

HOLDING SPACE - SERIES ONE

Mindful Tools for Caregivers, Parents & Teachers

Based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)

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Introduction

The *Holding Space* series was born from real moments — the pauses between chaos and calm, the breaths between exhaustion and grace.

Each reflection was created for caregivers, parents, and teachers who give endlessly, yet often forget to breathe for themselves.

This six-part series is grounded in **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)** — a mindfulness-based psychological approach that helps us stay present, accept what's difficult, and act with compassion and values-led intention.

ACT reminds us that:

- We can't control every storm, but we can choose how we show up in it.
- Growth doesn't come from perfection, but from presence.
- Awareness, acceptance, and action are the three pillars of emotional resilience.

Through these six themes, you will learn to pause, observe, and reconnect — with your child, your work, and your own inner self.

1. You Are Not Your Thoughts	4. Pause Before You React
2. Your Mental Health Gym	5. Even on Messy Days
3. Take 1 Hour Alone	6. Gentle Boundaries

The Six Themes

1. You Are Not Your Thoughts

Cognitive Defusion — Awareness

“Our minds are loud places. Thoughts come and go like clouds; you are the sky that holds them.”

We often mistake our thoughts for truths — “I am failing,” “I can’t do this,” “I am not enough.” ACT teaches us to notice these thoughts without believing them. **You are not your thoughts;** you are the one observing them.

Reflection Prompt:

- Which thoughts often feel “sticky” for you?
- Can you imagine placing distance between the thought and yourself — seeing it as a passing cloud, not a definition?

2. Your Mental Health Gym

Present-Moment Awareness — Mindfulness

“Mindfulness isn’t a trend; it’s your daily gym for emotional strength.”

Mindfulness isn’t about staying calm all the time. It’s about **noticing** when you have drifted away and gently returning.

The practice of **awareness** builds flexibility: the ability to stay steady even when things feel unpredictable.

Reflection Prompt:

- What small daily activity can you turn into a mindfulness anchor (breathing, walking, washing dishes)?
- How can you bring more awareness into ordinary routines?

3. Take 1 Hour Alone

Self-as-Context — Reconnection with Self

“You are still you — beneath the roles, the routines, and the noise.”

Solitude helps you meet yourself again. No phone. No TV. No child. Just you — breathing, noticing, being.

If one hour feels impossible, start with 30 minutes, or even 15.

This practice creates space for you to remember **who you are** outside of caregiving.

Reflection Prompt:

- When was the last time you sat in silence without multitasking?
- How did it feel to just be, instead of do?

4. Pause Before You React

Emotional Regulation — Respond, Don't React

“You can't control the storm, but you can choose how you show up in it.”

Between every trigger and every response, there's a space.

That single breath — before you yell, snap, or retreat is where awareness lives.

Reacting comes from **fear**. Responding comes from **calm**.

Each **pause** is a small act of growth.

Reflection Prompt:

- What triggers feel hardest to pause through?
- Can you practice breathing — just once — before reacting next time?

5. Even on Messy Days

Acceptance — Self-Compassion & Emotional Flexibility

“Progress isn’t neat or linear; it’s full of pauses, restarts, and grace.”

Some days, everything unravels.

The noise, the meltdowns, the exhaustion — none of it means failure. It means you’re human. Acceptance is not giving up; it’s **letting go of the need to control everything**, so you can breathe again.

Reflection Prompt:

- What does “enough” look like for you on messy days?
- Can you hold yourself with the same gentleness you offer your child?

6. Gentle Boundaries

Values + Committed Action — Love in Structure

“Boundaries are not walls; they are safety lines drawn with love.”

Love doesn’t always mean saying yes. Sometimes it sounds like “not now.”

Boundaries protect both your peace and your child’s stability.

They model **safety, consistency, and self-respect**.

Reflection Prompt:

- What boundary do you struggle most to maintain?
- How can you express limits with warmth instead of guilt?

Integration Exercise: The Six Breaths

A short grounding sequence to revisit each theme.

Awareness — Notice your thoughts without judgement.

Presence — Anchor to the moment through breath.

Solitude — Sit with yourself in quiet awareness.

Regulation — Breathe before you react.

Acceptance — Let go of perfection; hold what is.

Action — Set one boundary today that honours your values.

Repeat these **six breaths** anytime you need to realign. 🌿



Closing Reflection

Holding Space — *Series One* is not an end, but a pause.
It's an invitation to return — to breath, to body, to purpose.

Every mindful pause is an act of healing.

Every act of awareness plants a seed of change.

Even in chaos, you can choose presence over panic,
connection over control, and love over exhaustion.

The next series will deepen this journey — into compassion,
defusion, and gentle renewal.

Until then, take a breath. You are doing the work. 🌱

About This Series

The *Holding Space* series by **Arc & Hearth** is inspired by therapeutic and educational practices that bridge psychology and heart-led caregiving. It draws from **Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT)**, integrating evidence-based mindfulness tools with lived understanding from the world of early intervention, teaching, and caregiving.

ACT is a **therapy modality** that empowers individuals to:

- Stay present with what is here.
- Open up to what is difficult.
- Move in the direction of what matters.

Through this, we strengthen **emotional flexibility** — the ability to feel, think, and act with awareness and intention.

Phoebe Tan Huey Min