of life too. We are less anxious, more focused and more playful.