



# BEHIND THE RAINBOW

A mindfulness journal and  
coloring book in honor of Pride



**Most of us think of Pride in full color.**

We see it as a celebration of self and an ode to love without limits. But it's not all rainbows and sparkles. The truth is that Pride can often feel complex for those of us in the LGBTQIA+ community. Living authentically and visibly can be scary, and even cost us our safety.

And yet still, we find joy.

"Behind The Rainbow" is a mindfulness journal and coloring book I've created with Calm, that has been designed to help you to check in with yourself during the month of Pride and beyond. I hope it serves as a reminder that your mental wellbeing is important and worth investing in. While you're exploring its pages, I invite you to stay mindful, remain present, and ultimately feel at home in yourself.

Print out this mindful activity book and carve out some time for yourself. Use the journal prompts to connect with your authentic self, and peel back the layers that lie beneath the surface. Then bring some nuance to the black and white pages with whichever colors of the rainbow you're drawn towards. Notice what arises in your body and mind as you reflect and color.

May you find moments of peace within these pages.

And always remember...

**You are worthy.**

**You are loved.**

**You are valued.**

*Jess Bird*





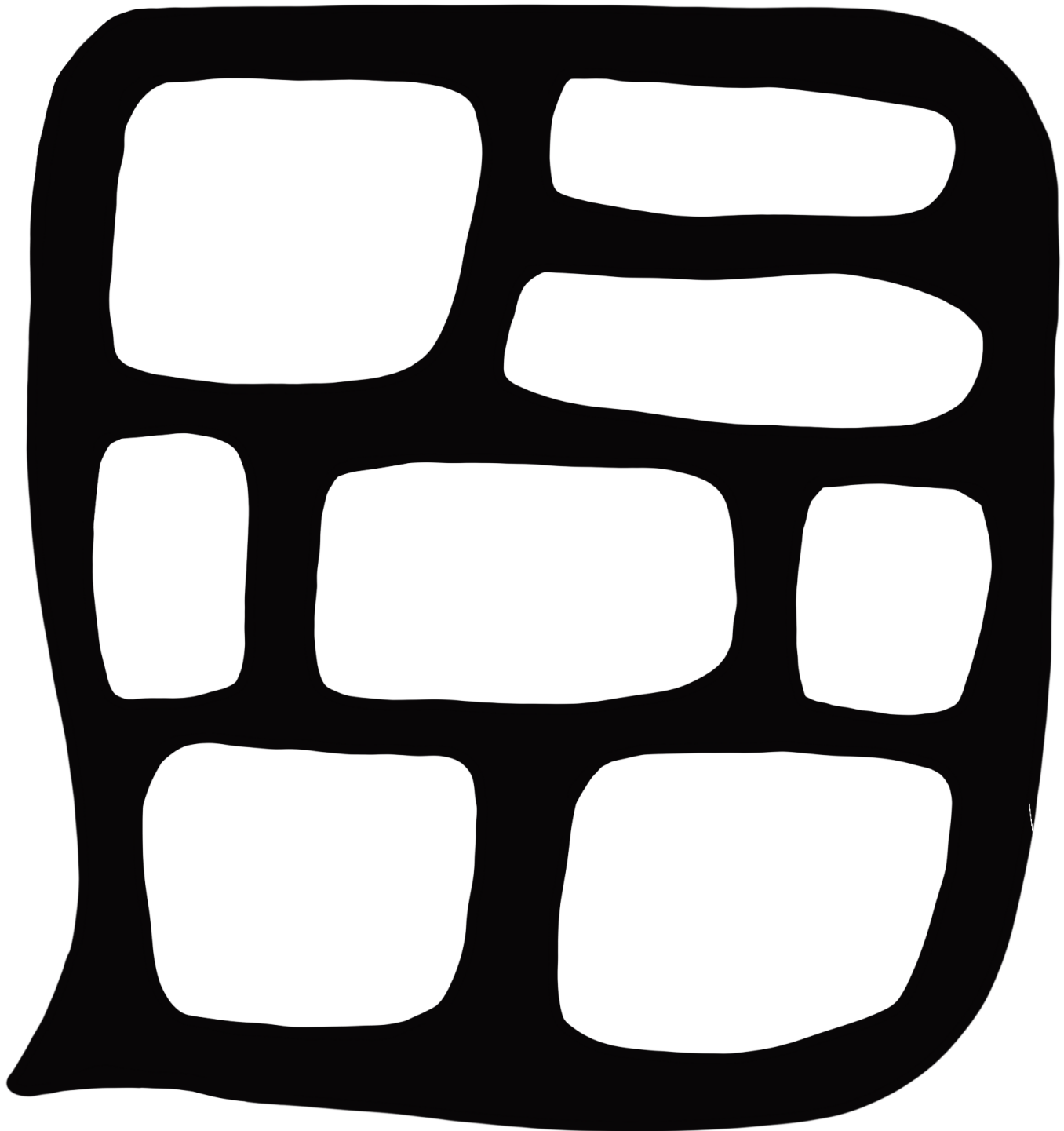
# HOW ARE YOU PROTECTING YOUR PEACE?

We cannot control everything. It is important  
to focus on what we can and being mindful  
of our own inner harmony.

# MIND MATTERS

What's taking up your mental space?

Write it down and let it go.



# SELF-LOVE is RADICAL

The only way to true self acceptance and authenticity  
is self love. How are you practicing this in your life?



# FEELINGS AREN'T FOREVER.

Feelings come and go.  
Acknowledge them and let them pass.





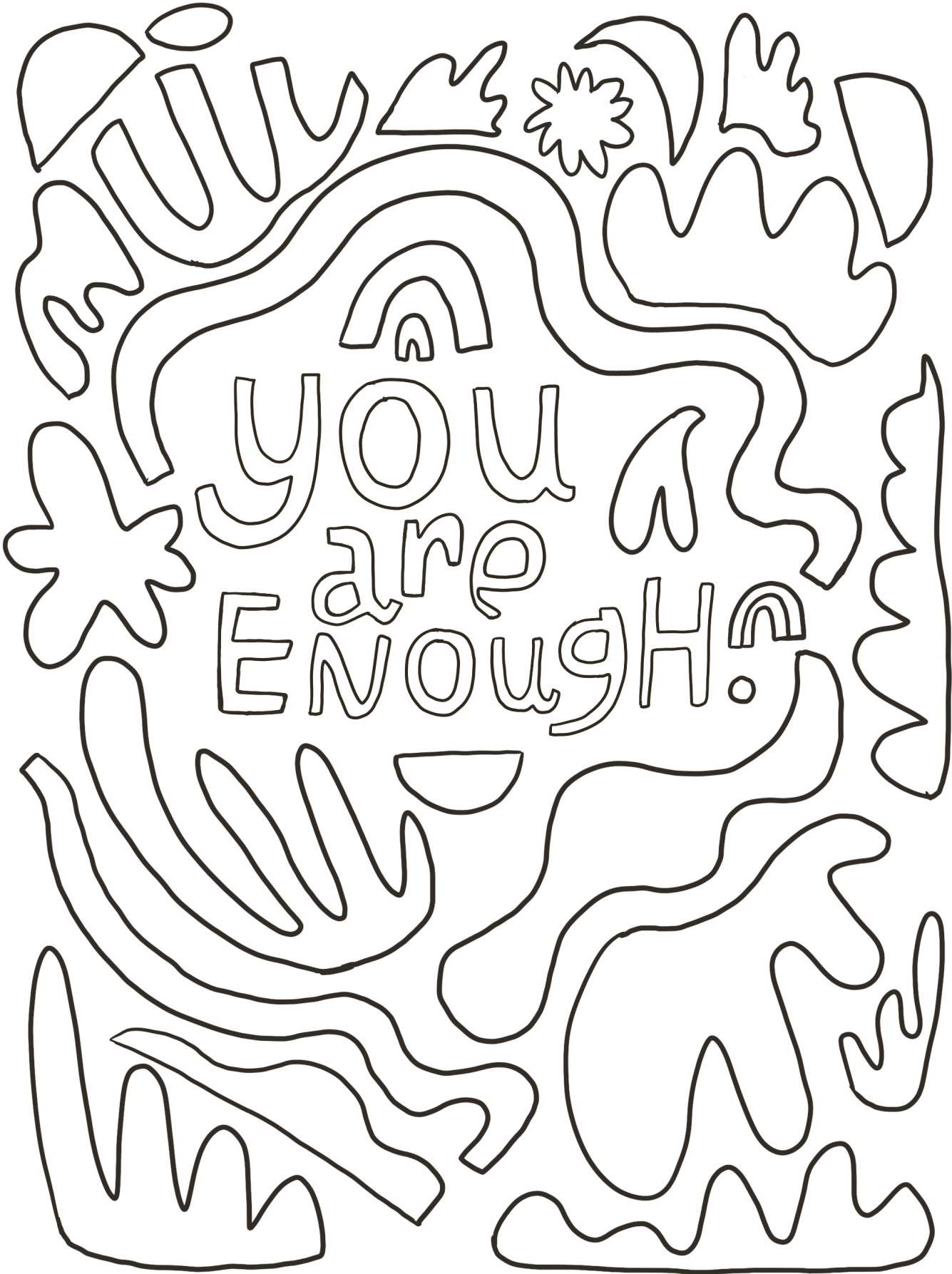
STAY  
PRESENT

# THINGS I'M PROUD OF MYSELF FOR:

A collection of ten hand-drawn, rounded rectangular boxes of various sizes and orientations, intended for writing. The boxes are arranged in three rows: the top row has two boxes, the middle row has one long horizontal box and one vertical box, and the bottom row has two boxes.

# THINGS TAKE TIME

Most things take time to cultivate. We cannot compare our journey to anyone else's. Use this space to write down the things you might be struggling with waiting for.



# Why our need to belong is so strong

YOU'RE NOT NEEDY OR TOO MUCH.  
YOU'RE JUST TRYING TO BELONG.

Belonging is fundamental to humankind. The pursuit of it is the driving force behind our desire to be a part of groups, and its presence (or absence) has a direct impact on our mental, emotional, and physical wellbeing.

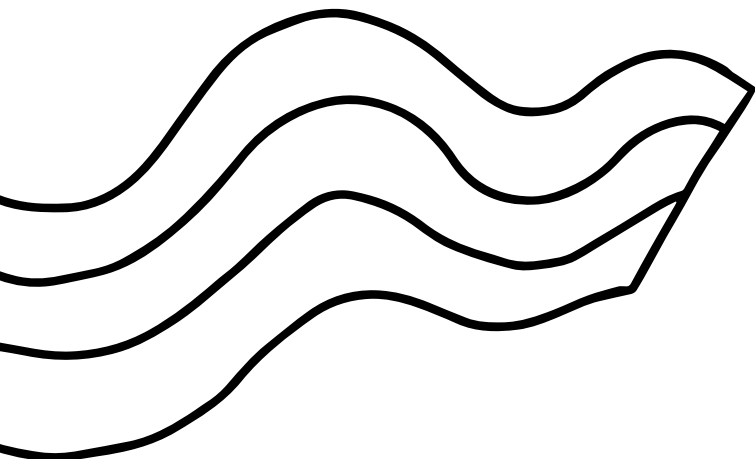
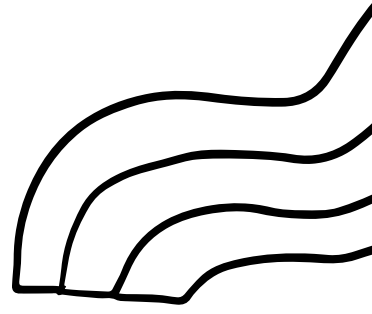
Belonging grows from a feeling of connectedness with others, and the sense that you are a part of something. That could be with an individual, a group, or a larger community. But, a social connection doesn't necessarily equate to belonging.

More than just an acquaintance between people or a group, belonging is all about being seen, accepted, and supported by others and doing the same for them. It's built gradually over time with people that are supportive of us as full, authentic human beings.

## Belonging helps us survive

The need to belong is seen as basic to our survival as food and shelter, because it helped keep us alive in the past. When faced with enemies (of the human or animal variety) or struggling to meet the other basic needs, those belonging to a group had a higher survival rate. Groups protect and support each other, making it more likely to raise offspring and pass on their genes.

So, we literally inherit our desire to belong; it's hardwired in our brain. Studies have shown that we crave connection in the same region of the brain that we crave food, and we experience social exclusion in the same part of the brain that we experience physical pain.





Belonging is also shown to be a key support for physical health, while the lack of it is linked to ill effects on health and wellbeing. It helps us to manage stress and feel more resilient, which ultimately allows us to cope more effectively during challenging times.

It's easy to see how a sense of belonging becomes a crucial component of our mental health. Research shows that the stronger our sense of belonging, the stronger our well-being. While the lack of belonging contributes to anxiety and depression.

In fact, lack of belonging is a stronger indicator for depression than loneliness or lack of social support.

## 5 ways to boost belonging

Given all of the benefits, it's important to actively seek, and cultivate, the sense of belonging in your life. While we can't control other people, there are some areas we can control to increase your feelings of connectedness. Here are five tips to help you boost your belonging.



### REMEMBER

Please remember that you should never do anything that puts your safety or welfare at risk. If something feels dangerous, don't do it. But if it's something that pushes the edge of your comfort zone, perhaps vulnerability and courage might serve your growth.

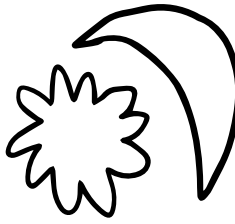
#### 1. Make an effort

Effort is one of the main ingredients when it comes to building a sense of belonging in your life. Your effort might look like:

- Joining a personal or professional group with shared values or goals
- Signing up for a class or training that interests you
- Saying yes to an invitation from someone you'd like to get to know (even if you're uncomfortable)
- Organizing meetups or time to get together with old and new friends

It can feel vulnerable, and exhausting at times, to put yourself out there (and then continue to show up), but this is the foundation of all belonging.





## 2. Be authentic

You have to be you to belong. If others aren't seeing the real you, they can't accept and support you, leaving no room for true connection to grow. For many of us, being authentic is a challenge. Whether we face outside pressure to be different, or just haven't had the time (or tools) to get to know who we really are, it can feel daunting. Mindfulness is a simple tool to start to quiet the noise and connect to who you really are.

## 3. Mindfully connect

Be curious about, and attentive to, others. Connection is an integral part of the belonging process so make an effort to engage in conversation. Ask questions, really listen to the responses, and share your thoughts and experience when appropriate. Steer clear of trying to "fix" or "instruct" others, instead focusing on being present and holding space for those you're with.

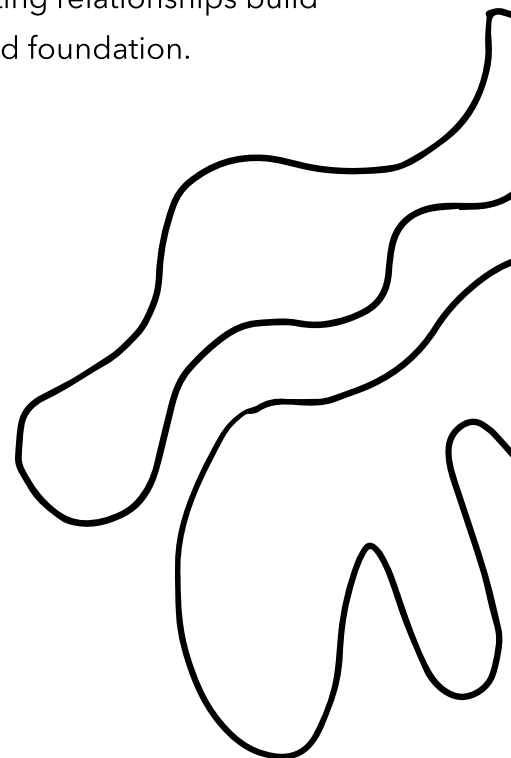
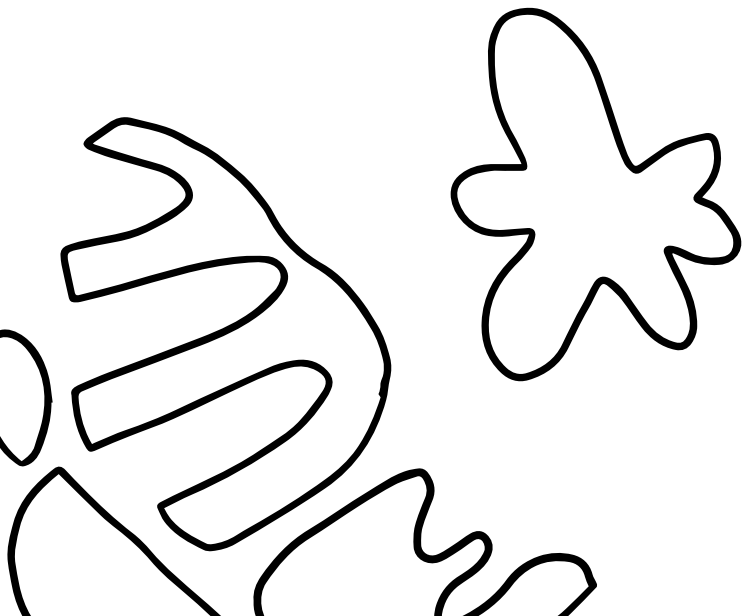
## 4. Practice acceptance

Focus on the similarities rather than differences of those around you. Others may have different beliefs or ways of doing things, but that doesn't mean you can't still share a deep connection with them.

So practice acceptance for others, and choose to see all the ways you are alike, including similar goals or beliefs that you share. You can also practice that same acceptance with yourself. Focusing on all the places you already feel you belong, rather than focusing on areas you don't, is a great way to boost our belonging, and invite more in.

## 5. Be patient

It can take time to gain acceptance, attention, and support from others. So be patient and try to enjoy the process. Easier said than done, but remember that letting relationships build slowly will create a solid foundation.



## Meet Jess Bird

Jess Bird is a self-taught artist + illustrator, making magic in her hometown of Rochester, NY. She started her Instagram and shop Bless the Messy in 2014, in an effort to connect back to herself and others during the darkness of depression.

Exposing herself as a messy, in-process human figuring it out, she uses her illustrations to convey what she's learning, how she's feeling, and how she moves through the world around her. Her hope is that people feel seen, validated, and less alone. She started Bless the Messy in a closet (both literally and figuratively) and has grown as an artist and human alongside so many of those who have supported her journey (even at a distance).

Jess is a mom, partner, friend, and community gatherer. She works hard to create magical spaces that are both beautiful and safe for the community to meet, make, learn, and grow together. Her studio, Luna Cooperative, is an inclusive co-working, classroom, shop, + safe space for anyone seeking a fortress for rest, healing, and love. When she's not in the studio she can be found drinking too much coffee, thrifting, rearranging her house, or being a newly-obsessive chicken mom.

