

HEAL FIRST, THEN LOVE

*Close Old Wounds.
Get Ready for the **Real** Thing.*



DEDE OKEKE



SMART LIFE GUIDES • BONUS GUIDE

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Get ready for the real thing.*



WRITTEN BY

Dede Okeke

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A Letter to You



You have been hurt before. Maybe once. Maybe more times than you like to count. And here you are, still hoping for love, still believing it can be good.

That hope is beautiful. But before you open your heart again, there is something gentle I need to say to you.

A new love cannot heal an old wound. It was never built to. If you carry the pain of the past into the future, you will feel it again, even with the right person. Not because they are wrong. Because the wound was still open.

*“You do not need to be perfect to love again. You only need
to be healed enough to receive it.”*

This short guide is here to help you close the old wounds, one at a time, gently, so that when love comes, you are ready to hold it without fear.

You are not broken. You are healing. And healing is holy work.

With love,
Dede Okeke

Why You Must Heal First



Imagine planting a seed in ground that is full of stones. The seed may try to grow, but the stones keep getting in the way. Love is the same. It needs clear ground to grow.

When you carry old pain, it does not stay quiet. It shows up in small ways. You test people who have not hurt you. You pull back the moment things feel good. You expect the worst, so you never fully relax.

This is not a flaw in you. It is a wound trying to protect you. But protection built from fear will also keep love out.

Healing is not forgetting

Healing does not mean you pretend the past never happened. It means the past no longer controls what you do today. The memory may stay. The power it holds over you does not.

When you heal first, you stop looking for someone to rescue you, and you start being ready to be met. That is a very different, and much stronger, place to love from.

The Four Old Wounds



“Name the wound, and it begins to lose its power.”

Most heartbreak leaves behind one of four wounds. See if you know any of them. Naming a wound is the first step to healing it.

The Wound of Rejection

Someone made you feel like you were not wanted. Now a part of you expects to be turned away, so you turn away first. The lie it tells you is, *“I am too much, or not enough.”* The truth is, one person’s no was never the whole world’s answer about you.

The Wound of Betrayal

Someone you trusted broke that trust. Now trusting anyone feels dangerous. The lie it tells you is, *“Everyone will eventually let me down.”* The truth is, one person’s choice was about their character, not your worth.

The Wound of Abandonment

Someone left, and it taught you that people go. Now you hold on too tightly, or you leave first so no one can leave you. The lie it tells you is, *"I will always end up alone."* The truth is, being left once does not mean you are unlovable. It means they were not the one to stay.

The Wound of Not Being Enough

Somewhere you learned that love had to be earned. Now you over-give, over-please, and still feel you must do more. The lie it tells you is, *"I have to prove my worth."* The truth is, real love is a gift, not a wage. You do not have to earn a seat at the table you already belong to.

*"The wound speaks in lies. Healing is learning to answer it
with the truth."*

You may carry one of these wounds, or two, or all four. That is normal. Read them again slowly. The one that stings the most is the one to start with.

Forgiveness Sets You Free



Forgiveness is one of the most misunderstood words there is. So let us be clear about what it does not mean.

Forgiveness does not mean what happened was okay. It does not mean you must trust that person again. It does not mean you invite them back into your life.

Forgiveness simply means you stop carrying the weight of the offense. You put down the heavy bag you have been holding, so your hands are free to hold something better.

“Holding a grudge is like drinking poison and hoping the other person feels it.”

You forgive for your own freedom

When you refuse to forgive, the person who hurt you still lives in your mind, rent free. They still shape your choices. Forgiveness is how you finally take your peace back.

Say it gently, even out loud if you can: *“I release you. I am not carrying this any further.”* You may need to say it many times. That is alright. Freedom often comes one small choice at a time.

Grieve, Then Grow



Before you rush to feel better, give yourself permission to feel at all. Something was lost. A relationship, a hope, a version of the future you had already pictured.

That loss deserves to be mourned. When we skip grief, it does not disappear. It hides, and it leaks out later as anger, or numbness, or fear of the next person.

Let it move through you

Cry if you need to. Write the letter you will never send. Talk to a trusted friend, or to God, honestly. Grief is not weakness. It is love with nowhere left to go, and it needs a way out.

But do not build a house there. Grieve fully, and then, when you are ready, take one small step forward. Heal what you can. Learn what it taught you. And slowly, gently, begin again.

“You are allowed to be both a masterpiece and a work in progress at the same time.”

Learning to Trust Yourself Again



After heartbreak, many women stop trusting other people. But there is a deeper loss that is harder to see. They stop trusting themselves.

You may think, “*I chose wrong before, so how can I trust my own judgment now?*” This quiet doubt can keep you stuck for years.

Here is the truth. You are not the same woman who made those choices. You know more now. You see more now. Every wound, once healed, becomes wisdom.

SMALL WAYS TO REBUILD SELF-TRUST

- ◆ Keep small promises to yourself, and watch your confidence grow.
- ◆ Notice a red flag, and honor it instead of explaining it away.
- ◆ Say no without a long apology, and let that be enough.
- ◆ Trust the quiet feeling that says “something is off,” even when you cannot prove it yet.

Self-trust is not built in a day. It is built in small moments where you keep your own side of the promise. Each one tells you, “*I have my own back now.*”

Your Gentle Healing Plan



“Healing is not a race. It is a returning.”

You do not have to heal everything at once. Take it one gentle step at a time. Here is a simple path you can follow over four weeks, or four months. Go at your own pace.

1

Name it. Write down the wound you carry most. Rejection, betrayal, abandonment, or not being enough. You cannot heal what you will not name.

2

Feel it. Let yourself grieve what was lost. Give the pain a way out through words, prayer, or a trusted friend.

3

Release it. Choose forgiveness, not for them, but for your own freedom. Put the heavy bag down.

4

Rebuild it. Keep small promises to yourself. Answer the old lie with the new truth, again and again, until it becomes who you are.

Some days will feel like progress. Some days will feel like you slipped back. Both are part of healing. Be as gentle with yourself as you would be with a dear friend.

Journal Prompts for Healing



Writing your answers down helps turn a feeling into something you can see and understand. Take your time with these. There are no wrong answers.

1. Which of the four wounds do I carry most, and where did it begin?
2. What lie has this wound been telling me about myself?
3. What is the truth I want to believe instead?
4. Who do I need to forgive, so that I can finally be free, including myself?
5. What is one small promise I can keep to myself this week?
6. What would my life look like if I truly believed I was worthy of good love?

Return to these questions often. Your answers will change as you heal, and that change is the proof that the healing is working.

Signs You Are Healing



Healing rarely arrives with a loud announcement. It shows up quietly, in small moments. Watch for these gentle signs in the weeks and months ahead.

- ◆ You think of the past and feel peace instead of pain.
- ◆ You no longer check for reasons to be afraid of someone kind.
- ◆ You can be alone without feeling unwanted.
- ◆ You forgive yourself for what you did not know back then.
- ◆ You set a boundary without guilt, and it feels like self-respect.
- ◆ You feel hopeful about love again, but no longer desperate for it.
- ◆ You trust your own judgment, one small choice at a time.

You will not feel all of these at once, and that is normal. Healing comes unevenly, a little at a time. Notice each sign when it appears, and let it count.

A Prayer for Healing



Heal the parts of me that still ache from what I have carried.

Take the weight of every old wound, and help me lay it down for good.

Teach me to forgive, so that I can finally be free.

Show me my own worth, the way You have always seen it.

*And when love comes, let me be whole enough to hold it, and brave
enough to believe I deserve it.*

A M E N .

A Final Word



You picked up this guide because a part of you is ready. Ready to stop carrying the old pain. Ready to believe that love can be good again.

Be patient with yourself. Wounds that took years to form do not close in a single day. But they do close. A little more each time you choose truth over the old lie, peace over the old grudge, and hope over the old fear.

“You are not starting over. You are starting wiser.”

When you have healed, you will not love out of need or fear. You will love from a full, steady place. And that is the kind of love that lasts.

Heal first. Then love. In that order, everything changes.

With love and hope for you,
Dede Okeke

READ ONE EACH MORNING

Affirmations for Healing



Say one of these slowly each morning, and let it settle before your day begins.

01 *My past does not decide my future.*

02 *I am healing, a little more every day.*

03 *I forgive, so that I can be free.*

04 *I am worthy of a love that is gentle and true.*

05 *I trust myself to know what is good for me.*

06 *I do not have to earn love. It is a gift I can receive.*

07 *I release what hurt me, and I keep what it taught me.*

08 *I am whole on my own, and open to being met.*

About the Author

Dede Okeke writes simple, honest guides for women who are ready for real love. Her words are gentle on purpose, because she believes the truth heals best when it is spoken with kindness.



Be gentle with yourself.

Your healing has already begun.