

# Journal Prompts for the Liminal Space

by Heather Plett

## A. Liminal Space

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*“Liminal space is a period in which something— social hierarchy, culture, belief, tradition, identity, etc.—has been dissolved and a new thing has not yet emerged to take its place. It’s that period of uncertainty, ambiguity, restlessness, fear, discomfort, and anguish. It’s the space between, when a trapeze artist lets go of one bar and doesn’t yet know whether they will be able to catch the other bar.” – Heather Plett, The Art of Holding Space: A Practice of Love, Liberation, and Leadership*

1. What is liminal in your life right now? What feels uncertain about your future?
2. How does liminal feel in your body? Move around as you consider the word and notice how your body holds it.
3. What have you let go of or moved away from?
4. What felt secure in the past but no longer feels secure?
5. What are you still clinging to from the past?
6. What are you happy to release from the past?
7. What are you grieving? How is grief living in your body?
8. Write a list of the emotions that have been emerging during this liminal space. (You can incorporate an art practice by assigning each emotion a colour and doing a finger painting with those colours.)
9. Are there relationships that will change as a result of this liminal space you’re in? How do you feel about that?
10. Do you feel safe in this liminal space? Why or why not? What might help you feel safer?
11. One of my favourite mantras, which I try hard to embrace when I’m in liminal space, is “The outcome is not my responsibility.” Say that mantra a few times to yourself and notice how it feels to say it. Write about how that feels.
12. Find a piece of music that represents liminal space. (Some of my favourites are Nothing Stays the Same, by Luke Sital-Singh; Carry On, by The Fortunate Ones; Change of Time, by Josh Ritter; Unsettled, by Justin Rutledge; and The Darkness, by Rose Cousins.) Listen to it and then write about the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
13. What is possible if you surrender to this moment?
14. What stories from the past might this liminal space be inviting you to let go of and/or rewrite?

## B. Rewriting old stories

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*“Our old stories shape us into the people we are now. When we can hold those stories with compassion and grace, they help us grow and heal and become more grounded and emotionally strong. But when those stories still hold a strong emotional charge – anger, fear, frustration, resentment, etc., they can hold us back from that growth and healing. In those times, it can be valuable to find new ways of telling those stories.” – Heather Plett*

***Note:** While this process can be healing and transformational for many, it might also be a triggering exercise for those with trauma. Exercise caution and, if necessary, seek therapeutic support. For those with trauma, it may be better to find alternative healing methods that don't risk bringing the trauma back to the surface (somatic healing, for example).*

1. List five moments in your life when something happened that changed the course of your life.
2. List five moments in your life when a relationship changed (ie. someone betrayed you, you let someone down, you changed your opinion of someone, you deepened your trust and commitment, new boundaries were erected, etc.)
3. List five moments when you surprised yourself with how much strength, courage, resilience, and/or wisdom you were capable of.
4. List five moments when you experienced joy.
5. Choose one of the stories from the lists you created that still holds some anger, pain, frustration, anxiety, disappointment, or other strong emotion. Write that story with as much detail as you can, including whatever emotions you were feeling throughout.
6. Notice how you feel after writing it. If those strong emotions are coming up again, take some time away from the page and be tender with yourself. Pour a cup of tea, go for a walk, talk to a friend – whatever helps you hold those emotions with tenderness.
7. When you are ready, revisit what you've written. You might want to try reading it out loud to yourself so that you can pay attention to what your voice reveals as you read it.
8. Ask yourself as many of the following questions as feel relevant (write your answers in your journal):
  - a. Which parts of the story bring up the most emotional charge?
  - b. What other feelings might be beneath the emotions that were revealed? (For example, sometimes anger is a mask for fear, and sometimes frustration is a mask for loneliness.)
  - c. In what ways did you let yourself down in the story? How can you make that right for yourself now?
  - d. In what ways did other people let you down in the story? How can you make that right for yourself now?
  - e. In what ways did you show courage, resilience, strength, and wisdom in the story?
  - f. Is there anyone from this story that you need to have a follow-up conversation with? If so, what is the nature of that conversation? (*Note: Writing a letter that you never send might be a sufficient way to practice this, even if the person is dead or no longer part of your life.*)

- g. Is there anyone from this story that you need to have clearer boundaries with? If so, what should those boundaries look like?
  - h. Did you have unfair expectations of anyone in the story (including yourself)? If so, what is the longing beneath those expectations?
  - i. Are you holding anyone hostage by not releasing them from your expectations, not communicating your needs or boundaries, or holding onto resentment or desire for revenge?
  - j. What would give you peace? Are you relying on other people for that peace, or can you find it yourself?
  - k. Can you imagine another way of interpreting any parts of this story?
  - l. What might happen if you chose to free yourself from the story and/or the people in it? What does that freedom look like?
  - m. What if you imagine the story as a triumphant narrative, in which you were able to survive and thrive despite the odds?
  - n. How do you feel now?
9. When you're ready (take a few days, if you need time), write the story again.
- a. What shows up this time? How are you feeling about the story now?
  - b. Is there anyone you want to share this new version of the story with?
  - c. Does this feel complete, or do you want to repeat the process?
  - d. Do you need to talk to anyone about the story?
  - e. What new commitment do you need to make to yourself now?
  - f. What have you learned?
10. If there has been transformation for you in this process, consider a **ritual** that might help you mark that transformation. Perhaps burning the old version of the story? Or turning it into art by painting over the old words? Or buying yourself a gift to mark the growth and transformation? Or throwing a party?

*Want to go deeper with your personal exploration? There is more like this in my online self-study program, [Write for Love and Liberation](https://centreforholdingspace.com/holding-space-online-courses/write-for-love-and-liberation/). (<https://centreforholdingspace.com/holding-space-online-courses/write-for-love-and-liberation/>)*