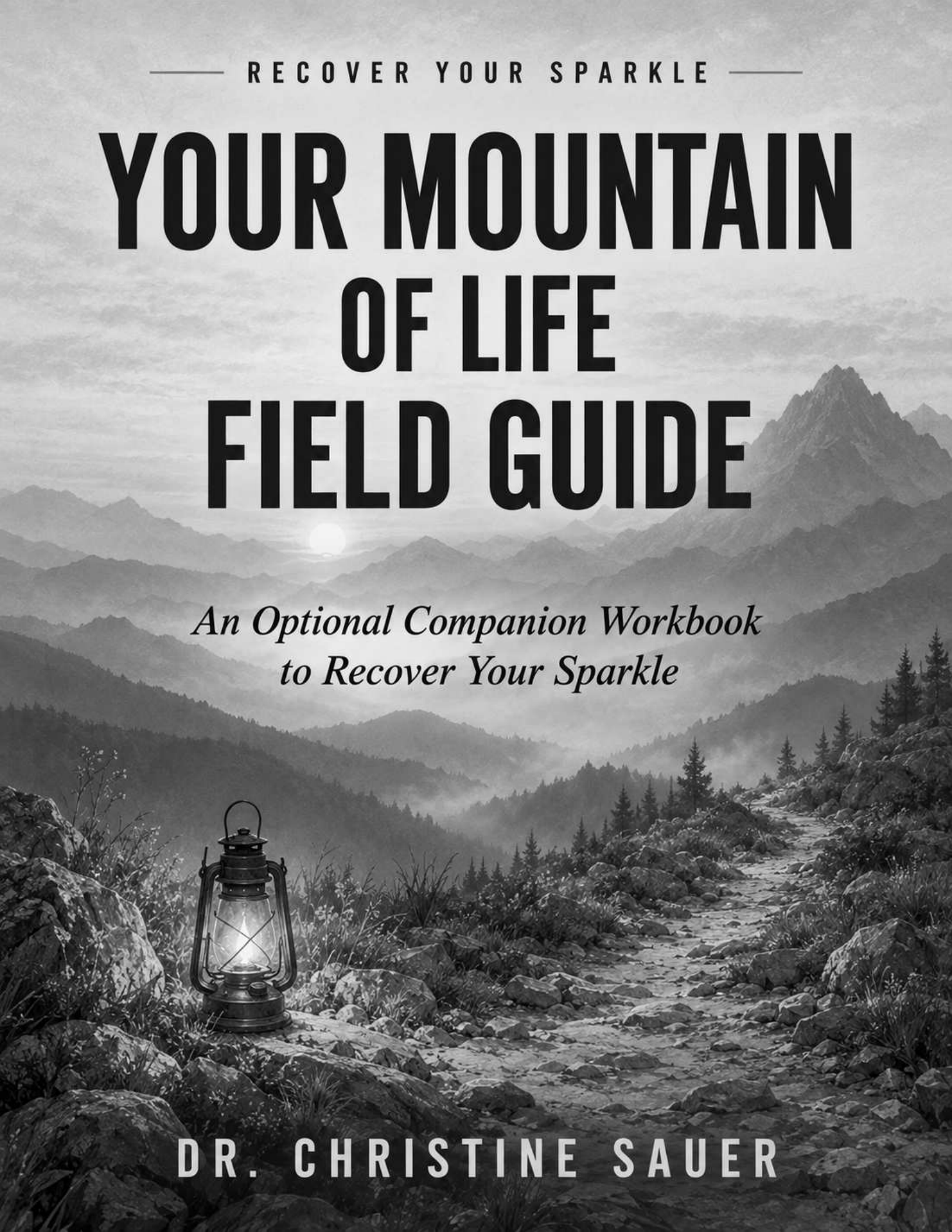
RECOVER YOUR SPARKLE

YOUR MOUNTAIN OF LIFE FIELD GUIDE

An Optional Companion Workbook to Recover Your Sparkle



DR. CHRISTINE SAUER

How to Use This Field Guide

This field guide is optional.

It is here to help you pause, notice, and make the ideas in Recover Your Sparkle your own - not to give you more homework.

You do not need to work through every question, in order, or all at once.

Read a chapter first, then come here if a prompt, map, or exercise feels useful.

Write a sentence, a few words, or nothing at all.

Skip anything that does not fit your life right now.

Come back whenever your terrain changes.

The goal is not to complete the workbook.

It is to help you see where you are with more clarity and less shame, and to notice your next true step.

Chapter 1 — The Mountain of Life

Finding Your Bearings

Before you try to change anything, it helps to know where you are.

A pebble in your shoe does not ask the same thing of you as loose gravel, thick mud, fog, or a storm.

In the same way, different seasons of life ask for different kinds of care, courage, support, and action.

This section is an invitation to notice your terrain - not judge it.

You do not need to answer every question or complete every exercise.

Use what helps you find your bearings.

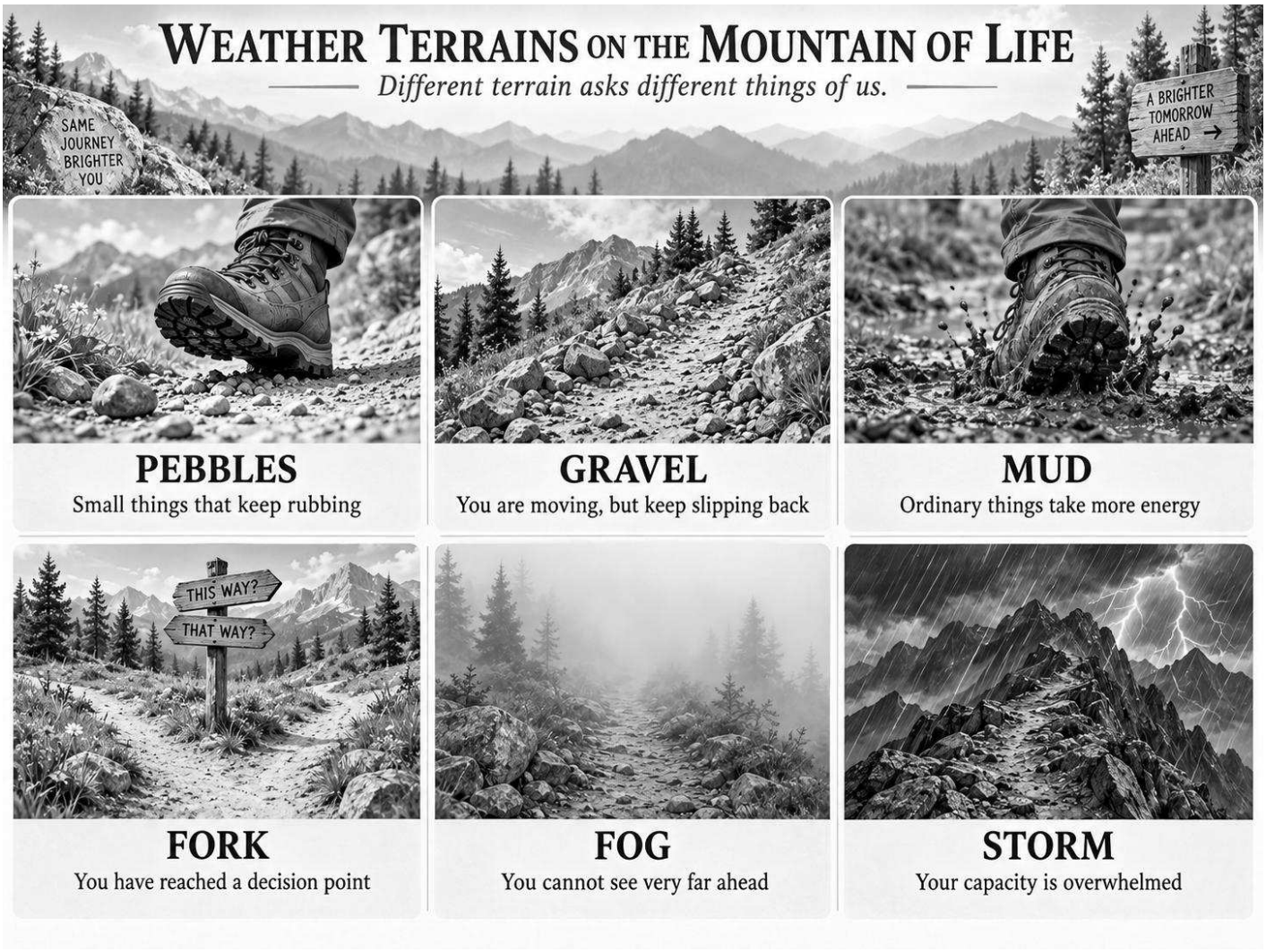
Leave the rest for another day.

Start by looking at the terrain map below.

Which one feels most like the ground beneath your feet right now?

You may find that more than one fits.

Weather Terrains on the Mountain of Life



Different terrain asks different things of us.

Chapter 1 Reflection Questions

Finding Your Bearings

You do not need to answer all of these.

Choose the questions that make you stop, notice, or feel curious. A few honest words are enough.

If you answer only one question, start here:

What kind of terrain am I in right now?

_____

_____

1. Name the terrain

Which terrain feels closest to your life right now: Pebbles, Gravel, Mud, Fork, Fog, or Storm? More than one may fit. What tells you that?

_____

_____

2. Look at your backpack

What feels heaviest in your backpack right now?

Which parts did you choose, and which parts were handed to you or arrived without your permission?

_____

_____

3. Reconsider the label

Is there something you have been calling laziness, weakness, failure, or "not trying hard enough" that might make more sense when you consider the terrain you are walking through?

_____

_____

4. Match the help to the terrain

What might actually help in this terrain right now - rest, food, sleep, information, practical help, professional care, companionship, a boundary, safety, time, or something else?

_____

_____

5. Notice old advice

Are you trying to solve a mountain problem with valley advice?

Is there advice you keep giving yourself that no longer fits where you are?

_____

_____

6. Reduce the menu

Where are too many choices or too much information making things harder?

What would one or two good choices look like instead?

_____

_____

7. Find a rope partner

Is there someone who could hold one end of the rope with you for a while?

What would you want that person to understand, say, or help you do?

_____

_____

8. Put something down

What is one thing you do not have to solve today?

_____

_____

9. See the next true step

From where you actually are - not where you think you should be - what is one small next true step you can see?

_____

_____

One last reminder:

You are not trying to solve the whole mountain here. You are simply finding your bearings.

Chapter 2 — The Valley of Noise and Distraction

Listening Beneath the Noise

You do not need to make your life perfectly quiet.

This page is simply a place to notice what has become so loud that you can no longer hear what matters. Choose only the questions that feel useful today.

1. Name the noise

What feels loudest in your life right now?

Consider both:

- outside noise - screens, demands, unfinished tasks, other people - and
- inside noise such as worry, responsibility, guilt, or the feeling that you must keep everyone else okay.

_____

_____

2. Ask what the noise may be doing for you

Sometimes busyness or distraction is not just a bad habit; it may also be helping you avoid something painful or difficult.

Without judging yourself, is there anything the noise may be protecting you from hearing or feeling?

It is fine if the answer is “I do not know.”

_____

_____

3. Notice what has become too quiet

What part of you has become hard to hear lately - your body, your need for rest, anger, grief, play, prayer, creativity, affection, curiosity, or a simple wish for more ease?

_____

_____

4. Make one small clearing

Where could you create a few minutes of space without turning quiet into another assignment?

Perhaps at a window, in the car before going inside, during a short walk, with a cup of tea, or before reaching for your phone.

_____

_____

5. Write one honest sentence

Complete this only if it feels helpful:

"When the noise gets a little quieter, I notice _____."

A few words are enough.

_____

_____

6. Choose the next true step

What is one small thing that would help you listen a little better - not solve your whole life, just listen?

_____

_____

A gentle reminder:

if quiet brings up something that feels too large to hold alone, you do not have to push through it.

Reaching for support can itself be a next true step.

Chapter 3 — The First Sparkle

Protecting the First Flicker

A first sparkle does not have to be happiness, certainty, or a plan.

It may simply be something that reaches you.

Let these questions help you notice what is still alive without demanding that it become more.

1. What still reaches me?

Think of a song, a patch of sunlight, a memory, a smell, a person, a prayer, a place, a piece of art, a bird outside the window, or anything else that has made you pause recently.

What touched you, even briefly?

_____

_____

2. What makes me feel one percent more alive?

Not ten times better.

Not healed.

Just **one percent** more present, interested, warm, curious, peaceful, or like yourself.

_____

_____

3. Let longing become a compass

What are you longing for right now?

Beneath the ache, what might that longing be pointing toward - a need, a value, a relationship, rest, beauty, belonging, creativity, freedom, or something else that matters to you?

_____

_____

4. Notice wonder without denying what is hard

Can you name one small thing that is still beautiful, kind, interesting, or alive while also allowing the difficult parts of your life to remain true?

_____

_____

5. Remember what did not need to become a project

What have you enjoyed simply because you enjoyed it - making something, listening to music, cooking, walking, gardening, reading, drawing, laughing, praying, tinkering, or playing?

Is there a tiny version of it you would like to make room for again?

_____

_____

My own (Christine's) first flickers in clay

Two of the small clay pieces I made during my own recovery belong here as visual reminders that a flicker does not need to be polished, useful, or understood in order to matter.



An elephant-owl-o-dragon — a creature that existed nowhere except in my imagination.

The little girl on the cracked riverbed — an image I did not yet understand but could not look away from.



6. Protect your flicker

Something that touched me:

_____

_____

What I am NOT going to demand from it:

_____

_____

One tiny way I can make room for it again:

_____

_____

More small questions to explore — only if useful

These are the questions that were intentionally moved out of the main chapter so the book can stay light.

Circle one that catches your attention. You do not need to answer all of them.

• What do I miss?

• What still touches me?

• What makes me feel even one percent more alive?

• What do I wish I had time to notice?

• What else might still be possible?

• What part of me have I been trying not to hear?

• What might I need in order to feel safer, more rested, more honest, or more alive?

One last reminder:

You do not have to turn a flicker into a five-year plan.

Notice it. Make a little room for it. Let it be small.

Chapter 4 — Choosing a Mountain

Whose Mountain Am I Climbing?

Some parts of life are freely chosen. Some are inherited.

Some arrive through circumstances we never asked for.

And sometimes we stay on a path for so long that we stop asking whether it still belongs to us.

You do not need to make a major decision here.

This exercise is simply about noticing.

1. Name one mountain

Choose one area of your life that is taking a lot of your energy right now - a relationship, role, job, responsibility, expectation, goal, or something else.

The mountain I am thinking about is:

_____

_____

2. How did I arrive here?

☐ I chose this freely.

☐ I chose it once, but I am no longer sure.

☐ It was expected of me.

☐ Circumstances placed me here.

☐ I am afraid of what might happen if I stop.

☐ It's several or all of them at once.

☐ I do not know yet.

3. What part of this still feels truly mine?

_____

_____

4. What part feels more like obligation, fear, or someone else's expectation?

_____

_____

5. Is the problem that this path is hard—or that it may no longer be mine?

You do not have to know the answer today.

_____

_____

6. What is one small choice that belongs to me now?

Not the whole future. Just one choice.

_____

_____

A reminder

Choosing does not mean controlling everything.

Sometimes the next true choice is to rest, ask for help, tell someone the truth, set one boundary, gather information, or simply admit: This path is hurting me.

Chapter 5 — The Ascension Spiral

The Same View From a Different Place

Sometimes an old fear, question, grief, or pattern returns and we immediately think: I am back where I started.

Perhaps you are.

Perhaps life has genuinely knocked you backward for a while.

Or perhaps you are meeting something familiar from a different place on the mountain.

This exercise is simply a way to look.

1. **What has come around again?**

An old worry, relationship pattern, regret, question, habit, fear, or something else:

_____

_____

2. What feels the same as before?

_____

_____

3. What, if anything, is different now?

Consider:

- what you understand;
- the words you have for it;
- people who support you;
- boundaries you can set;
- skills or experience you have gained;
- choices you can see now;
- or simply your ability to recognize what is happening.

_____

_____

4. What is harder now?

Growth is not guaranteed. Perhaps you are more tired, carrying a new loss, dealing with illness, or facing genuinely harder terrain.

_____

_____

5. From where I actually am today, what would the next switchback look like?

It might be moving forward, resting, asking for help, turning around, trying differently, or simply staying where you are long enough to find your bearings.

_____

_____

A reminder

Returning to an old question does not automatically mean failure—and it does not automatically mean progress. Sometimes the first task is simply to notice what is different this time.

Chapter 6 — Fog: When You Cannot See the Path

Finding the Next Marker

Fog changes what is wise.

When you cannot see far ahead, the goal is not to force certainty.

It is to make the next decision small enough to see and safe enough to take.

You do not need to work through every prompt.

Choose what helps you find one marker, one person, or one next step.

1. Name the fog

What is making it hard to see clearly right now - grief, exhaustion, pain, too many choices, too much information, overwhelm, fear, conflicting advice, relationship stress, illness, or something else?

_____

_____

2. Make the decision smaller

What decision feels too large right now?

Can you reduce it to two reasonable options, one question, or one next step?

Examples you might borrow:

- Call one trusted person — or sit quietly for ten minutes first.
- Eat something simple — or drink some water first.
- Lie down for a while — or step outside for five minutes.
- Make one appointment — or ask someone to help you make it.
- Read one trustworthy page — not twenty more opinions.
- Choose one thing that needs attention today and let the rest wait.

_____

_____

3. Find the next marker

What is one marker you can trust today?

A person, appointment, note, book, routine, place, prayer, professional, or simple fact that helps you orient?

_____

_____

4. When words will not come

If speaking feels too hard, what could you write instead?

You might begin with:

“I do not know how to say this out loud, but I need help with _____.”

_____

_____

Then state: Who could receive that note, text, or message?

_____

_____

5. My Fog Rule

- Stop.
- Rest.
- Look around.
- Find the next marker.
- Ask for a guide or a rope partner.
- Choose the next safe step.

My own safe step today is:

_____

_____

One thing I do NOT need to solve today is:

_____

_____

If the fog becomes dangerous

If you are thinking of harming yourself or others, cannot keep yourself safe, or are in immediate danger, this is not a workbook moment.

Tell someone and seek urgent local help.

If speaking is hard, show another person what you wrote above and let them help you take the next step.

Chapter 7 — Crevices, Avalanches, and the Need for Rescue

Preparing to Let Help Reach You

Some terrain calls for more than another coping strategy.

There are times when the wise next step is rescue, stabilization, or practical help from other people.

This page is not about proving that things are “bad enough.”

It is about making help easier to reach when you need it.

1. Notice the snow load

What has been accumulating lately?

Consider sleep loss, grief, pain, caregiving, conflict, fear, money pressure, illness, isolation, shame, or simply too many demands at once.

_____

_____

2. What tells me I am slipping?

What signs tell you that ordinary coping is no longer enough?

These may be changes in sleep, eating, concentration, hopelessness, agitation, withdrawal, frightening thoughts, feeling unable to stay safe, or something else you know from your own life.

_____

_____

3. My rescue team

Write down people or services you would want to be available if the terrain became serious. You do not need a large team; one reliable person is a beginning.

Person I can tell the truth to:

_____

_____

Health professional or clinic:

_____

_____

Person who could come with me or stay with me:

_____

_____

Local urgent or emergency services:

_____

_____

Other support that matters to me:

_____

_____

4. If I know I am slipping but I am not in immediate danger

Possible next steps include:

• Write the note.

• Make the appointment.

• Tell one safe person the truth.

• Call or text a phone hotline or call 9-8-8 or 9-1-1 (or your local helpline or mental health support number).

• Ask for a second opinion if something does not feel right.

• Ask someone to sit beside you while you make the call.

• Bring a rope partner to the appointment.

• Ask someone to help with food, transportation, childcare, paperwork, or another immediate burden.

• Reduce decisions and commitments until the weather settles.

• Move to a place where you are less alone if being alone feels unsafe.

• Put important phone numbers and contact names somewhere easy to find before you need them.

_____

_____

5. Words I can use

- “I do not think I am fine.”
- “I need help.”
- “I cannot do this alone right now.”
- “Please stay with me while we decide what to do next.”
- “I am not safe alone right now.”

_____

_____

6. Prepare while the weather is clearer

What could you prepare now that would make asking for help easier later?

A written contact list, a short note about what helps and what does not, transportation plans, medication information, a trusted person who knows your wishes, or a simple sentence you can show someone when words disappear?

One thing I can prepare now:

_____

_____

A reminder about rescue

Rescue is not the summit. After a crisis may come stabilization, rebuilding, rehabilitation, setbacks, more support, and a slow return of strength. These do not always happen neatly or in order.

You do not need to earn rescue.

You only need enough honesty to let help begin.

Chapter 8 — Automatic Sparkle Extinguishers

What Was This Trying to Do for Me?

Sometimes a pattern that causes problems now began a long time ago - as an intelligent attempt to cope with something difficult.

You do not need to excuse the harm it may cause today. This exercise is simply an invitation to become curious before you become judgmental.

Look through the examples below. Mark only the ones that feel familiar. You do not need to identify with any of them, and you do not need to work through every one.

• Food may become comfort.

• Overwork may become safety.

• Achievement may become a way to earn approval or worth.

• People-pleasing may become protection from conflict or rejection.

• Silence may become a hiding place.

• Anger may become a shield.

• Busyness may keep difficult questions quiet.

• Research or information-seeking may create a temporary sense of control.

• Spending may create a brief sense of possibility, reward, or freedom.

• Rescuing other people may keep us from noticing our own needs.

1. **Choose one pattern that feels familiar**

The pattern I want to look at is:

_____

_____

2. **What might this pattern once have done for me?**

_____

_____

3. **What was it trying to protect me from, provide, or help me feel?**

_____

_____

4. **What does it cost me now?**

_____

_____

5. **What might give me some of the same comfort, safety, control, connection, or relief with less cost today?**

_____

_____

Understanding why a pattern began does not require you to keep it.

Sometimes compassion gives us enough room to choose something different.

If a pattern feels dangerous, overwhelming, or is harming you or someone else, getting support may be part of the next true step.

Catch the Pattern Before It Takes Over

Once you understand what a pattern may have been trying to do for you, the next step is not to fight it harder. It is to notice the sequence a little earlier.

Choose one familiar pattern—preferably not your hardest one—and trace what tends to happen.

1. What usually happens just before it?

A feeling, situation, person, memory, tiredness, conflict, loneliness, boredom, or something else?

_____

_____

2. What thought tends to appear?

Some familiar thoughts might sound like:

- I am a failure.
- No one cares.
- I will never get better.
- I have ruined everything.
- I should be stronger by now.
- I have to fix this alone.
- I am not allowed to need help.

The thought I notice most often is:

_____

_____

3. What urge follows?

_____

_____

4. What do I usually do next?

_____

_____

5. What does that response give me in the short term?

Comfort, relief, control, numbness, approval, distance from conflict, a sense of usefulness, or something else?

_____

_____

6. What does it cost me later?

_____

_____

7. **What could help me notice five seconds earlier next time?**

A pause, one breath, a question, a ring or bracelet, a smooth stone, a small card, a phrase, or another gentle reminder?

The reminder is not there to punish you or force the thought away.

It is simply a trail marker: There I go again.

_____

_____

8. **What is one different response I could try - not perfectly, just once?**

_____

_____

A reminder about awareness

Awareness is not the same as control. You may notice the old path and still take it sometimes.

The important change is that you noticed. Every pause gives you another chance to choose.

Protect What Is Still Alive

Understanding a pattern is important, and noticing it earlier creates more choice.

The next question is practical:

What could help you protect?

What is still alive in you without shaming yourself or forcing yourself to shine?

1. **What might help me feel safer without dimming my sparkle?**

_____

_____

2. Choose one small protective action

You might:

- Write in a journal before trying to say something difficult aloud.
- Accept one honest compliment instead of pushing it away.
- Let someone bring you soup, tea, a meal, or another small kindness.
- Tell one safe person: “I am not very well, actually.”
- Take off the old mask for five minutes.
- Do something small, imperfect, and alive.
- One small action I could try is:

_____

_____

3. Who could help shelter the flame?

Is there someone who could sit beside you, listen, bring practical help, remind you of what matters, or simply stay close while the weather is rough?

Person or source of support:

_____

_____

What I might ask for:

_____

_____

4. What do I want to protect?

What small part of you feels worth protecting right now - a little honesty, curiosity, rest, creativity, hope, connection, prayer, humor, courage, or something else?

_____

_____

A reminder about the flame

A candle does not need to apologize for flickering in the wind.

It needs shelter, oxygen, and sometimes another person's hands around the flame for a while.

Recovering your sparkle is not about forcing yourself to shine.

It is about protecting what is still alive.

Chapter 9 — The Familiar Wrong Turn

The Pause Before Correcting

Sometimes the familiar wrong turn is the urge to correct, explain, argue, or prove a point immediately.

The goal is not to become silent when something important needs to be said.

It is to create enough space to decide whether this particular moment truly needs your voice.

1. Notice the urge

Think of a recent moment when you felt a strong need to correct someone or prove that you were right.

What was happening?

_____

_____

What did I want to say?

_____

_____

2. Ask the pause questions

- Does this really matter?
- If I do not correct this statement, will anyone be harmed?
- Will anything important go wrong?
- Or am I trying to feel safer, more certain, or more important by being right?
- What do I notice when I answer honestly?

_____

_____

3. Choose the response that fits the moment

The next true step may be different in different situations.

I might:

• Speak clearly because truth, safety, or something important really is at stake.

• Ask a question instead of correcting immediately.

• Say, “I see it differently,” without turning the moment into a battle.

• Wait and revisit the issue later when I am calmer.

• Let the small thing go.

In this situation, the response I want to practice is:

_____

_____

4. What am I protecting by being right?

Sometimes the urge to correct is about more than the fact itself.

What might I be trying to protect - certainty, control, competence, dignity, approval, safety, or something else?

_____

_____

A reminder

Letting a small thing go does not mean truth no longer matters.

It means choosing more carefully where your voice, energy, and attention are truly needed.

And if something does matter - especially where safety, harm, or an important boundary is involved - you are still allowed to speak.

Do Not Shame the Old Path

It is easy to judge an old choice or pattern with everything you know now.

This exercise is not about excusing harm or pretending the old path was good for you.

It is about understanding what made that path make sense at the time, so you can choose with more freedom now.

1. Name the old path

Choose one pattern, decision, relationship, habit, or familiar response you sometimes judge yourself for.

The old path I am thinking about is:

_____

_____

2. What did I know then?

Try to answer from the person you were then - not from everything you understand today.

_____

_____

3. What was I trying to survive, protect, avoid, or receive?

_____

_____

4. What did the old path give me, even for a little while?

Perhaps comfort, belonging, approval, numbness, certainty, protection from conflict, a sense of control, or something else.

_____

_____

5. What did it cost me later?

_____

_____

6. What do I understand now that I did not understand then?

_____

_____

7. What different turn could I try now?

It does not have to undo the past. It only needs to be one response that fits who you are and what you know today.

_____

_____

A reminder

You do not have to praise the old path.

You do not have to keep walking it. But you do not have to hate the person who first stepped onto it either.

That person was trying to get somewhere with the map they had.

Chapter 10 — The Sparkle Stick

What Will You Carry Forward?

Your Sparkle Stick is not a scorecard. The plaques are not medals for performing recovery correctly. They are trail markers - small reminders of what happened, what you learned, and what you can carry with you.

1. Choose one moment or mountain

Think of something you have lived through recently or long ago.

It may be a large mountain or a very small moment.

The moment or mountain I am thinking about is:

_____

_____

2. What happened?

Write only as much as feels useful.

_____

_____

3. What did I not know how to do at first?

_____

_____

4. What helped me find my way?

Perhaps it was a person, a truth, a boundary, a skill, a routine, professional help, rest, practice, faith, information, or something else.

_____

_____

5. What did I learn that I can carry forward?

_____

_____

6. Write the plaque

Keep it simple and write it in your own words.

It might say:

“I asked for help.” “I finally rested.” “I learned to say no.” “I started again.” - Or something entirely your own.

My plaque says:

_____

_____

A reminder

A plaque does not say that you handled everything perfectly. It simply says: I was here. This happened. I did not know what to do at first, but I learned something I can carry forward.

My Mountain Weather Plan

Make this plan for the life you actually have - not an imaginary life with unlimited time, money, quiet, or freedom from responsibilities.

A useful plan is one you can still reach for on a difficult day.

1. What are my early warning signs?

What tells me that my weather is changing?

Consider

- sleep,
- tension,
- irritability,
- withdrawal,
- racing thoughts,
- forgetfulness,
- appetite,
- pain,
- overworking,

shutting down, or signs that are particular to you.

_____

_____

2. What helps me slow down before the storm grows?

Choose things that are realistic in your actual life.

Perhaps ten minutes in the car, a chair in a quiet corner, a bathroom door you can close for three minutes, one song, one person to text, a dog to walk, a prayer, a page in a notebook, or a place outside.

What helps me:

_____

_____

3. What can wait until the weather is better?

_____

_____

4. Who can I ask for help if I cannot manage alone?

Person or service:

_____

_____

How I can reach them:

_____

_____

5. What sentence helps me remember?

You might borrow: “This is weather. It will change.”

Or write your own. My sentence:

_____

_____

6. Where will I keep this plan?

Choose a place you can find even when you are tired or foggy—a phone note, wallet card, kitchen drawer, journal, bedside table, or somewhere else.

I will keep it:

_____

_____

A reminder

Fog can make it hard to remember what you knew on a clear day. That is why hikers carry maps and leave trail markers. Your plan can be a map just for you.

Small Plaques Count

You do not need to climb a great mountain before something belongs on your Sparkle Stick.

Ordinary days contain things worth remembering too.

1. Notice one small good thing from today

Perhaps you

- got out of bed,
- made your bed
- cleaned one thing
- rested before you were completely exhausted,
- drank water,
- answered the phone,
- did not answer the phone,
- asked for help,
- let something wait,
- stepped outside,
- said no.

What small, good thing happened today?

_____

_____

2. Why did this matter today?

_____

_____

3. Write the small plaque

Keep it short. A few words are enough.

Today's plaque says:

_____

_____

4. If another small plaque appears

Another plaque:

_____

_____

Another plaque:

_____

_____

A reminder

A life is not made only of summits.

It is made of ordinary, stormy, foggy, resting, walking, and sheltering days.

A small plaque is simply a way of saying:

This day counted. I was here.

Chapter 11 — Climbing Beside Others

Help That Leaves Dignity Intact

Good help does not have to be perfect.

But it should help a person feel more seen, more informed, and more able to participate in their own life - not smaller, ashamed, or quietly taken over.

Use these questions to notice what helps you receive support and what helps you offer it.

1. When help has felt good

Think of a time when someone helped you without making you feel helpless.

What did that person do - or not do - that made the help feel respectful?

_____

_____

2. When help has made me smaller

Without needing to relive every detail, what kinds of help, advice, pressure, or “fixing” tend to make you shut down, feel ashamed, or lose your own voice?

_____

_____

3. What I want a rope partner to understand

Complete any sentence that feels useful:

• When I am overwhelmed, it helps when someone

_____.

• It does NOT help when someone

_____.

• If I cannot find words, you can help me by

_____.

• One thing I still want to decide for myself is

_____.

My Rope Team

Different people may hold different parts of the rope.

One person does not have to become your entire rescue team.

Person who listens well:

_____

_____

Person who helps with practical things:

_____

_____

Health or other professional support:

_____

_____

Person I can call when the weather becomes serious:

_____

_____

Someone I can laugh or simply be ordinary with:

_____

_____

When I Am the Helper

Helping can be loving. It can also become a way of taking over.

Before stepping in, you might ask:

• Did this person ask for advice, practical help, company, or simply to be heard?

• Am I explaining what I see, or deciding for them?

• Is there real danger that requires urgent action?

• Can I offer one useful handhold instead of carrying the whole backpack?

• What belongs to me to carry - and what belongs to the other person?

One change I want to practice in how I help:

_____

_____

A reminder

Walking beside someone does not mean tolerating harm.

If there is ongoing violence, coercion, serious danger, or repeated harm without real accountability and change, protection and appropriate support come first.

Chapter 12 — The Mountain You Did Not Mean to Climb

The Life I Thought I Would Live

Some grief comes from losing something we had.

Other grief comes from the life we expected to have or hoped for - but never lived.

You do not have to decide whether every old choice was right or wrong.

This page is simply a place to tell the truth about what was lost - and what is still possible.

1. The old map

What did you once imagine your life would look like?

What career, relationship, home, family, body, ability, country, role, or future did you envision for you?

_____

_____

2. What was lost?

Name what you genuinely miss.

Grief does not prove that you made the wrong choice.

It may simply mean that something mattered.

_____

_____

3. What can I not return to?

Sometimes clarity begins with knowing what no longer fits, even before you know what comes next.

_____

_____

Acceptance Is Not Approval

Choose one difficult reality you are spending a great deal of energy wishing had never happened.

Then separate acceptance from approval.

This happened:

_____

_____

What I do NOT have to approve of:

_____

_____

What I may still need to grieve, repair, protect, or change:

_____

_____

One next true step that is still mine:

_____

_____

Making a Home on This Mountain

Look at the life that actually exists around you now.

Not the life you were supposed to have. Not the life you may still wish had happened.

What is alive here?

One person, place, practice, creature, or ordinary thing that feels like home:

_____

_____

Something this unchosen mountain has taught me:

_____

_____

Something I may be ready to choose again—or choose for the first time:

_____

_____

A reminder

Making peace with where you are does not require you to stay in a place that is harming you.

Sometimes the next true step is to build a safer life somewhere else.

Chapter 13 — What You Carry Forward

Keep, Understand, Put Down

We inherit more than objects.

We inherit ways of speaking, worrying, loving, working, apologizing, hiding, celebrating, surviving, and making sense of the world.

You do not have to keep all of it unchanged.

1. What did I receive?

List a few visible or invisible things that came through your family, culture, community, or early life. Include good things too.

_____

_____

2. What do I want to keep?

Music, faith, humor, courage, recipes, practical skills, traditions, tenderness, work ethic, curiosity, stories, or something else:

_____

_____

3. **What do I want to understand rather than judge too quickly?**

Is there a family pattern that makes more sense when you consider the terrain earlier generations walked through?

Understanding does not require excusing harm.

_____

_____

4. **What needs to stop with me?**

A silence, fear, harsh rule, way of speaking, expectation, secret, or pattern that you do not want to pass forward unchanged:

_____

_____

5. What can begin with me?

Perhaps an apology.

A new family tradition.

More honest language.

A safer boundary.

A photograph with names written on the back.

Asking for help.

Saying “I love you.”

Letting a child know that an accident is only an accident.

_____

_____

The Inheritance I Want to Leave

If someone who loves you remembers one small thing about how you lived, what do you hope it is?

_____

_____

One small way I can live that inheritance now:

_____

_____

A reminder about forgiveness

Forgiveness is not the same as trust, reconciliation, forgetting, or allowing unsafe people back into your life.

You do not have to force forgiveness on a timetable.

Honesty and safety can come first.

Chapter 14 — The Last Sparkle

A Life Worth Living

Thinking about the finiteness of life does not have to make life smaller.

It can help us notice what deserves our attention while we are here. Use only the questions that feel grounding rather than overwhelming.

1. What feels precious because it will not last forever?

A person, an ordinary ritual, a place, your body, a season, a relationship, a dog, a song, a morning cup of coffee, a piece of art, or something else:

_____

_____

2. What am I still waiting to do?

Not a bucket list.

Think of something that matters because it would make your life more truthful, connected, or alive.

_____

_____

One small version I could do now:

_____

_____

The Questions at My Final Summit

Circle or answer only the questions that belong to you:

- Did I try to become the person I was meant to become?
- Did I use the gifts I was given?
- Did I ask for help when I needed it?
- Did I give help when I could?
- Did I protect people who were vulnerable?
- Did my pain make me more cruel - or more compassionate?
- Did I repair what I could repair?
- Did I do the things that mattered most to me?
- Did I have the courage to live true to myself and express my true feelings to others?
- Did I love?

One question I want to live more intentionally now:

_____

_____

What I Believe—and What I Do Not Know

You do not have to solve the mystery.

If spiritual questions matter to you, you may want to write a few words about what you believe, what you hope, what you do not know, and what fills you with awe.

What I believe or hope:

_____

_____

What I honestly do not know:

_____

_____

What helps me feel connected to something larger than myself:

_____

_____

Keep the Light

Imagine leaving one small trail marker for someone walking behind you. It does not have to be grand.

My pebble of courage might be:

_____

_____

One kindness, story, apology, lesson, or light I want to leave behind:

_____

_____

And for today, my next true step is:

_____

_____

If this reflection becomes dark

If thinking about death begins to feel like wanting to die, or you are unsure you can keep yourself safe, stop this exercise.

This is not a time to reflect alone.

Tell someone, contact a trusted person, seek urgent local help, call your local emergency service, or go to an emergency department.

The Final Summit is not an invitation to leave life early.

While you are here, your life still matters.

One last reminder

You do not have to finish this Field Guide.

You do not have to answer every question.

You may close it here with one sentence:

I am here. My life is still mine. My next true step is:

_____