

Sumud (Arabic for “steadfastness” or “perseverance”) is a collective Palestinian practice of refusing erasure through care, education, resistance, and rooted presence. More than resilience, it is a lived philosophy and political refusal that affirms dignity and survival under occupation. We reference sumud here not to define or dilute it, but to respectfully recognize its place in Palestinian psychosocial and political life, with humility and situated awareness (Abourahme, 2014; Ben Yahmed & Caron, forthcoming; Abu-Lughod, Hammami & Kervorkian, 2023).

You Are Not Outside the Crisis

In war, colonial occupation, or systemic violence, caregivers, students, professionals, community members, live through the same conditions as those they support. You are **within the crisis**, offering care, presence, and protection, often while holding grief and responsibilities no one should bear alone. Your presence is not only supportive, it is political. To care under occupation is to resist to its logic.

What You May Feel

This shared exposure, sometimes called **dual trauma**, can bring emotional, physical, cognitive, and moral responses. These are **not weaknesses**, they are **human and collective responses** to prolonged threat, rupture, and ethical strain (Rabin et al., 2023; Hamama et al., 2025; Abu-El-Noor et al., 2018).

It is natural to wonder:

“Why do I feel numb or disconnected?”

“Why can’t I concentrate or care like I used to?”

“Why am I feeling the same things as those I support?”

These are normal responses to extraordinary circumstances.

This Guide Is Not a Solution

It is a **companion**, offering simple reminders to help you:

- Recognize what you carry, and that it is not yours alone
- Name your experiences without shame
- Reconnect with what grounds you, people, traditions, land, ancestors
- Stay connected to others, even in silence
- Care for others while honouring your own needs and humanity

You Are Not Alone

Even in the most painful circumstances:

- **Your reactions make sense**
- **You are not alone**
- **Caregivers must not be forgotten, especially not by themselves**

This guide is also a gesture of **collective witnessing**.

We see you. We carry this with you. You belong to us, and we to you.



Holding the Spirit of Sumud

You might be having many complex feelings, sometimes all at once. Your community might also be collectively experiencing profound imbalances and loss. Recognising this is not about fixing yourself or your community, but about gently acknowledging shared suffering, intergenerational transmission of trauma-based coping strategies, and collective strengths.

You are not only a caregiver.

You are part of a community, a place, and a legacy of resilience, the enduring spirit of **Sumud**. Sometimes, simply naming what is happening, be it in prayer, in song, in silence, or with someone beside you, is itself a form of survival and of resistance.

What You May Be Feeling

These are **normal human responses** to conditions of occupation and systemic injustice, not personal failures.

Possible experiences:

- **Emotional:** sadness, anger, numbness, lingering grief, guilt
- **Mental:** difficulty concentrating, intrusive worries, questioning purpose
- **Physical:** exhaustion, disrupted sleep, headaches, chest tightness, disconnection
- **Relational:** withdrawing, feeling misunderstood, “staying strong,” feeling alone
- **Moral/Spiritual:** anger at injustice, guilt, betrayal, paralysis with hard choices

Key message:

These are not symptoms. They are signs of still being human, connected, and responsive even in unbearable conditions.

What We May Be Carrying (Collective Trauma)

In war, occupation, and systemic injustice, trauma also lives in streets, families, memories, and silences.

Shared realities:

- Constant grief, funerals blending into each other
- Caring until collapse, few people holding everything
- Silence for safety, not absence of feeling
- Time remembered by checkpoints, invasions, sirens
- Children play war, weddings under rubble
- Carrying the past forward through lullabies, stories, prayers



Key message:

These are not pathologies.

They are signs of endurance, dignity, and collective survival¹.

¹ Abu-El-Noor et al., 2018; Hamama et al., 2025; Rabin et al., 2023; El-Sheikh, 2024; Atallah, 2017; Summerfield, 1999; Kirmayer, 2007

Ways to Stay with Yourself in Crisis

To continue caring, feeling, or showing up is already a form of resistance.

These practices are not solutions, but **gentle offerings**, to help hold pain without losing sight of who you are, where you come from, and what matters most to you and your community.



Practice 1: Make Room for What Is

"This is here. I don't have to like it. But I can hold it."

When to Use : When emotions, grief, fear, or moral distress feel too heavy.

Steps:

1. **Pause and breathe.** Notice where the feeling lives in your body (chest, stomach, throat...).
2. **Name it gently:** *"Here is sadness."* *"Here is rage."* *"Here is powerlessness."*
3. **Imagine creating space around it, as if your chest or hands can hold it softly.**

Say to yourself

"I don't need to push this away. I can make space for it to exist, without letting it take over."

Why It Matters

This reflects presence and the spirit of **Sumud**: staying present with suffering without surrendering to it.

Making space is not resignation. It is a quiet act of defiance:

You remain in your body.

You remain with yourself.



Practice 2: I Am Not My Thoughts

"This is a thought, not a truth."

When to Use

When thoughts spiral into self-criticism, hopelessness, or judgment, such as:

"I'm failing."

"There's no point."

"I'm not allowed to feel this."

"I should be stronger."



Steps:

Notice the thought. No need to analyze — *just recognize it.*



Say to yourself:

"I'm having the thought that..."

"This is a painful thought, not a truth."

1. Name the category. This reduces its emotional weight.

Examples:

"This is a self-doubt thought."

"This is a helplessness story."

"This is fear, trying to protect me again."



2. Write it down or whisper it. Jot the thought on paper or whisper it softly.

- Notice how it shifts once outside your head, it loses some of its grip.
- You can even write it on your hand or a napkin, then set it aside.

3. Use your body to ground yourself.

As the thought comes up, connect to what is physically real:

- Press your feet into the floor
- Place your hand on your chest or heart
- Breathe into your belly
- Touch an object near you and name it



Say to yourself:

"This is one part of my experience. But I am here. I am in my body. I am more than this thought."

Why It Matters:

- This practice reflects **Cognitive Defusion**, stepping back from thoughts instead of fusing with them.
- Through embodied and grounded practices, it helps loosen the grip of harmful thinking **without bypassing pain**.
- You don't have to believe every thought you think, especially those shaped by violence, fear, and injustice.
- In the spirit of **Sumud**, this is a refusal to let your inner life be overtaken by external forces that try to silence or erase you.

Remember:

You can carry pain, but you are **not your pain**.

You can feel lost, but you are **not gone**.

You are **still here**.



Practice 3: Anchor in What Matters

"Even now, I remember who I am."

When to Use

When you feel numb, lost, disconnected, or unsure why you're still trying.

Steps

1. Ask yourself:

"What matters to me in this moment, even in pain?"

"Who do I want to be for myself or others, even now?"

2. Choose a small action:

- Send a text
- Drink water slowly
- Sit beside a patient
- Step outside
- scream into a pillow; punch the air or a pillow

3. If emotions feel intense, "drop anchor":

- Acknowledge what you're feeling
- Connect to your body with movement (wiggle toes, straighten back)
- Engage with your surroundings (notice sights, sounds, sensations)

Why It Matters

- This reflects **Values-Based Action and Self-As-Context** : choosing your response even when you cannot choose your situation.
- In the spirit of **Sumud**, it is living your truth not in spite of oppression, but as an act of resistance to it.

Closing Thought

Every time you pause to feel, breathe, or hold space for yourself, you resist the dehumanizing pull of chronic trauma.

You are not broken. You are alive.

You are not alone. You are remembered.



Practices That Already Exist: Honouring Collective Acts of Care and Resistance

These are not steps to follow, but **reminders of what is already within and around you.**

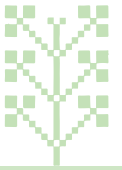
You may already do some of these. You may have others.

Each one is a way of remembering: **this isn't yours to carry alone.**

These practices reflect acts named by those who have lived through war, displacement, and shared trauma.

They are not solutions. They are small, quiet, or unseen gestures that carry memory, meaning, and connection.

What matters is not *what* you do, but that it keeps you connected, to others, to ancestors, to the land, to community, to the sacred, and to your own dignity.



Ways to Reconnect with Collective Practices of Resistance and Care

Pray, Recite, or Sit in Sacred Stillness

Through prayer, remembrance, or *tawakull* (silent surrender), let yourself be held by traditions of dignity and hope.

Allow what is greater than the moment to hold you.

Prepare or Share a Meal, Even in Grief

Food is continuity and love. Boil tea, cook khubeizeh, break bread.

Even the scent of za'atar or olive oil can root you in memory & belonging.



Name Your Ancestors, Mentors, or Martyrs

Say their names, those who resisted, mothered, built, and grieved.

You are not the first to endure. You are part of a living line.



Sing, Hum, or Repeat a Line of Resistance

Carry a chant, poem, or verse in your body.

A whisper is enough, let your voice join theirs.



Touch the Land, Tend a Plant, Sit with the Earth

Plant something, water herbs, walk barefoot, hold a stone.

This land remembers you. Even in displacement, connection lives in small acts.

Light a Candle or Place a Belonging by the Door or Window

A scarf, a photo, a child's drawing, a quiet ritual to say:
"Someone is holding the light. I am not alone."



Say or Whisper: "We Are Still Here"

Say it for yourself, for those beside you, for the land, for those who cannot.
Say it with yaqin, deep trust that your people endure.



Practice Collective Silence Together Sit in stillness as a group, refusing the noise of domination. Silence, when chosen, becomes a powerful act of presence and endurance OU Organize or Join a Circle of Storytelling Gather voices - patients, colleagues, neighbors- and share stories of endurance, resistance, and care. Listening and speaking together transforms isolation into solidarity. Every testimony is a refusal to be erased.

Final Reflection

In impossible conditions, you continue to feel, connect, and care for each other while refusing to accept injustices and continuing to resist oppression and occupation. It embodies Palestinian determination, community resilience, and storytelling.



Research Foundation

These practices are not just coping mechanisms. They are **cultural, historical, and political tools of survival**. Research in trauma theory, liberation psychology, and cultural psychiatry shows that ritual, spirituality, community presence, and ancestral memory are vital to healing in contexts of systemic and collective trauma (Hammad & Tribe, 2020; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Martín-Baró, 1994).