

Two Truths

Some things don't resolve into one truth. They were never supposed to.

A great deal of suffering comes from trying to force a complicated reality into one absolute sentence. *Either I love them or they hurt me. Either I did my best or I caused harm. Either I'm grateful or I want more.* But the truest sentences in a life are usually double:

I love them, and they hurt me. I did the best I could, and I caused harm. My parents loved me, and some of what they did affected me. I am grateful, and I want more. I forgive myself, and I am responsible for changing. I can understand why someone became who they are, and decide they cannot have access to me.

Notice every one of those uses *and*, not *but*. "But" erases the first half. "And" lets both stand. Therapists have a name for holding two truths at once; you can just call it honesty. About ten minutes.

ONE

Name the knot

What's the situation you keep trying to force into a single verdict — the person, the choice, the chapter of your life you can't file under "good" or "bad"?

TWO

Write the first truth

The one that's easier to say — the one you lead with when you tell the story.

THREE

Write the second truth

The one that feels like a betrayal of the first — the one you usually attach to a "but," or leave out entirely. Write it with "and."

FOUR

Let them stand together

Write both as one sentence, joined by "and." Then sit with it a moment and answer: what becomes possible when you stop making them fight? What have you been unable to do while waiting for one of them to win?

Holding both is not indecision. You can hold "I understand them, and they cannot have access to me" and still lock the door. The two truths don't cancel your choices — they finally make your choices honest.

IF IT STIRRED SOMETHING UP

Coming back down

Breathe in through your nose for four, out through your mouth for eight — longer out than in — for a few minutes. Then name five things you can see, four you can hear, three you can touch. Stirred-up feelings after writing like this are common and tend to pass; if they don't, that's information that this deserves more support than a page can give.

If you're in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, please don't work through it alone here. In the US, call or text 988 (the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline), or chat at 988lifeline.org — available 24/7. Outside the US, findahelpline.com lists helplines around the world.

A BLESSING ON THIS WORK

This work is a gift. Share it freely with anyone who needs it — print it, copy it, pass it on whole. It is not for sale, by us or by anyone, and it shouldn't be changed. Above all, keep the crisis lines and the words about seeking professional help exactly as they are — for someone, those may be the lines that matter most. It exists to help people heal, and to raise the vibration of the world. That will never cost anything here.

— Aether & Root · aetherandroot.com/inner-work