

WORKSHEET 1 · CHAPTER ONE · SAY IT WITH ME: THIS IS TRAUMA

Name It to Tame It

Because what you've been through matters — and you were probably never given the language for it.

Before we go any further, I want to invite you to pause. Too often, breast cancer is framed as a medical experience instead of what it truly is: a traumatic one.

From the moment you heard the words *"It is cancer,"* everything changed:

- Your sense of safety
- Your trust in your body
- Your plans for the future
- Your identity
- Your relationships

And yet many women move through diagnosis, treatment and survivorship without ever being given the language for what they've experienced.

So let's start with naming it. When we name what we've been through, something changes. The confusion softens. The self-doubt quiets. And we begin to understand our reactions not as weakness, but as human responses to something hard.

So, when you're ready, try this.

STEP 1

Name What Happened

Complete the following sentences. Take your time here — there's no right or wrong answer.

What happened to me was...

The hardest part for me has been...

What I didn't expect was...

What still affects me today is...

STEP 2

Notice What You've Minimized

Now read back what you wrote. As you do, notice if there are places where you softened your experience — where you told yourself:

"It wasn't that bad."

"Other people have it worse."

"I should be grateful I'm alive."

"I should be over this by now."

If you notice that happening, gently underline those parts. Minimizing your experience doesn't make it less painful. It makes you feel more alone in it.

What did you underline, and why do you think you softened it?

STEP 3

Say It with Me

Take one of the sentences you wrote and rewrite it using this phrase:

This was traumatic because...

For example:

“This was traumatic because my body stopped feeling safe.”

“This was traumatic because everything happened so fast.”

“This was traumatic because I didn’t know if I would live.”

Now write your own:

Take a breath. Read that sentence again. Notice what you feel as you say the word *traumatic*. For some, it brings relief. For others, resistance. Both are completely normal.

A Gentle Reminder

Calling something traumatic doesn’t mean you’re broken. It doesn’t mean you won’t heal. And it doesn’t mean your story ends here.

It means something painful happened, and your mind and body responded the way we humans do when we’re trying to survive. There is nothing weak about that.

In fact, recognizing trauma is often the first step toward healing. Because once we name what we’ve been through, we can begin to view ourselves with more compassion. And from there, healing becomes possible.

REFLECTION

After You Finish

Take a moment to notice:

What did I feel while doing this?

What surprised me?

What felt validating?

What felt difficult?

Write anything that comes up. You don't have to rush this process. You don't have to figure everything out today.

For now, just begin here by saying with me:

This is trauma.
And you are not alone in it.

This worksheet accompanies Chapter One of *Reluctant Warrior: A Memoir & Breast Cancer Emotional Survival Guide* by Dr. Christina Hibbert. It is a reflective exercise, not therapy or medical care. If it brings up more than you expected, that makes sense — please consider bringing it to someone who can sit with you in it.