

Knowing What I Need

First Steps in Reconnecting with Your Needs

For many women, especially those carrying the mental and emotional load in their families, relationships, or workplaces, the question “What do I need?” can feel surprisingly hard to answer. Not because you don’t have needs. But because you’ve gotten very good at responding to everyone else’s.

Our systems are incredible. They learn to adapt in order to navigate the challenges of life. And those adaptations often help us function well for a long time. But over time, they can also make it harder to notice simple things — hunger, fatigue, tension, overwhelm... even joy.

This guide offers a simple starting place to reconnect with your body and your needs.

Before we take action, set boundaries, or change routines... we learn to notice, build awareness, and get reacquainted with ourselves.

Here are five small ways to start.



1. Notice When You Push Through



Start paying attention to the moments you override yourself.

You feel tired — but keep going.

You need the bathroom — but finish the task first.

You feel overwhelmed — and say, “I’m fine.”

You don’t need to fix it or do anything differently to start. Just notice that it happened.

Awareness is the first shift.

2. Swap Pressure for Curiosity

Sometimes asking “What do I need?” can feel like too big of a stretch.

Instead, try:

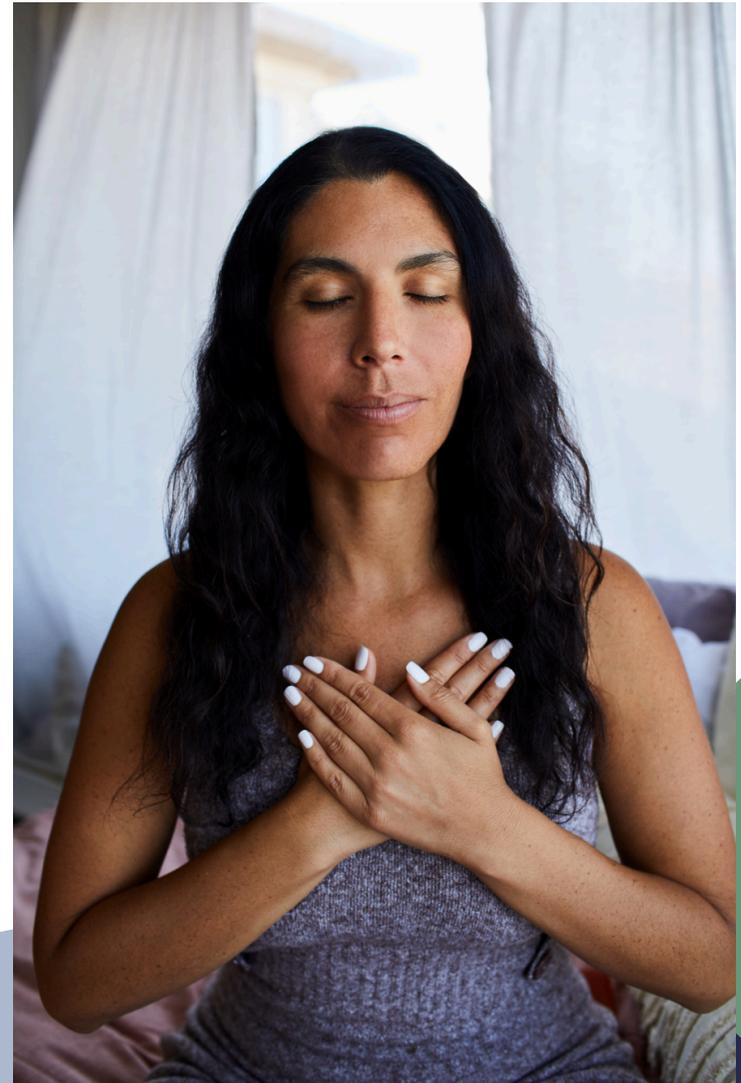
“I wonder what I might need”

or

“I wonder what my body might need”

That small language shift matters.

Curiosity feels safer to the nervous system than demand. We’re not interrogating ourselves. We’re getting acquainted.



3. Start with Sensations, Not Solutions



If identifying needs feels like too much, begin with the body.

Right now, I notice...

- Tight shoulders
- A heavy chest
- A clenched jaw
- Shallow breathing

You don't have to interpret it. Just start building familiarity with your own signals.

4. Pay Attention to Irritation

Irritation is often a clue.

When something feels sharp, resentful, or reactive, you can quietly wonder:

“What might this be pointing to?”

Sometimes irritation shows us where a limit or need exists, even if we're not ready to act on it yet.



5. Let “I Don’t Know” Be Enough

As you start to ask yourself “What do I need?”, the answer may be “I’m not sure.

And that is okay.

For many women who have spent years responding to everyone else, this may be the first time their needs have been considered.

Not knowing is part of reconnecting.



Transforming Trauma ~ Living Well

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