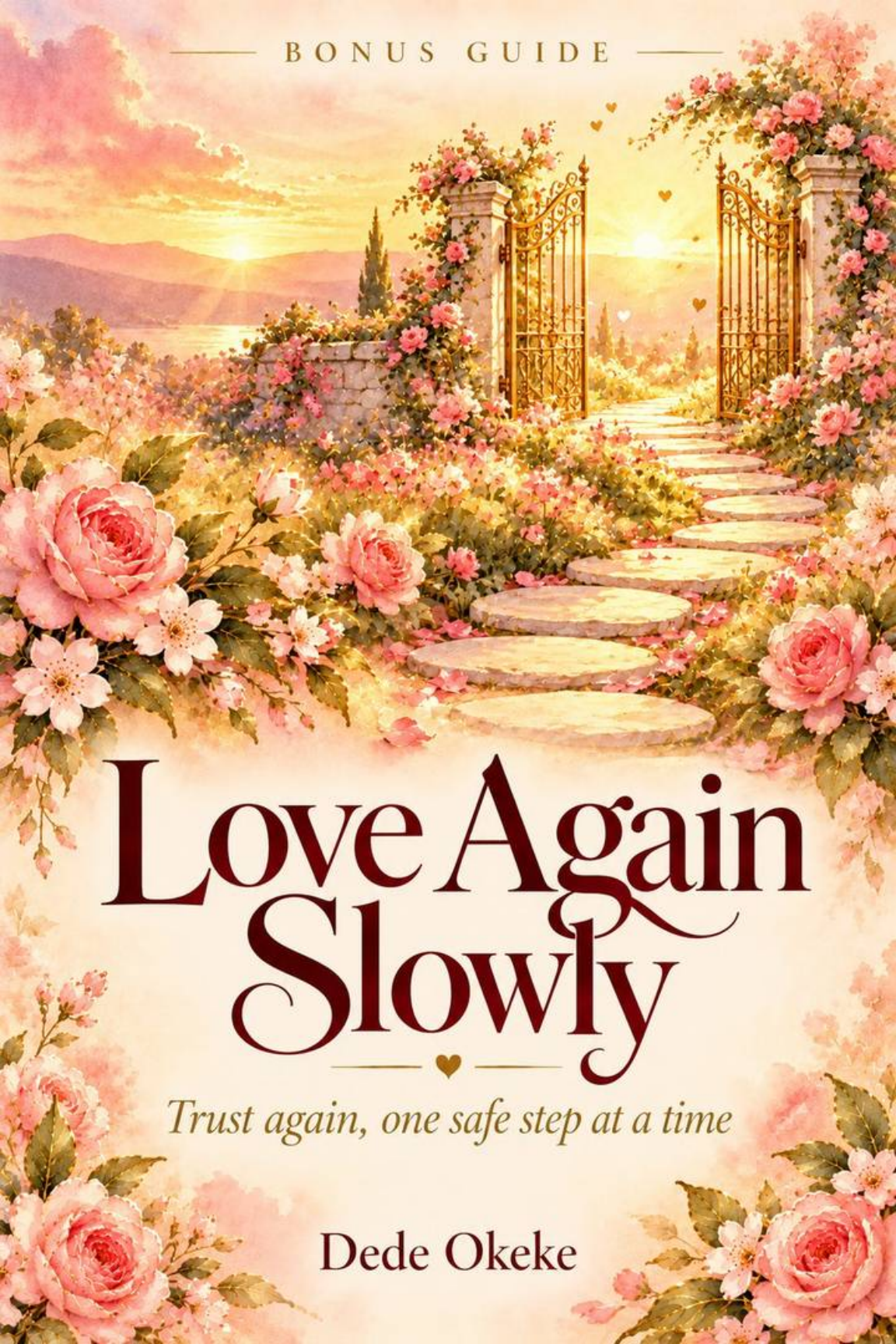




BONUS GUIDE

Love Again Slowly

Trust again, one safe step at a time

Dede Okeke

BEFORE WE BEGIN

A Note From Dede



Welcome, friend.

After you have been hurt, love can feel scary. Your heart wants to try again, but your mind says, “Be careful.” Both are right.

This guide is about loving again with **open eyes**. Not in a rush. Not in fear. Slowly, and safely.

How to use this guide

- Read one page at a time.
- Answer the questions in a notebook.
- There is no right speed.
- Finish with your own Love Rules on page 11.

This guide is general advice. It does not replace a counselor. You know your life best.

With love,

Dede Okeke

WHY IT FEELS SCARY

A Careful Heart



If you feel afraid to love again, nothing is wrong with you. Your heart is trying to keep you safe.

Fear is not a stop sign

Fear says, “Be careful.” That is good advice. But fear should not drive the car. You can feel afraid and still take a small, safe step.

Being careful is not the same as being closed.

Two mistakes to avoid

- **Running too fast:** giving your whole heart before you know someone.
- **Hiding too much:** never letting anyone in, even a good one.

The path is in the middle. This guide shows you how to walk it.

STEP 1

Heal First



A heart that is still bleeding often grabs the first hand it can find. Give yourself time to heal.

Are you ready? Check yourself

- I can think about the past without crying all day.
- I am not looking for someone to fill a hole.
- I like my own company.
- I know what I need and what I will not accept.
- I am not trying to prove something to anyone.

You do not need all five. But if most are “no,” take more time. There is no prize for hurrying.

Fill your own cup

Spend time with friends. Do things you enjoy. Rest. A full heart chooses better.

STEP 2

The Trust Ladder



Trust is not one big jump. It is a ladder. You climb one step at a time.

1. **Small truths.** Does this person tell the truth in little things?
2. **Kept words.** Do they do what they say, even small things?
3. **Respect.** Do they respect your “no” and your time?
4. **Hard talks.** Can they hear a problem without anger?
5. **Time.** Is it the same person after months, not only weeks?

Do not climb to the top in one day. Stay on each step until it feels strong.

If a step shakes, do not climb higher. Stay, or step back down.

STEP 3

The 90-Day Rule



Almost anyone can look good for a few weeks. Real character shows with time. Try giving every new love about **90 days** before you give your deep trust.

Days 1 to 30: Watch

Notice how they speak, listen, and treat other people.

Days 31 to 60: Test

Say no to something small. Share a mild disagreement. See what happens.

Days 61 to 90: Decide

Look at the whole picture. Do their actions match their words? Do you feel calm or tense around them?

This is not a rule from the sky. It is a tool. Use it in your own way.

GOOD SIGNS

Green Flags



Learn what safe love looks like. Then you will know it when you see it.

- Tells the truth, even when it is hard.
- Says sorry and changes.
- Respects your “no.”
- Is the same with you and with others.
- Lets you have friends and your own time.
- Speaks kindly, even when upset.
- Does what they say they will do.
- Makes you feel calm more than anxious.

Safe love does not make you guess.

A person does not need to be perfect. But the good signs should be **more** than the bad ones, and they should be steady.

A HARD QUESTION

Has Someone Really Changed?



Sometimes a person who hurt you says, “I have changed.” How can you know? Look for these signs:

1. They tell the whole truth, without being forced.
2. They take full blame, with no “but.”
3. They do the work: they get help, or learn new habits.
4. The change lasts for many months.
5. They do not ask you to hurry or to forget.

Words alone are not change. Change looks like a new way of living, day after day.

Forgiving is not the same as trusting

You can forgive to free your own heart. Trust is different. Trust is earned slowly.

Fear or Warning?



How can you tell if you are feeling real danger, or just old fear?

Old fear

- Loud and fast.
- Comes up even when nothing is wrong.
- Is about the past.

A real warning

- Quiet and steady.
- Comes with something you can point to.
- Is about what is happening now.

The 3-Breath Check

1. Put a hand on your chest.
2. Breathe in and out slowly, three times.
3. Ask: *What do I actually see?*

If you can point to something real, listen. If not, be kind to yourself and wait.

Words You Can Use



Many of us were never taught how to say hard things. Here are simple sentences you can borrow.

To slow things down

- “I like this. I want to go slowly.”

To ask for honesty

- “I need the truth, even when it is hard.”

To set a limit

- “That does not work for me.”
- “Please do not speak to me like that.”

To pause

- “I need time to think. I will answer later.”

Say them out loud, alone, a few times first. You do not need to be loud to be firm.

YOUR PAGE

My Love Rules



Write your own rules for love. These are the lines you will not cross. Keep this page.

Rule 1: _____

Rule 2: _____

Rule 3: _____

Rule 4: _____

Rule 5: _____

Examples: "I will be told the truth." "I will go at my own speed." "I will keep my friends." "I will not be shouted at."



THANK YOU



Your heart is not broken beyond repair. Go slowly. Choose with open eyes. You deserve a love that is honest, kind, and steady.

This guide gives general encouragement and education. It is not medical, legal, or mental health advice. If you are in danger, please contact local emergency or crisis help.

Thank You!

Your Healing Journey Begins Here.



A Beautiful New Chapter Awaits You

"Thank you for choosing yourself, your peace, and your healing. May these pages remind you that your story is far from over."

*With love,
Dede Okeke*