

# A Concussion Recovery Guide for IPV Survivors



A survivor's guide to brain healing, strength, and self-care

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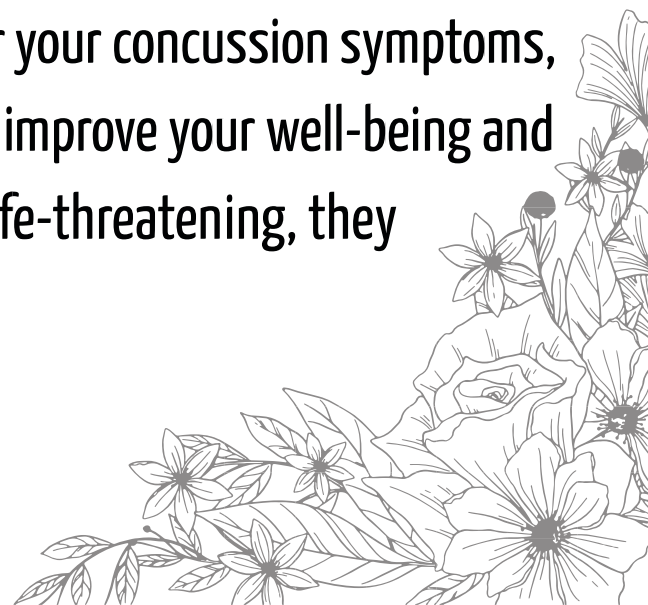


# What is a concussion?

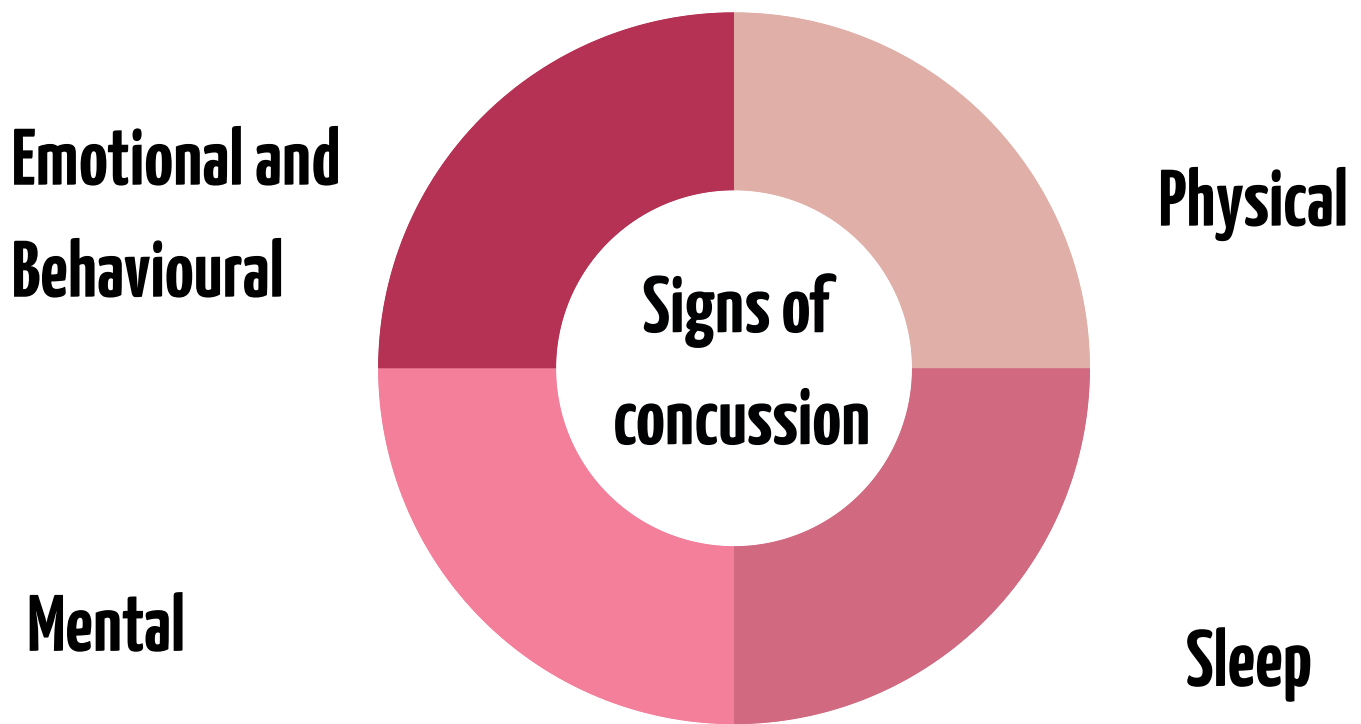
A concussion is a type of brain injury that occurs when the brain gets shaken or jolted inside the skull. It can happen due to a blow of the head, a fall or any other incident that causes the head and brain to move forcefully. This force results in a bruise on the brain that can impact many different systems in your body.

A brain injury is an invisible injury which means survivors may not realize they've experienced a traumatic brain injury (TBI) and often don't seek medical help. Treatment typically focuses on managing symptoms, with rest being the primary recommendation. The symptoms are different for everyone, as each concussion is unique and can present in various ways. These symptoms may be worsened by the physical and emotional toll of fleeing violence

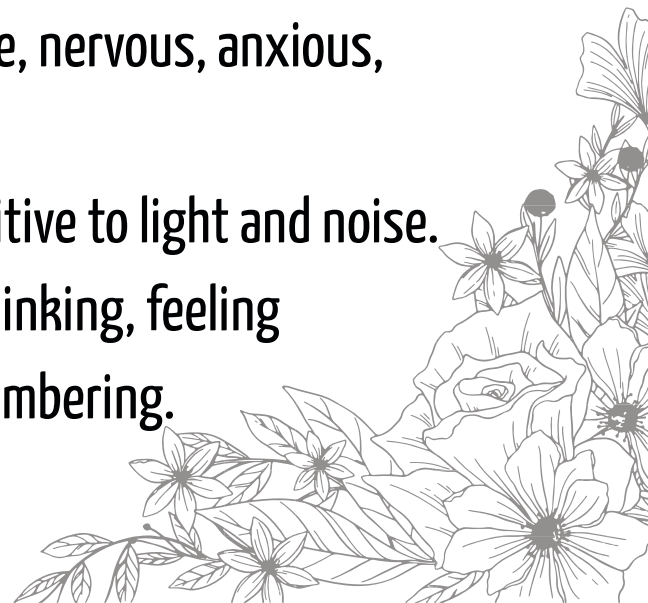
It's crucial to identify the situations that trigger your concussion symptoms, manage them, and avoid them when possible to improve your well-being and quality of life. While most concussions are not life-threatening, they should still be taken seriously.



# What is a concussion?



- **Sleep Symptoms:** Sleeping more or less than usual, difficulty falling asleep and staying asleep.
- **Emotional and Behavioural Symptoms:** Irritable, nervous, anxious, frustration, anger, sadness.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, nausea, sensitive to light and noise.
- **Mental Symptoms:** Fogginess and difficulty thinking, feeling slowed down, difficulty concentrating and remembering.



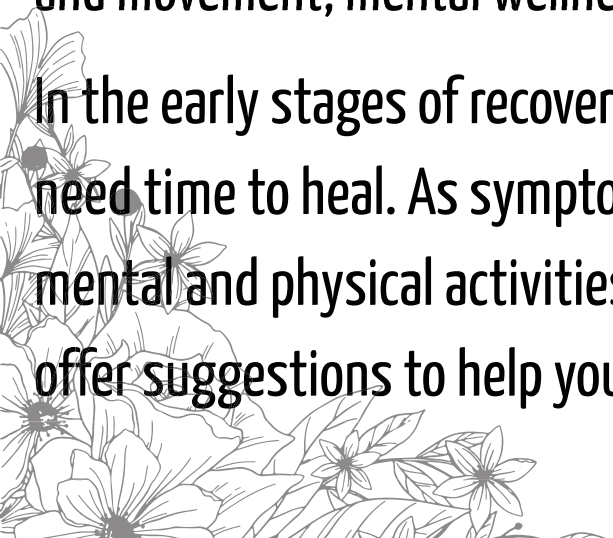
# The Road to Recovery

The journey toward healing begins with recognizing what you're going through. If you've experienced a concussion, it's important to know that the symptoms you're feeling, whether physical, emotional, or cognitive, are not isolated or "just in your head." There is a reason behind what you're experiencing, and you're not alone in it.

Acknowledging that you have a brain injury is a powerful first step toward recovery. This guide is here to walk beside you, not to replace medical care, but to complement it. Ongoing support from healthcare professionals can be vital in helping you continue to improve and feel more in control of your healing.

This journal is designed to support you gently and intentionally. Over the next four weeks, you'll find tools and tips focused on: mindfulness and meditation, restorative sleep and sleep hygiene, balanced nutrition, safe physical activity and movement, mental wellness and reflection.

In the early stages of recovery, rest is essential. Your brain and body both need time to heal. As symptoms begin to improve, gently reintroducing mental and physical activities can support long-term recovery. This guide will offer suggestions to help you do that at your own pace.



# Mindfulness

Mindfulness is a state of being you can engage in at any point in your day. To help you get started, here are a few ways to practice:

- Mindful eating: Pay attention to your surroundings, and take the time to fully enjoy each meal; smell it, feel it, and taste it.
- Mindful breathing: When difficult thoughts or challenging situations arise, pause for a moment. Notice how you're feeling, gently close your eyes, and take a slow, deep breath.
- Body scan: Find a comfortable position, either sitting or lying on your back, with your arms relaxed and palms facing upward. Bring your attention gently to each part of your body, from the top of your head down to your toes.
- Walking: Find a peaceful spot and start walking slowly. Tune in to the world around you, notice your breath and welcome the fresh air. Embrace all the natural sensations surrounding you

Find a place where you feel comfortable. It's perfectly normal to find it difficult to concentrate at first.

Start with short sessions, and gradually increase the length as you feel ready.





# Meditation

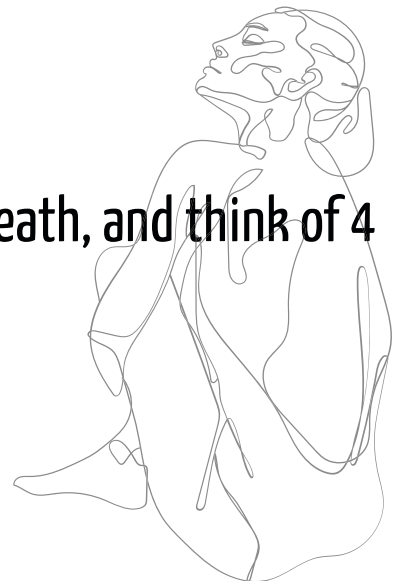
Meditation has been found to have several beneficial effects on the brain and can support the process of brain healing. Here are some ways in which meditation can help:

- Stimulating breaths: Begin by practicing for 15 seconds, then gradually extend to one minute. Sit upright with a straight back, and breathe quickly and evenly through your nose, making sure your inhales and exhales are the same lengths
- Diaphragm breathing: For moments of anxiety, lie on your back and place one hand on your chest and the other just below your rib. Breathe in deeply through your nose, noticing your stomach rise. Exhale slowly through your mouth. Practice this technique for 5 to 10 minutes, about 3 times a day.



# Meditation

- Visualization meditation: Close your eyes and picture a peaceful place, like a quiet beach. Imagine every detail, the warmth of the sun on your skin, the texture of the sand beneath you, and the cool breeze coming off the sea.
- Blackboard meditation: This technique is designed to help you fall asleep. Gently close your eyes and imagine a large chalkboard in front of you. In your mind, write the number "100" as big and clearly as you can. Then slowly erase it, taking your time. Move on to "99" and repeat the process, continuing to count down until you drift off to sleep.
- Walking meditation: Take a quiet, mindful walk, it can help ease stress and anxiety. Stay present with each step, and pause occasionally to take a deep, calming breath
- Gratitude meditation: Close your eyes, take a deep breath, and think of 4 things you're grateful for today.





# Sleep

Many people struggle with sleep after concussion. Here are some steps you can take to set yourself up for better sleep success at night.

- **Relaxing breathing:** Breathe in slowly while counting to four, hold your breath for a count of seven, then exhale gently through your mouth to a count of eight. Limit yourself to no more than four breaths at a time. You can use this technique to help manage stress.
- **Body scan:** Take a few deep breaths and gently bring your attention to your feet. Notice any sensations in that area. Slowly and mindfully, visualize each part of your body, one at a time, bringing awareness to how it feels in the present moment.
- **Progressive muscle relaxation:** Bring your awareness to each muscle group in your body and gently allow them to relax; starting from your toes and feet, moving up through your legs and thighs, hips, stomach, and back. Then release any tension in your hands, arms, shoulders, neck, mouth, cheeks, eyes, nose, and forehead.
- **Paworth method:** Sit upright with your back straight and take slow, deep breaths. Inhale to a count of four, and exhale gently through your nose. Focus on the sound and feeling of your breath as it moves into your belly.



# Nutrition

Proper nutrition plays a vital role in supporting brain health and aiding in the recovery process after a brain injury. Here are some basic but important things to support brain healing:

- Salmon, sardines: high levels of omega-3 fatty acids.
- Kale: high levels of B-vitamins.
- Walnuts: high levels of omega-3, reduces inflammation.
- Berries: antioxidants, reduces inflammation.
- Eggs: source of choline.
- Avocado: high levels of oleic acid.
- Moderate red meat: source of zinc.
- Lentils: high levels of zinc.

If possible, avoid alcohol and processed foods when possible, and try to stay hydrated.



# Exercise

When you engage in physical activity, your body increases the circulation of oxygen-rich blood, delivering vital nutrients to your muscles—and most importantly, to your brain. This improved blood flow helps support brain cell function, promotes healing, and can boost your mood, reduce anxiety, and enhance mental clarity.

Start with gentle, low-impact activities like walking, stretching, yoga, or tai chi. These movements are not only physically beneficial, but also grounding, they help you reconnect with your body in a calm, intentional way. Find what feels most enjoyable to you. Whether it's a quiet walk in nature or slow breathing paired with movement, choose something you look forward to.

If you're new to exercise or still adjusting to your symptoms, begin slowly, just a few minutes at a time. Listen to your body. If any symptoms return or worsen, it's important to stop and rest. Only increase the intensity or duration if your body feels ready and comfortable.



# Mental activity

A concussion can affect your ability to think clearly, remember things, and stay focused. These changes can temporarily disrupt how your brain functions and may make everyday tasks that rely on your thinking skills feel more challenging.

As your brain heals, cognitive exercises can play a helpful role in supporting recovery and improving mental clarity. The key is to reintroduce these activities slowly and gently, especially after an initial period of complete cognitive rest.

- **Card sorting:** Start with a deck of 30 playing cards and shuffle them well. Begin with a small number of cards, gradually increasing the amount as you feel more comfortable. Lay the cards out in a row from left to right. Take a few seconds to study and memorize their order. Then, turn the cards face down. The goal is to recall the order of the cards and identify how many belong to each suit, hearts, clubs, diamonds, and spades.
- **Antonyms:** Whether you're indoors or outdoors, take a moment to observe what's around you. Focus on something you notice, it could be an object, a sensation, or even a feeling. Then, try to think of its opposite. For example, if you see the sun, the opposite might be the moon or rain.









# Mental activity

- Tangrams: These are hands-on puzzles made up of various shapes that come together to form a specific image. The challenge is to figure out how to arrange the pieces to complete the picture. You can find printable tangrams online or use digital versions available on various websites.
- Word stories: Choose five words and create a short story that connects them in a meaningful way. The next day, try to recall the original five words using the story as a memory aid. This exercise helps strengthen recall by linking words to vivid, personal narratives.
- Brain games: Scrabble, strategy board games, code names, sudoku, crosswords, chess, wordle.



# Red Flag Symptoms

-  Neck pain or tenderness
-  Restlessness, agitation or combativeness
-  Severe or worsening headache
-  Visible deformity of the skull
-  Loss of consciousness
-  Repeated vomiting

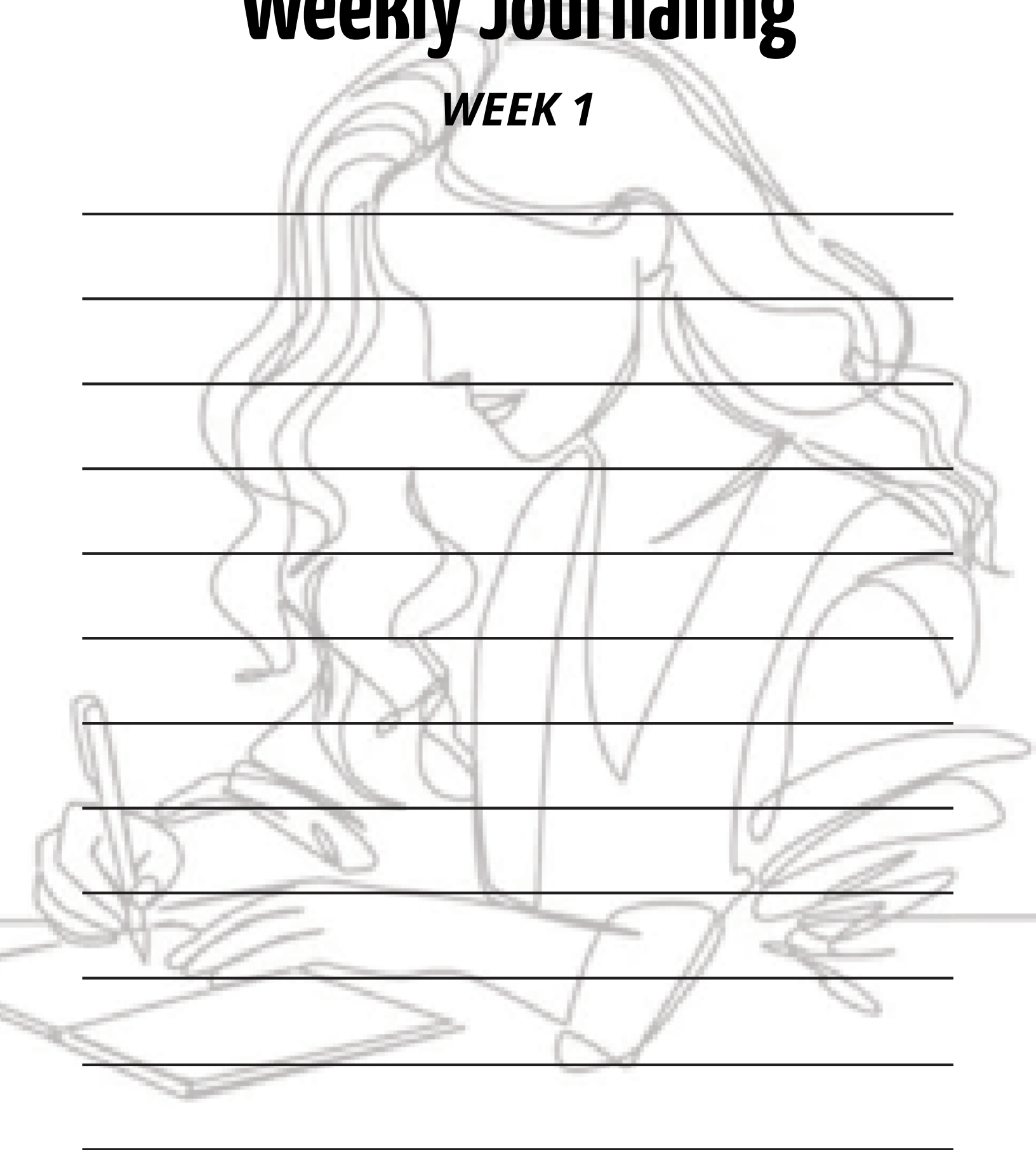
If you experience any of these symptoms, seek emergency medical care immediately.





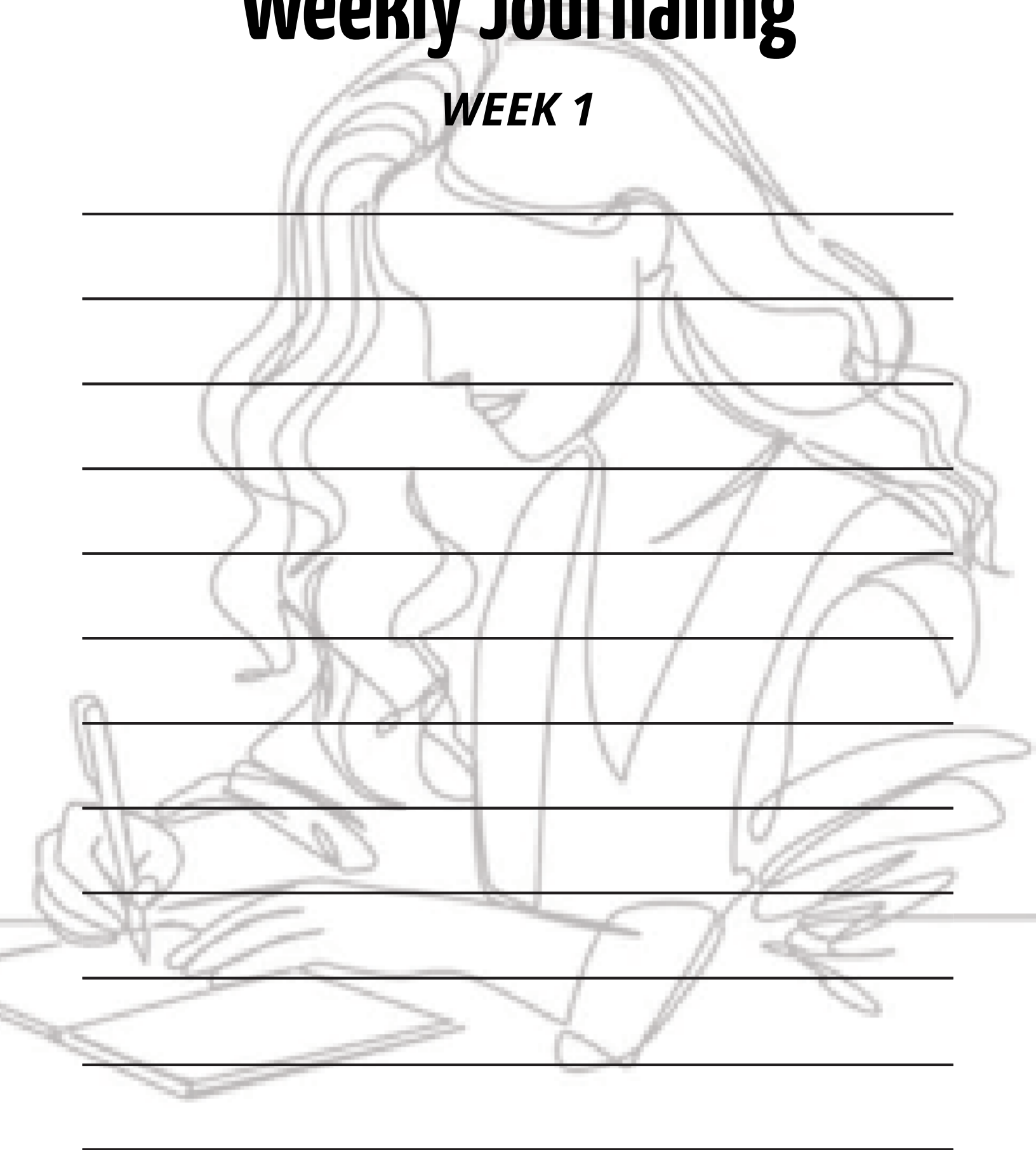
# Weekly Journaling

***WEEK 1***



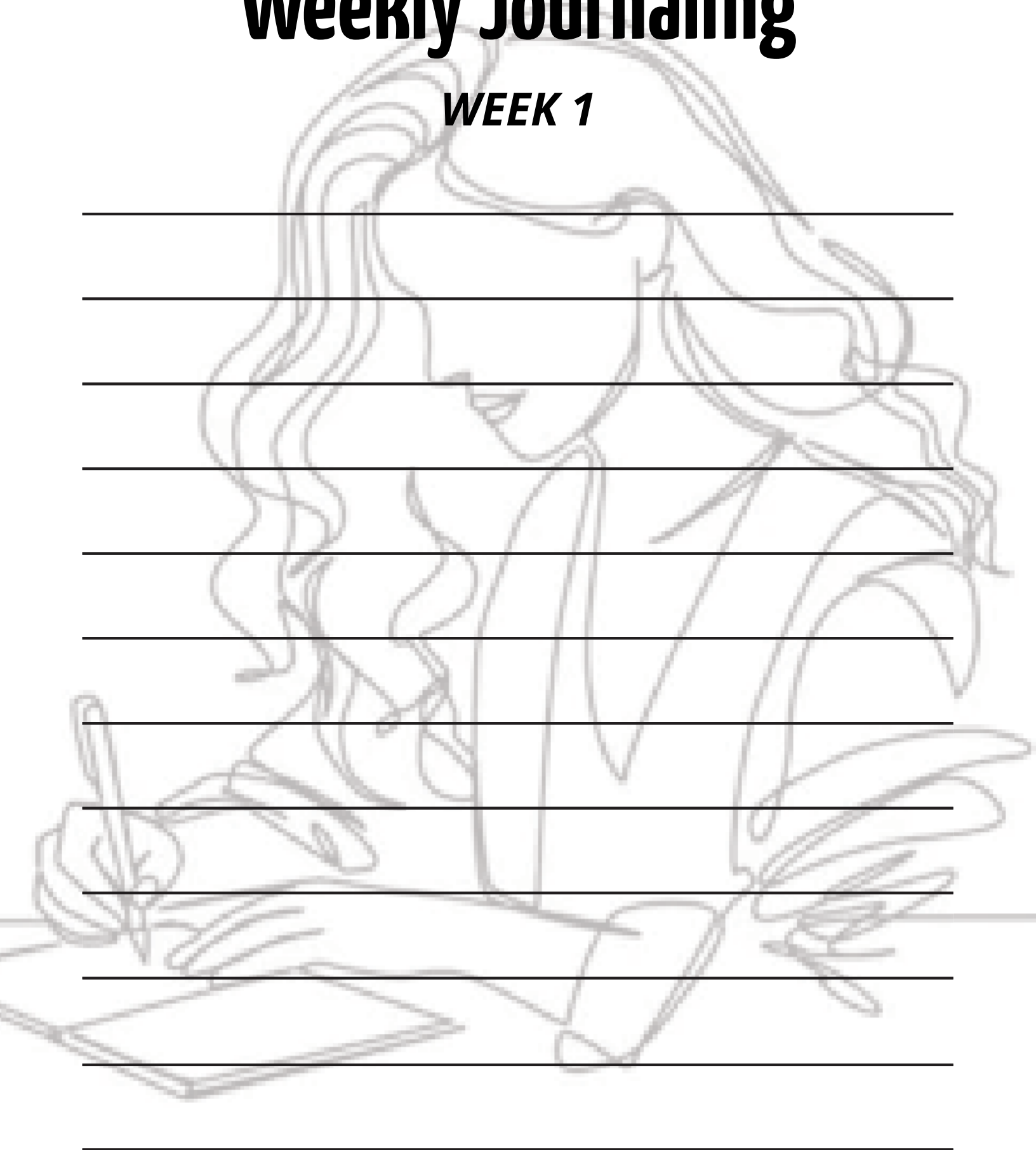
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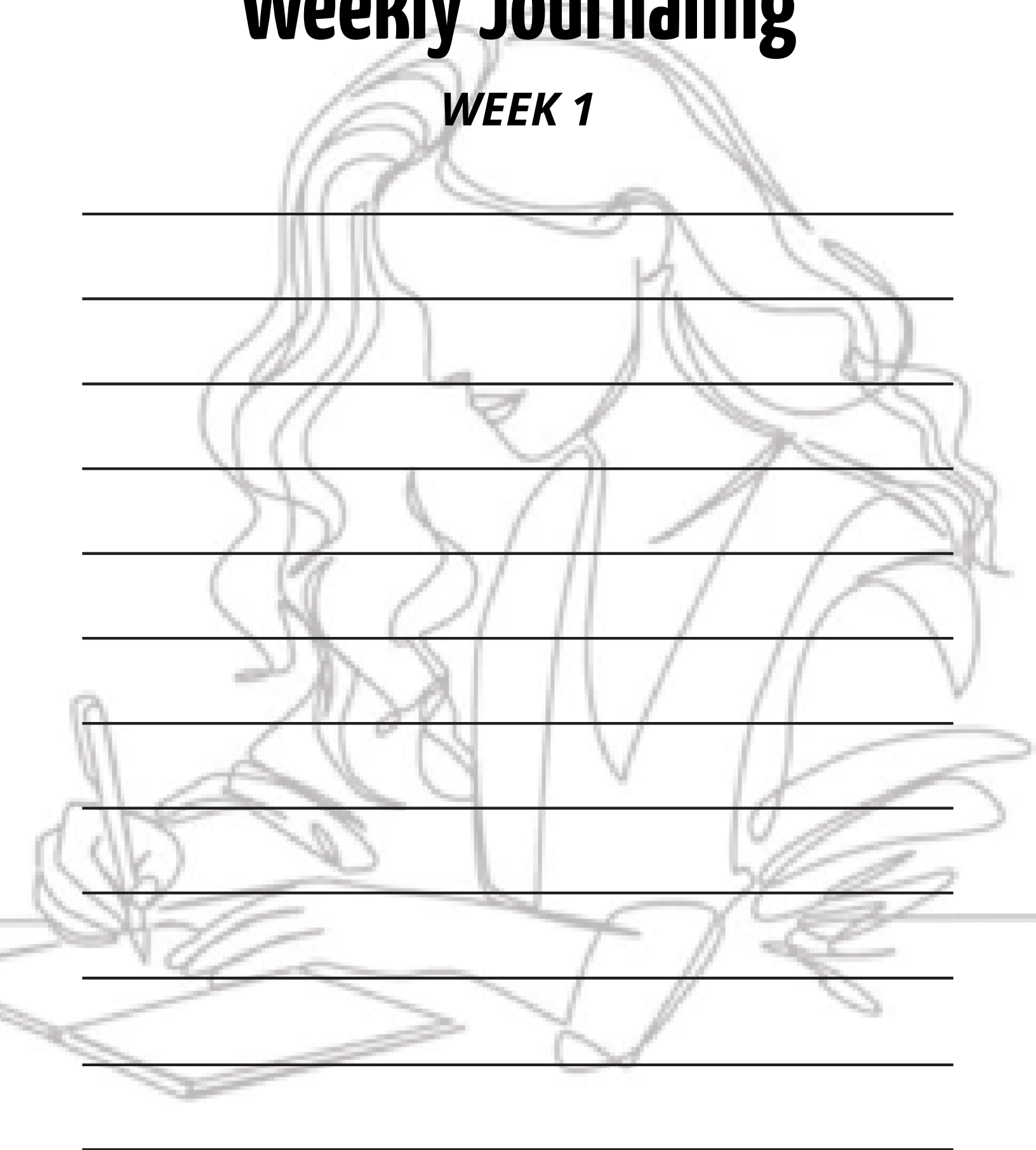
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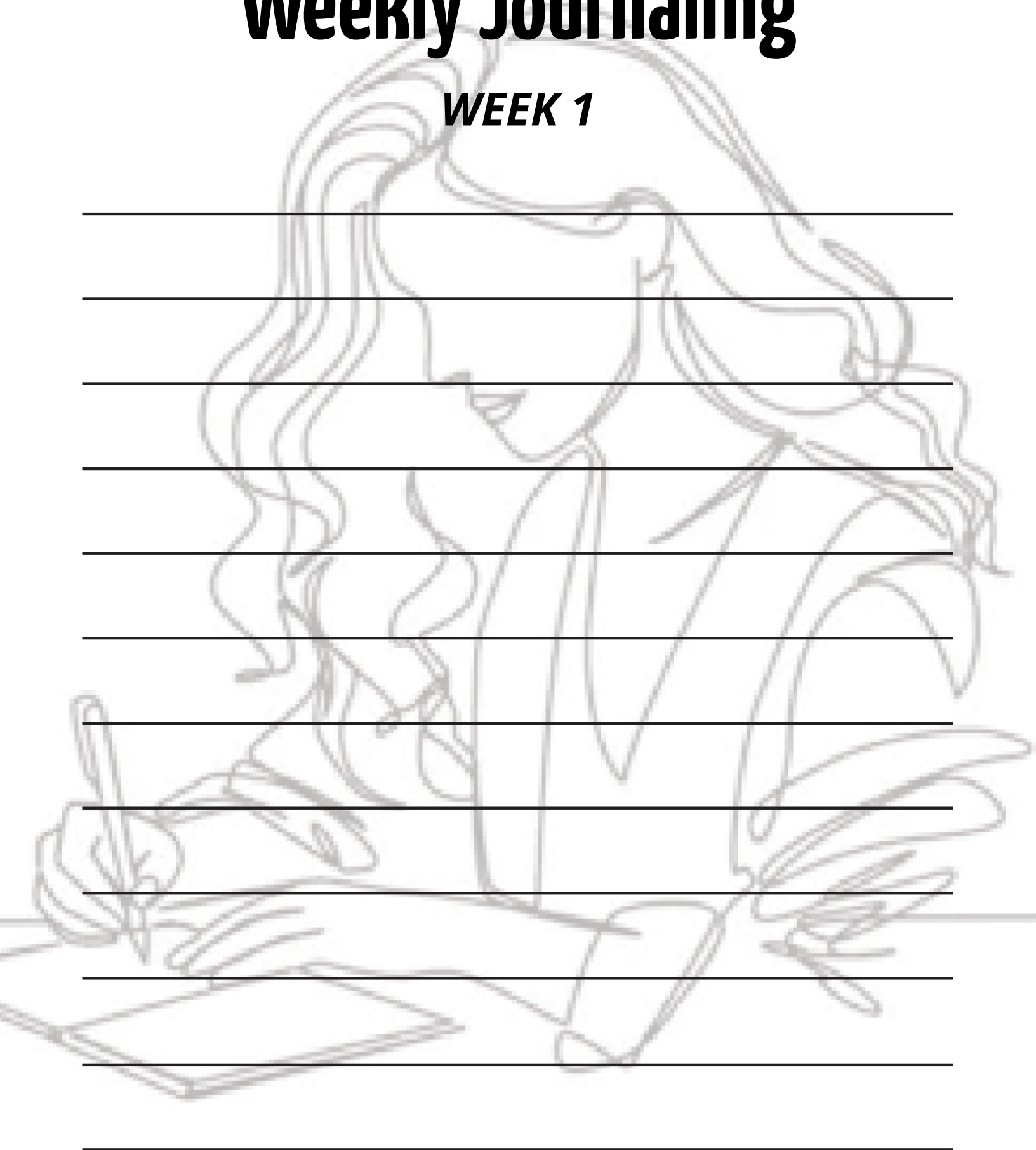
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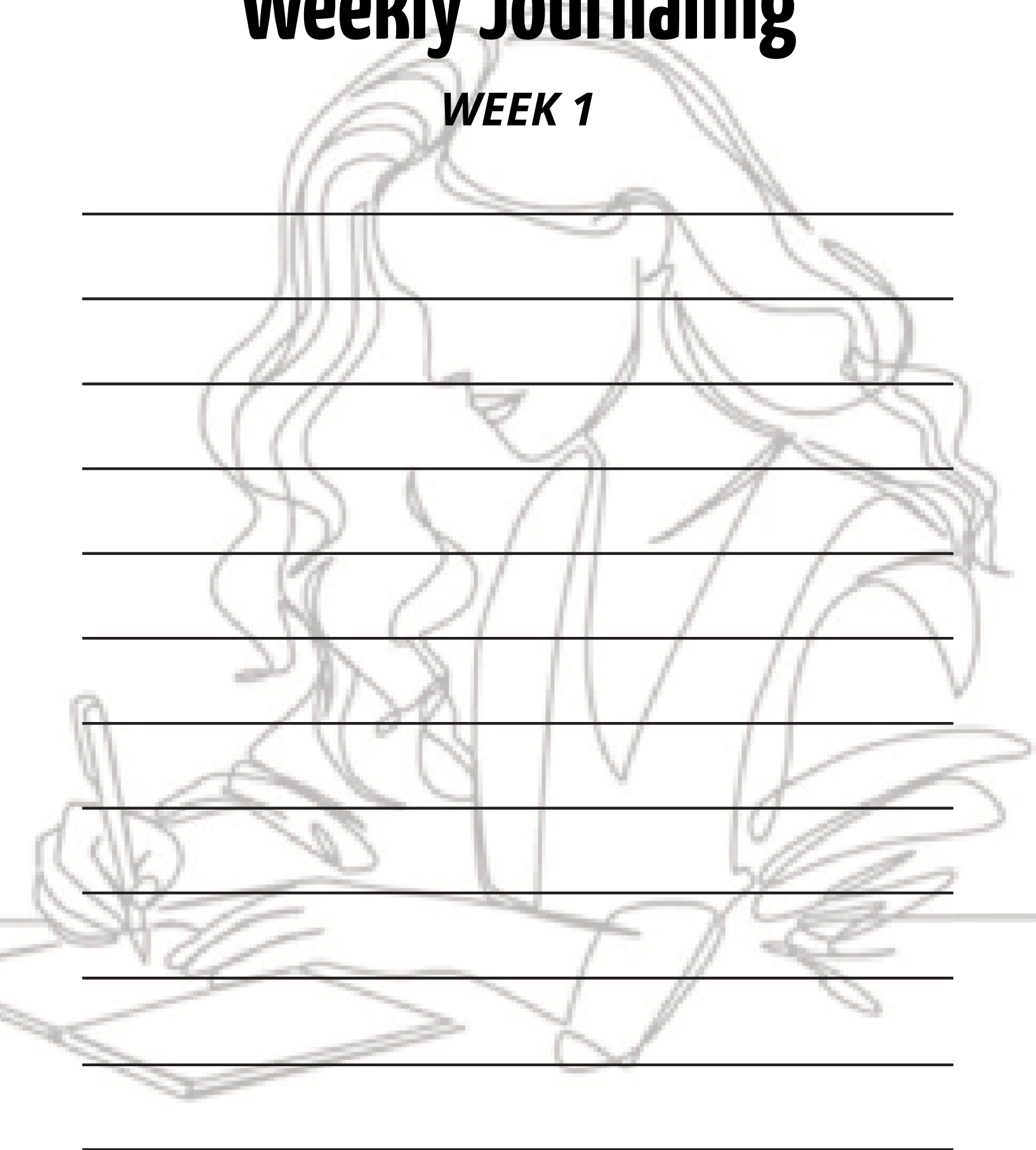
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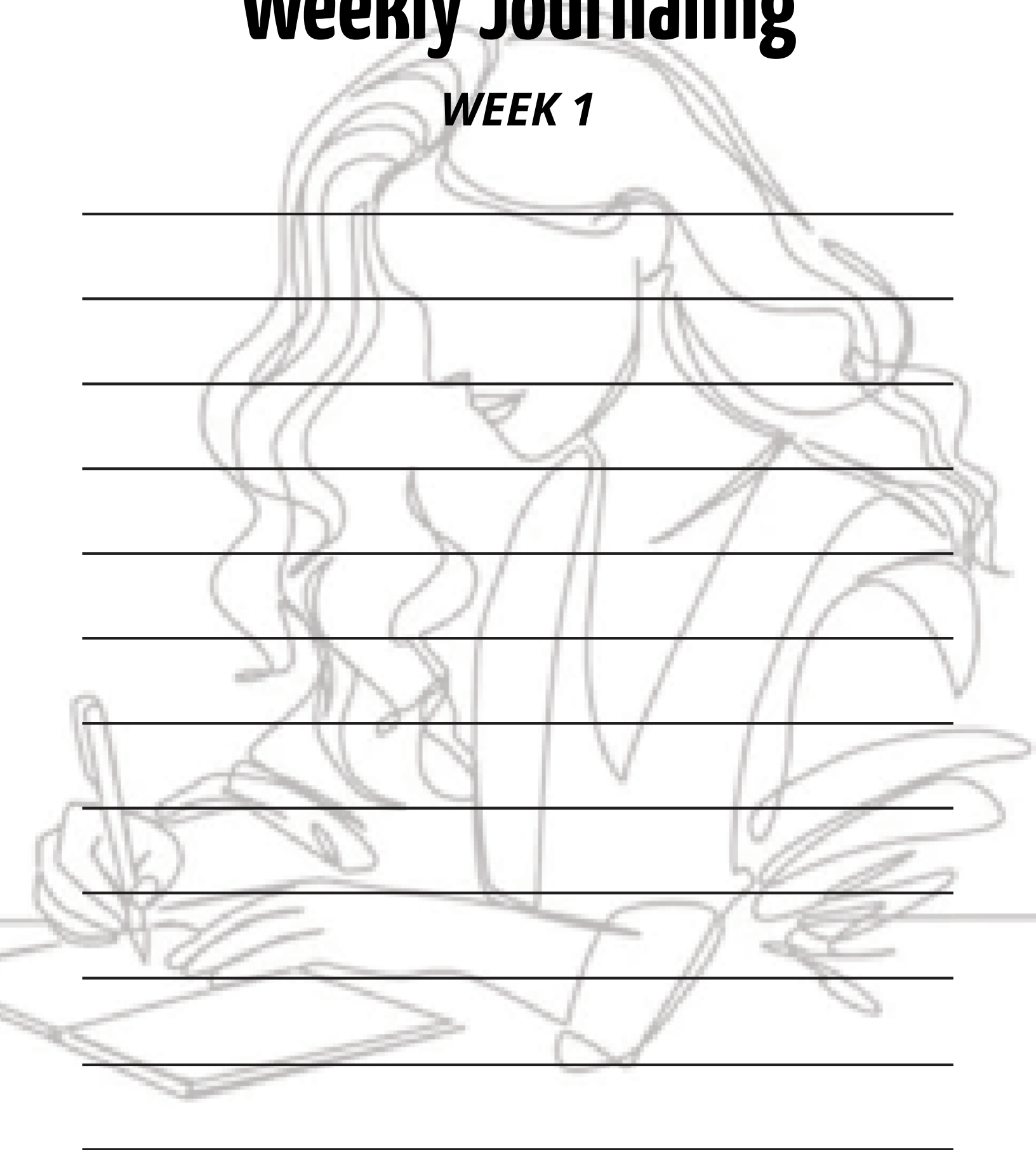
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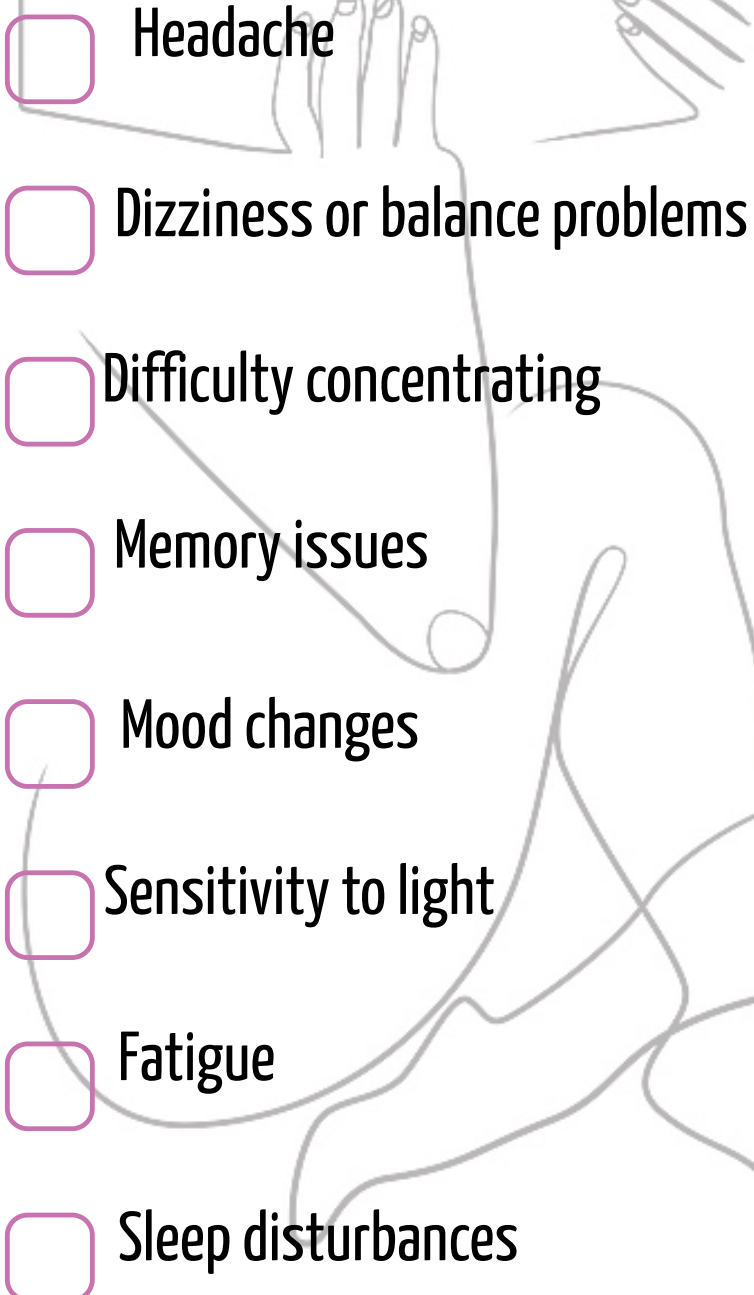
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# Weekly Journaling

## *SYMPTOM CHECKLIST*

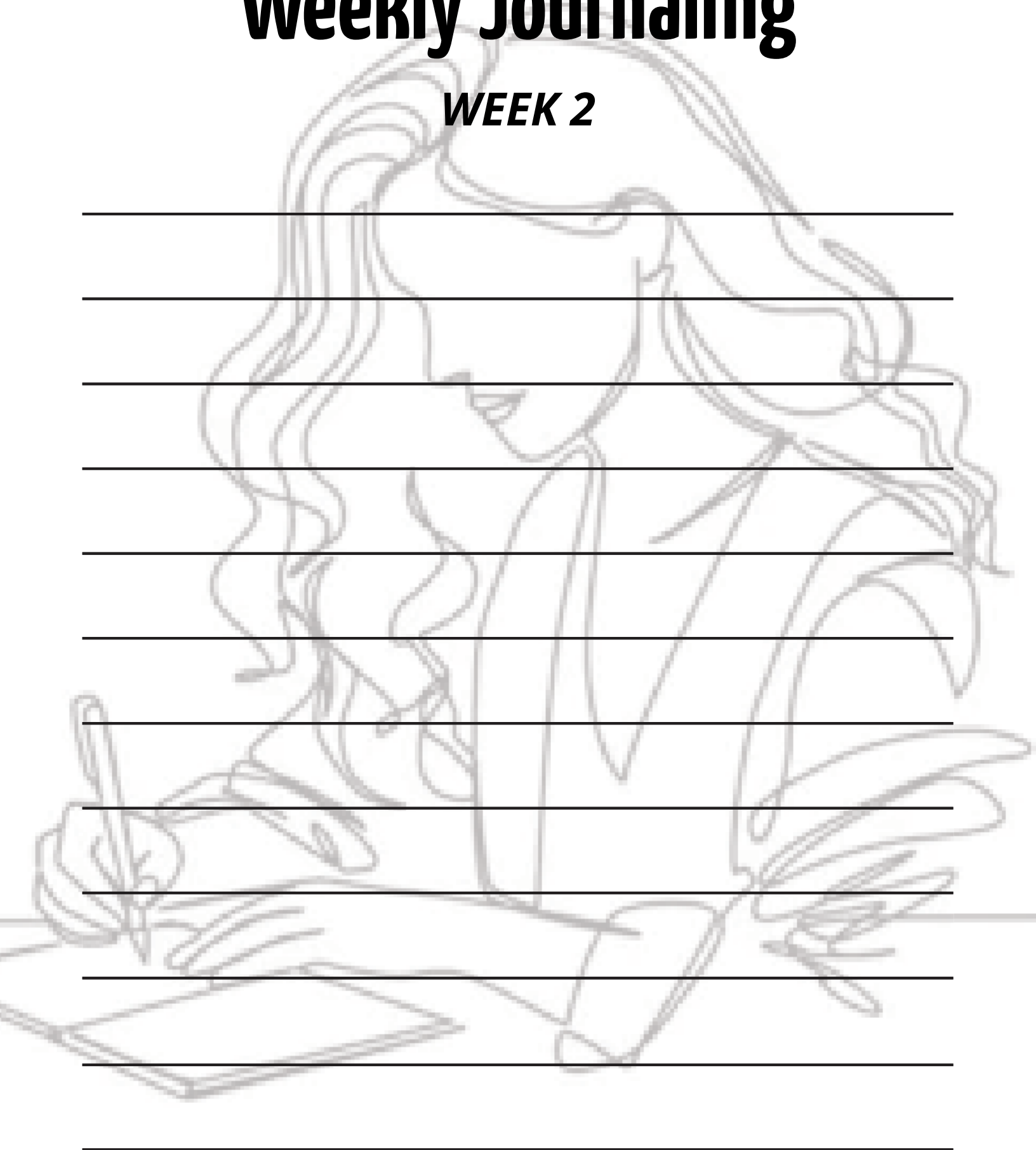
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- 
- ☐ Headache
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  - ☐ Mood changes
  - ☐ Sensitivity to light
  - ☐ Fatigue
  - ☐ Sleep disturbances

Others: \_\_\_\_\_

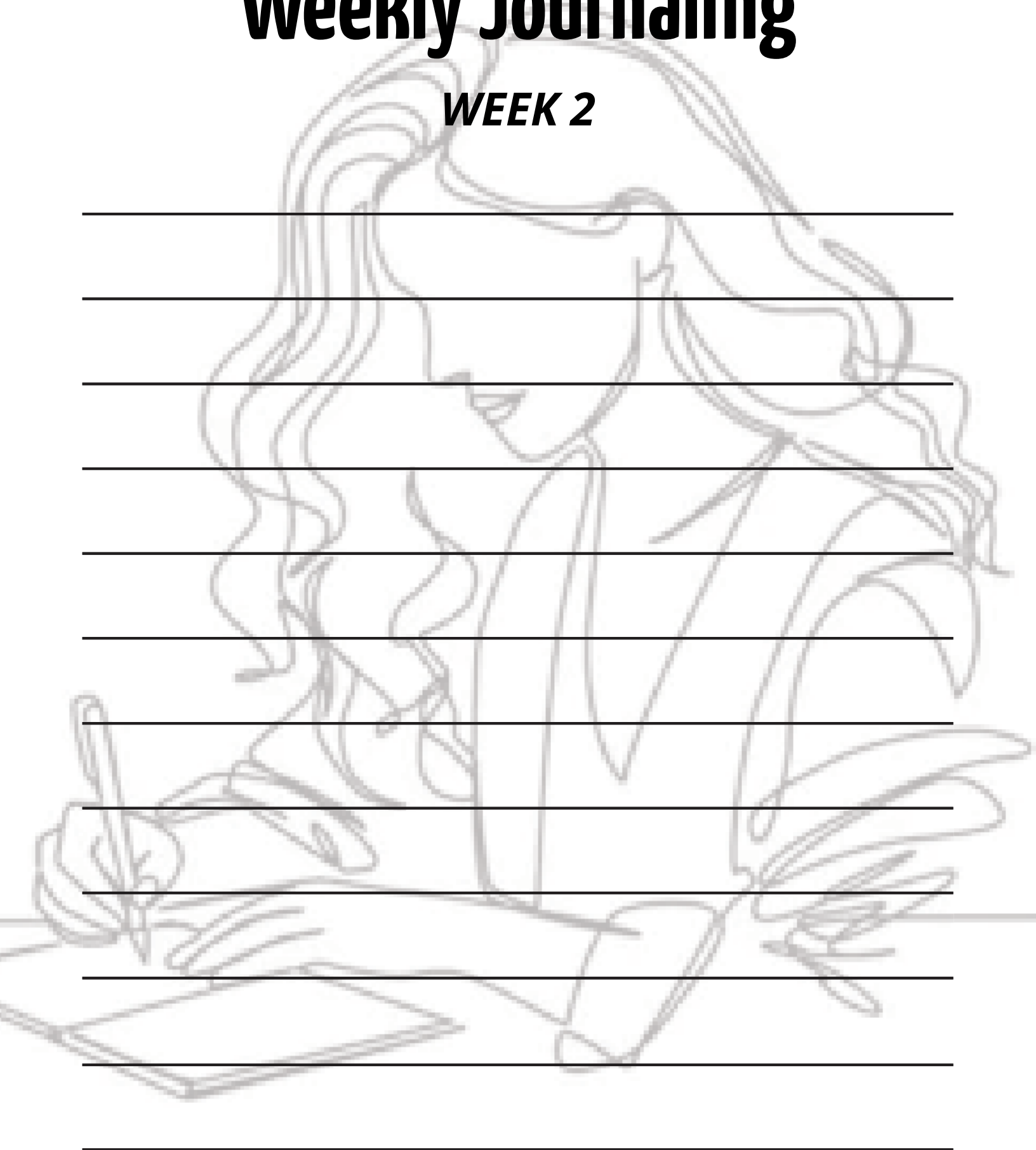
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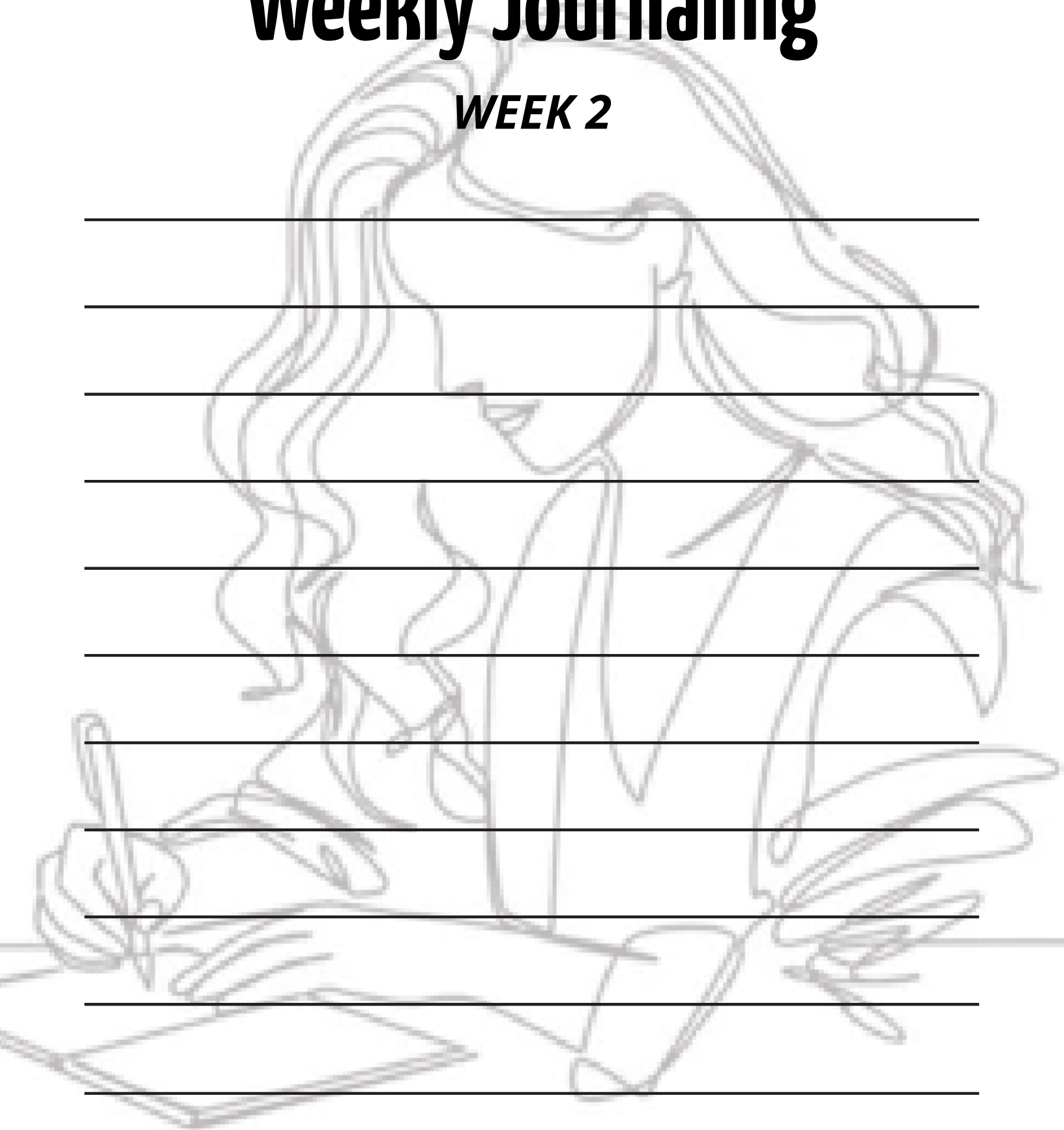
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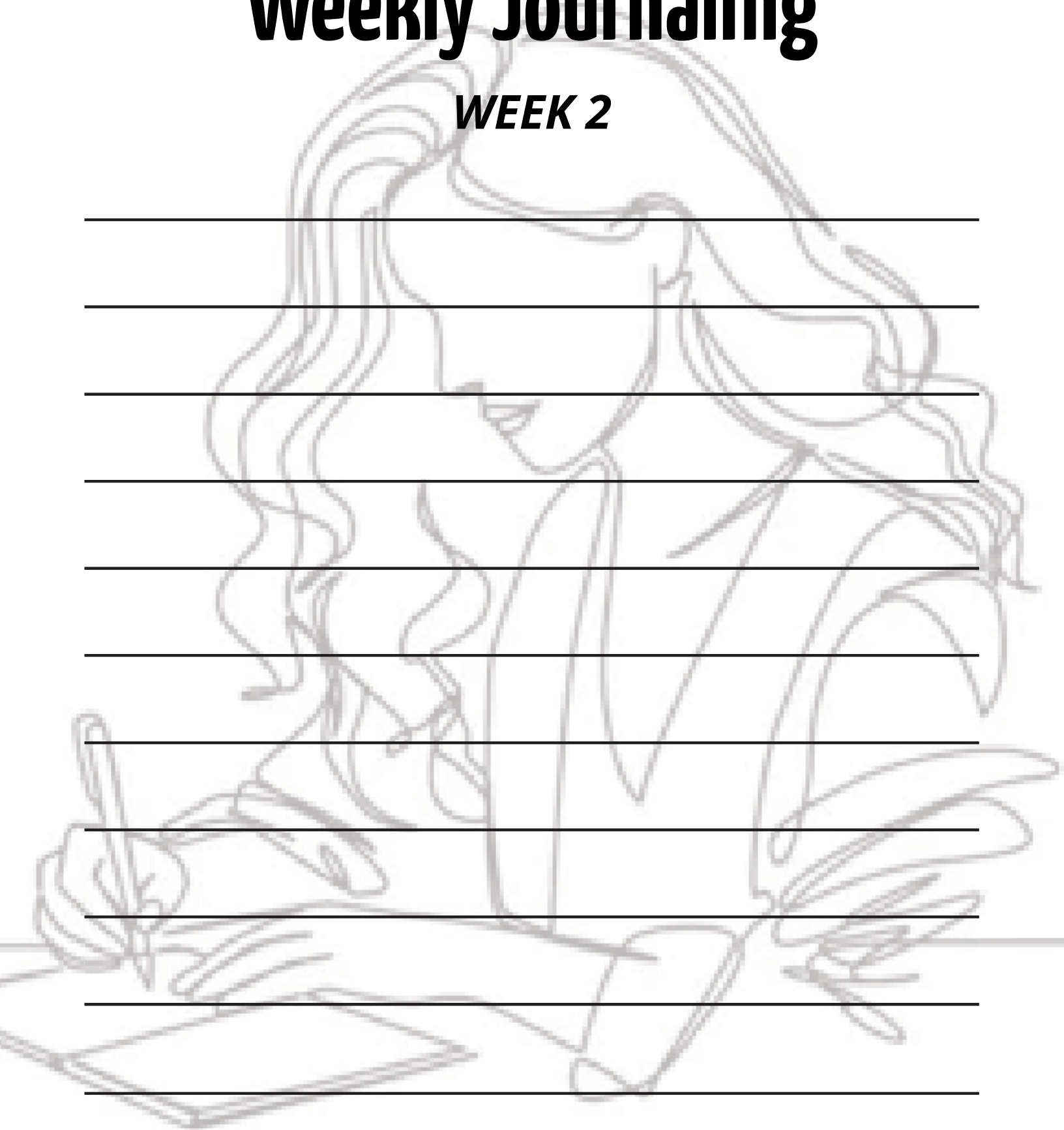
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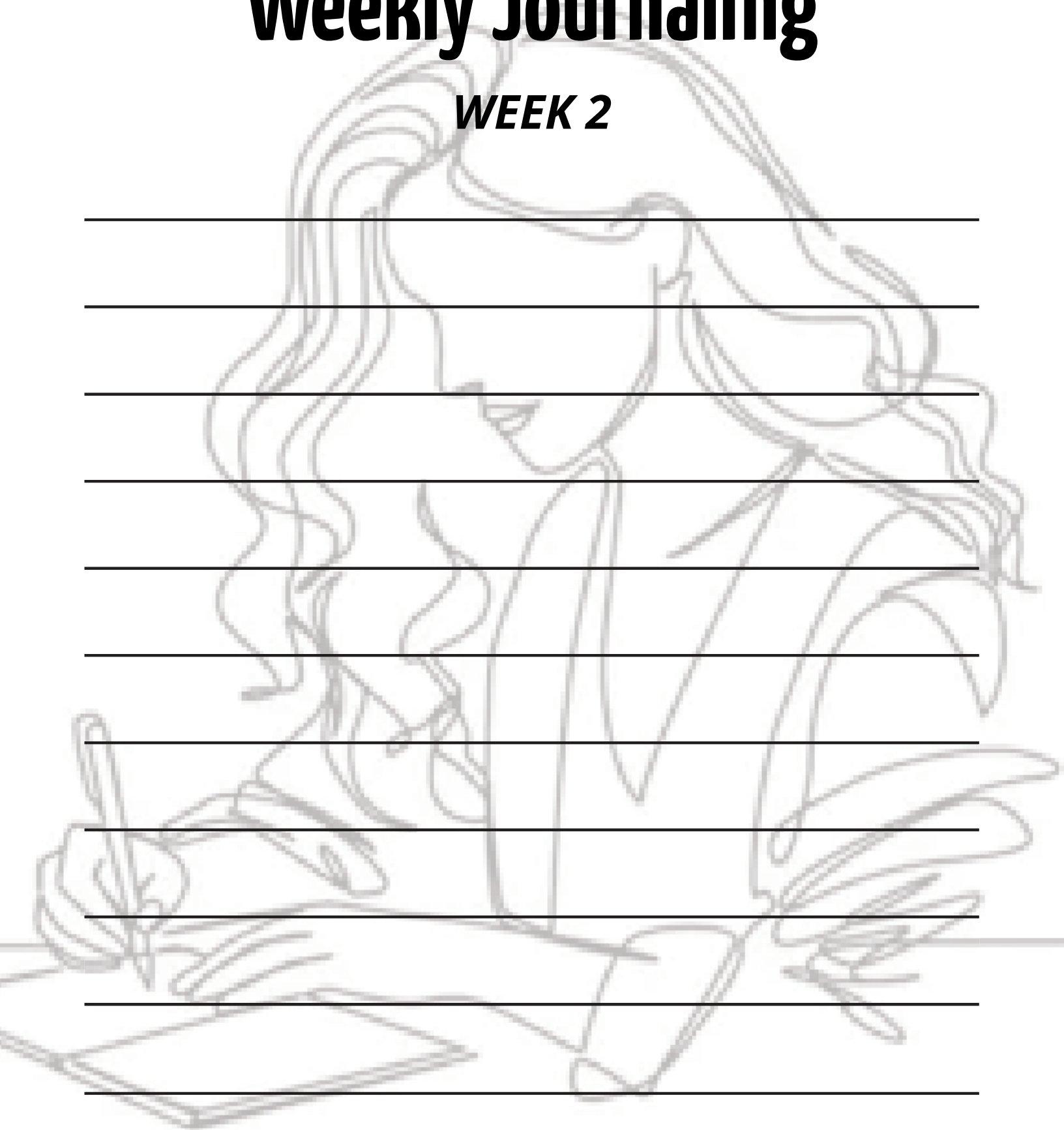
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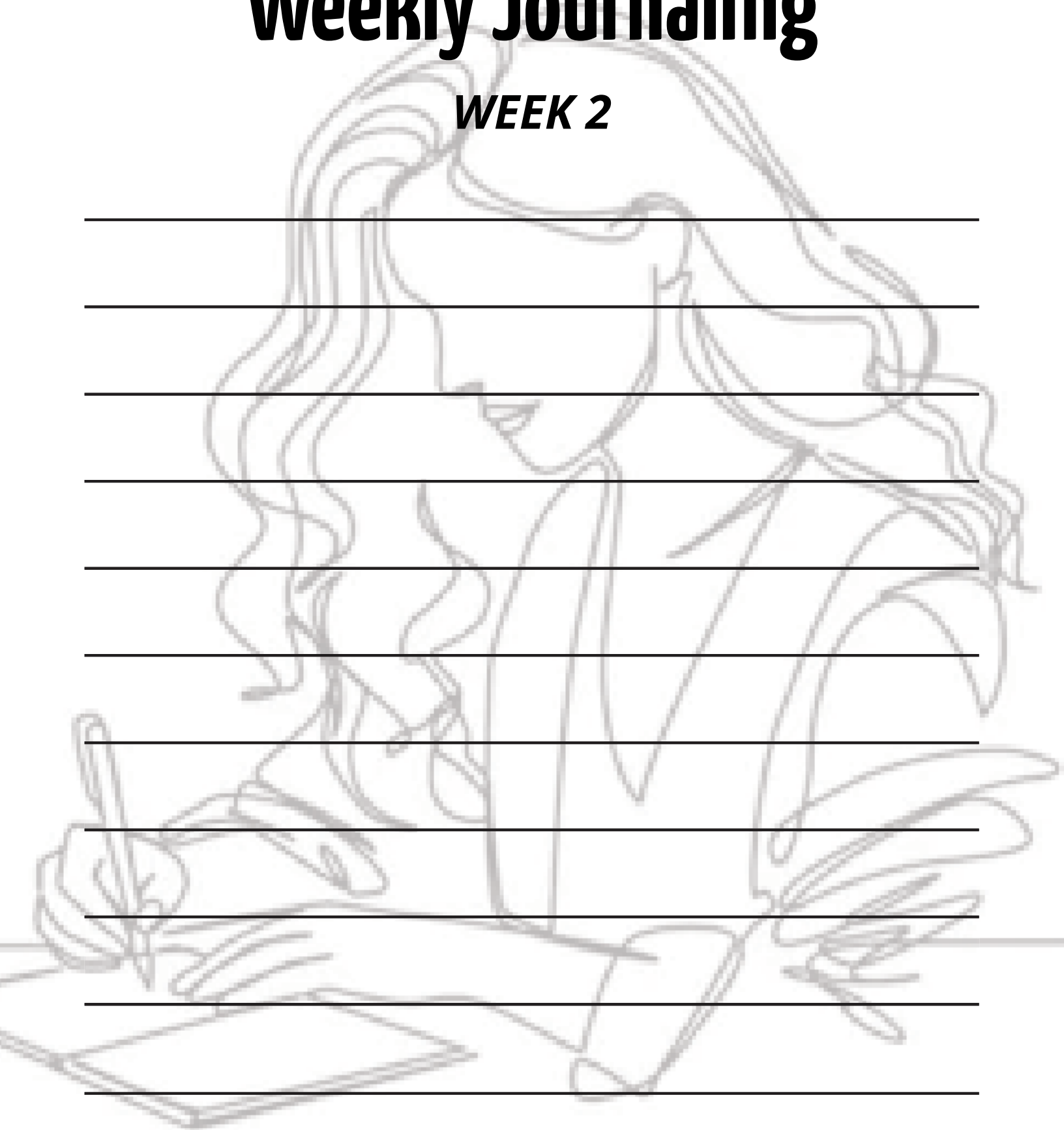
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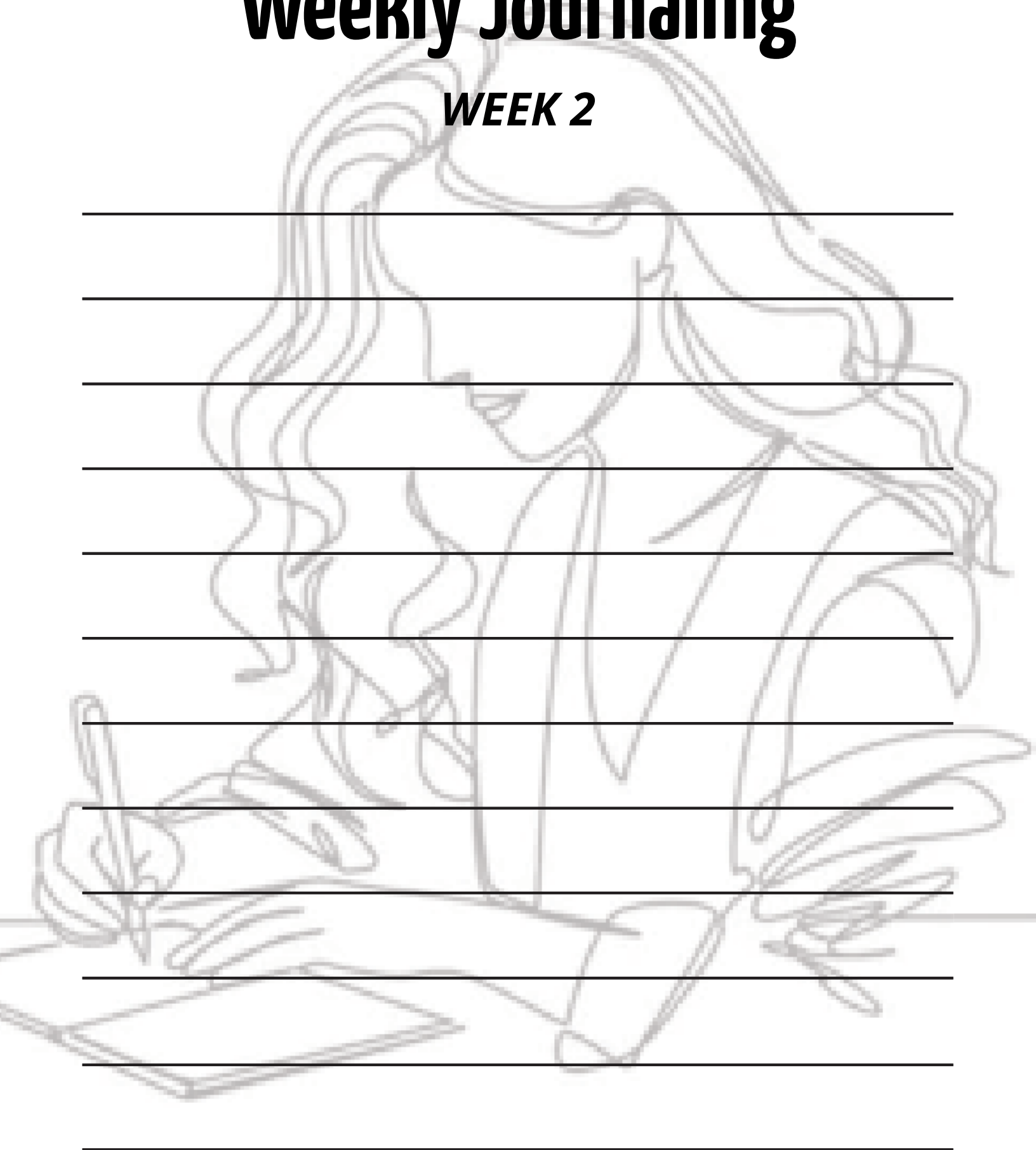
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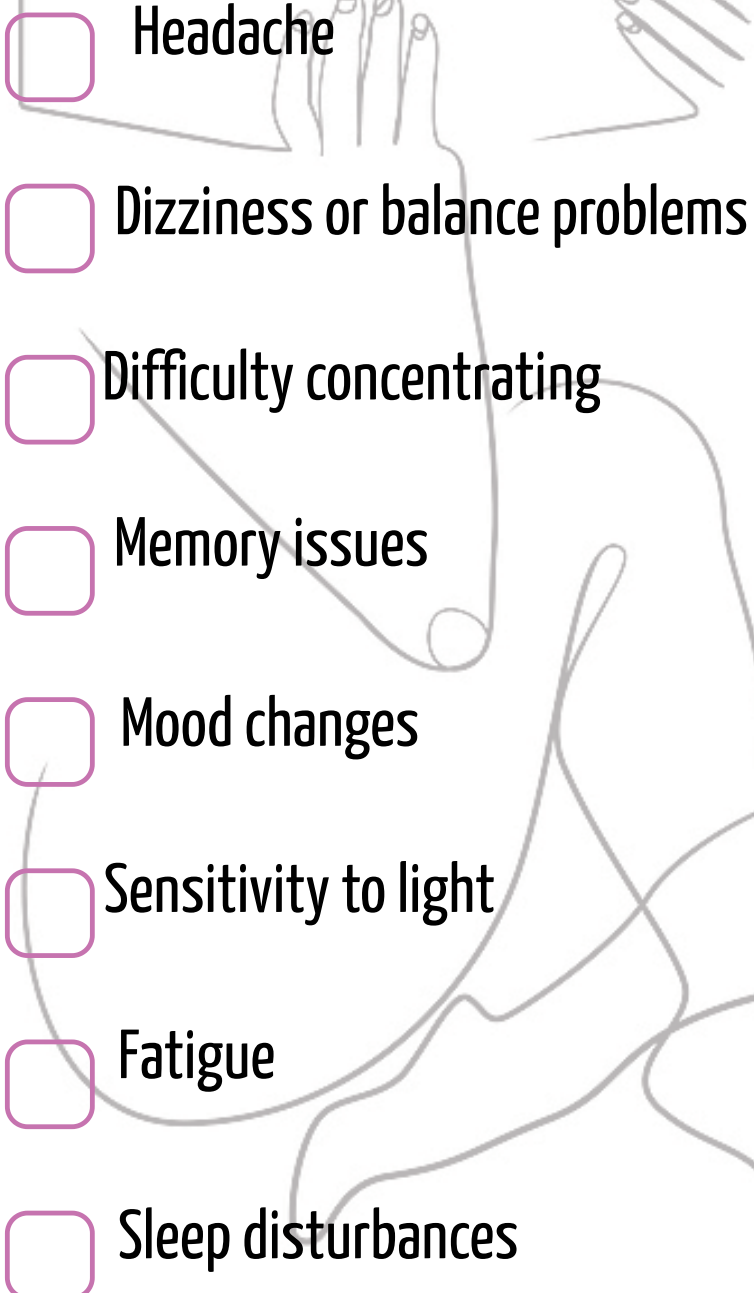
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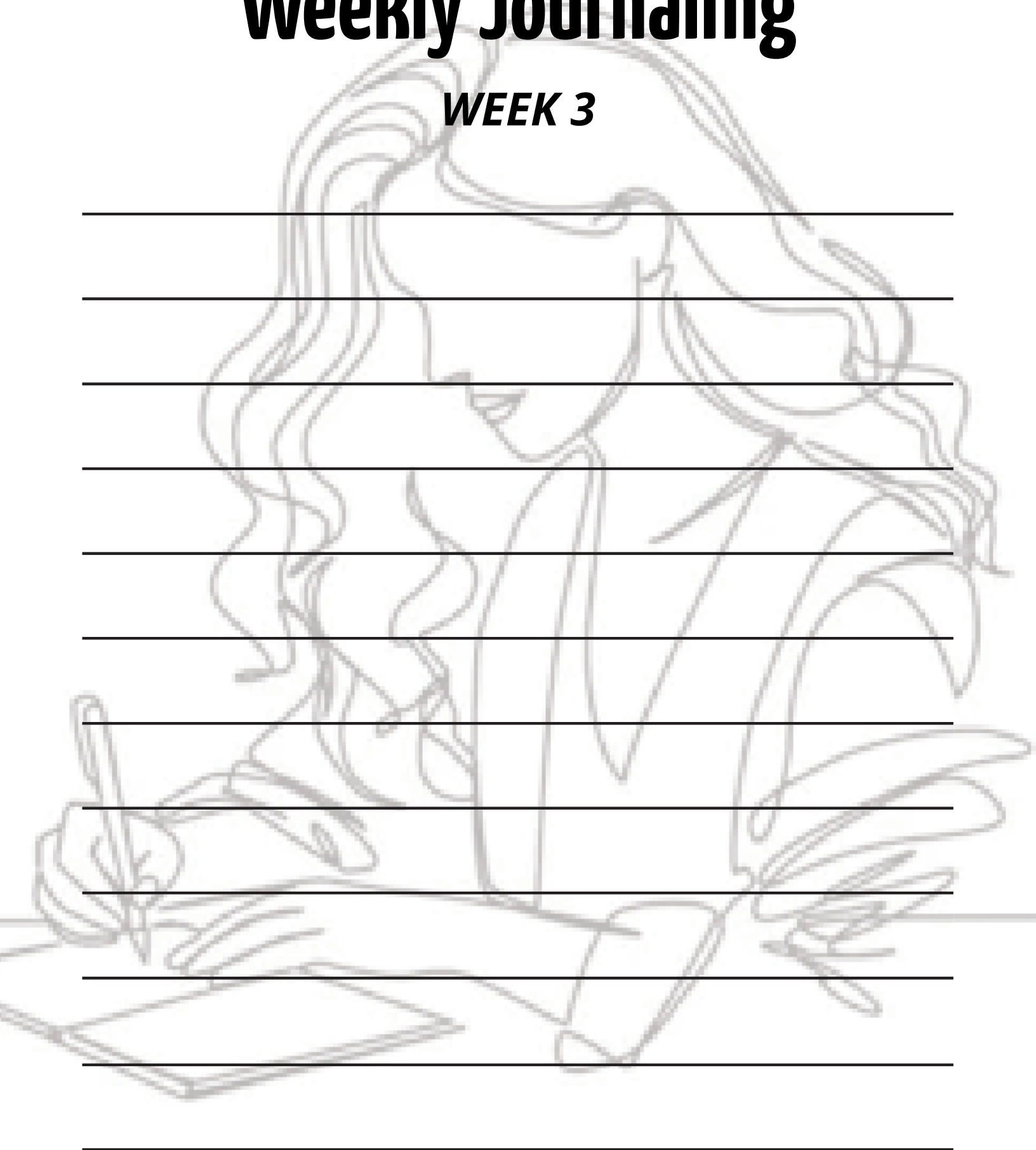
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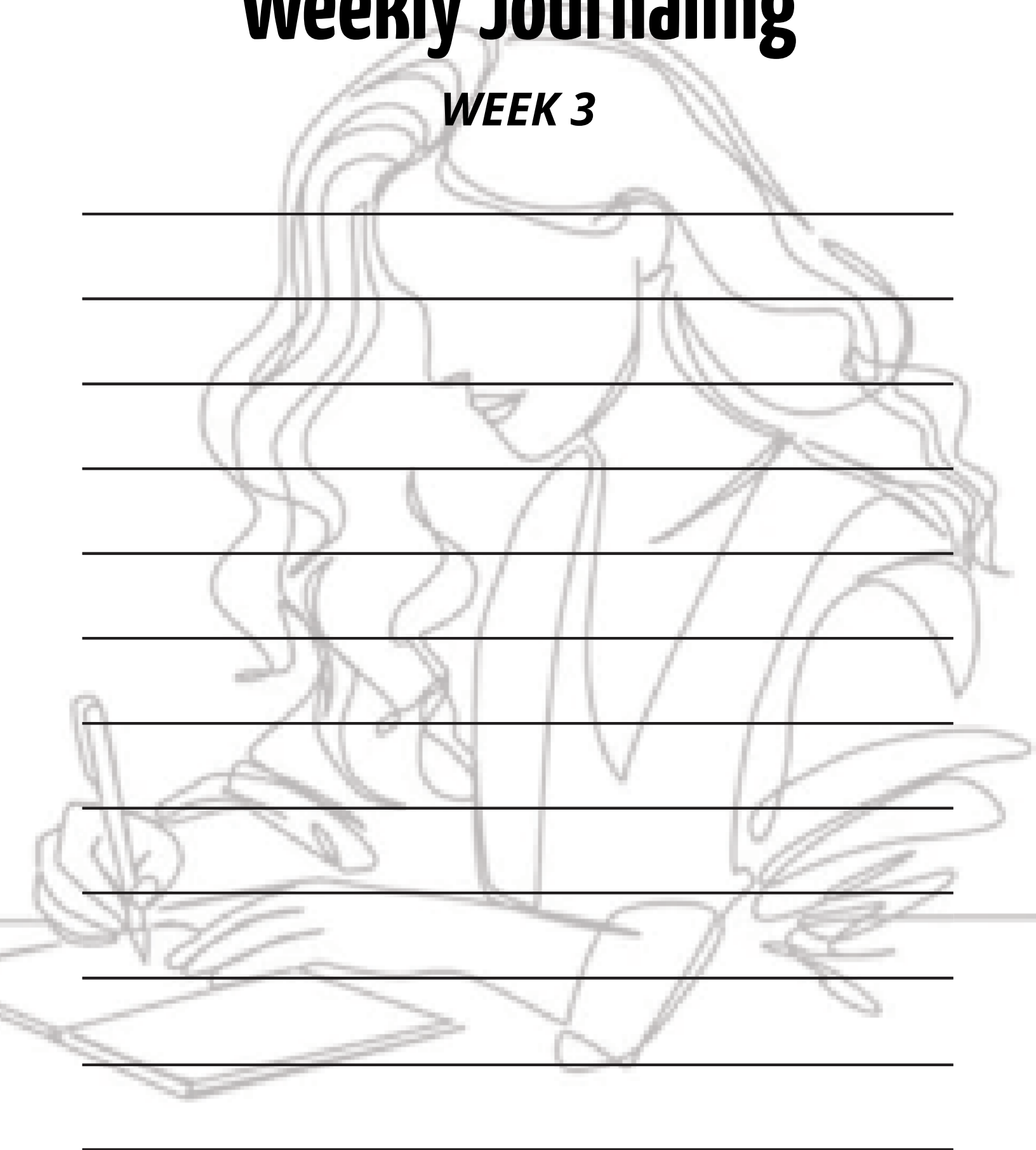
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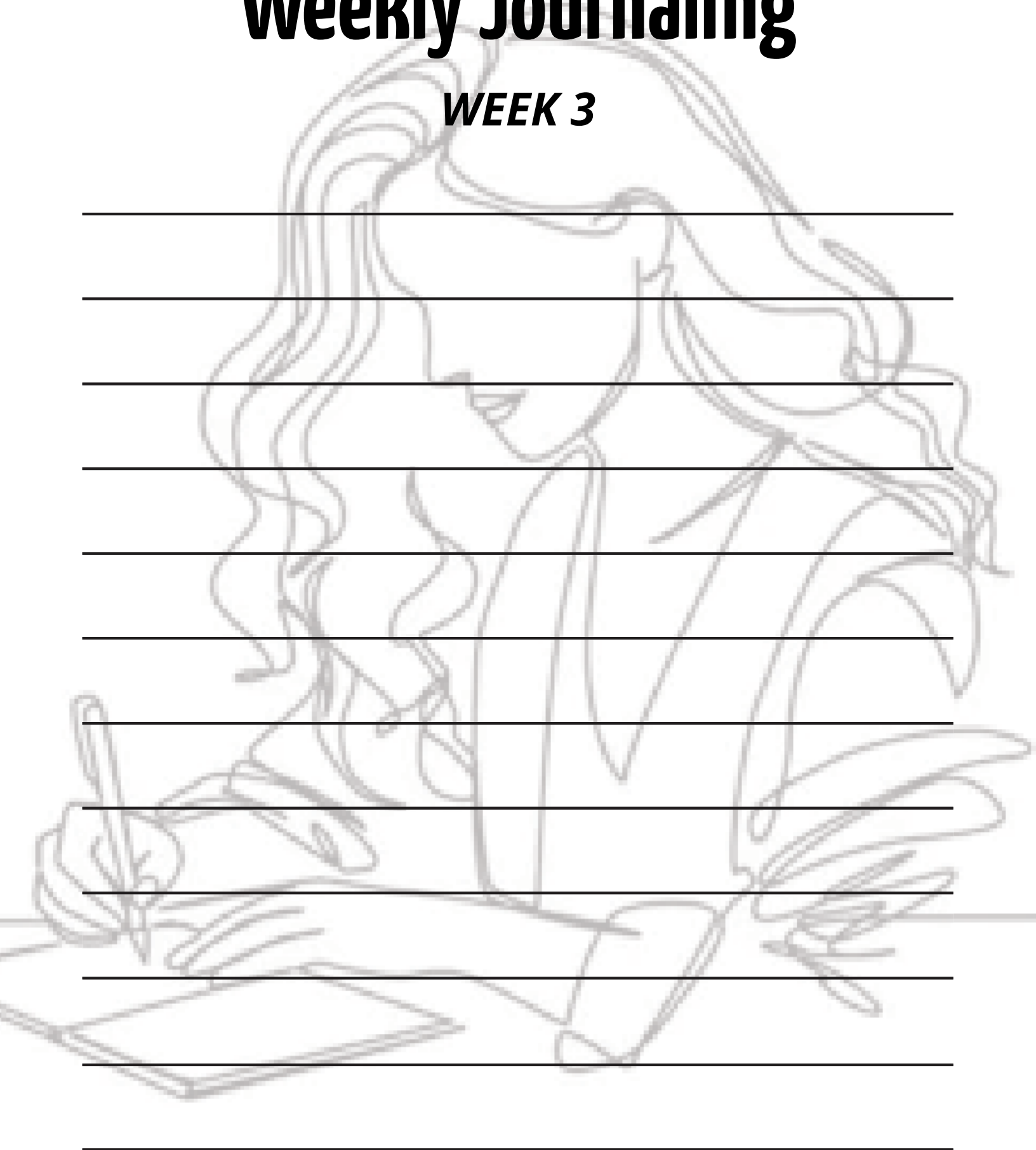
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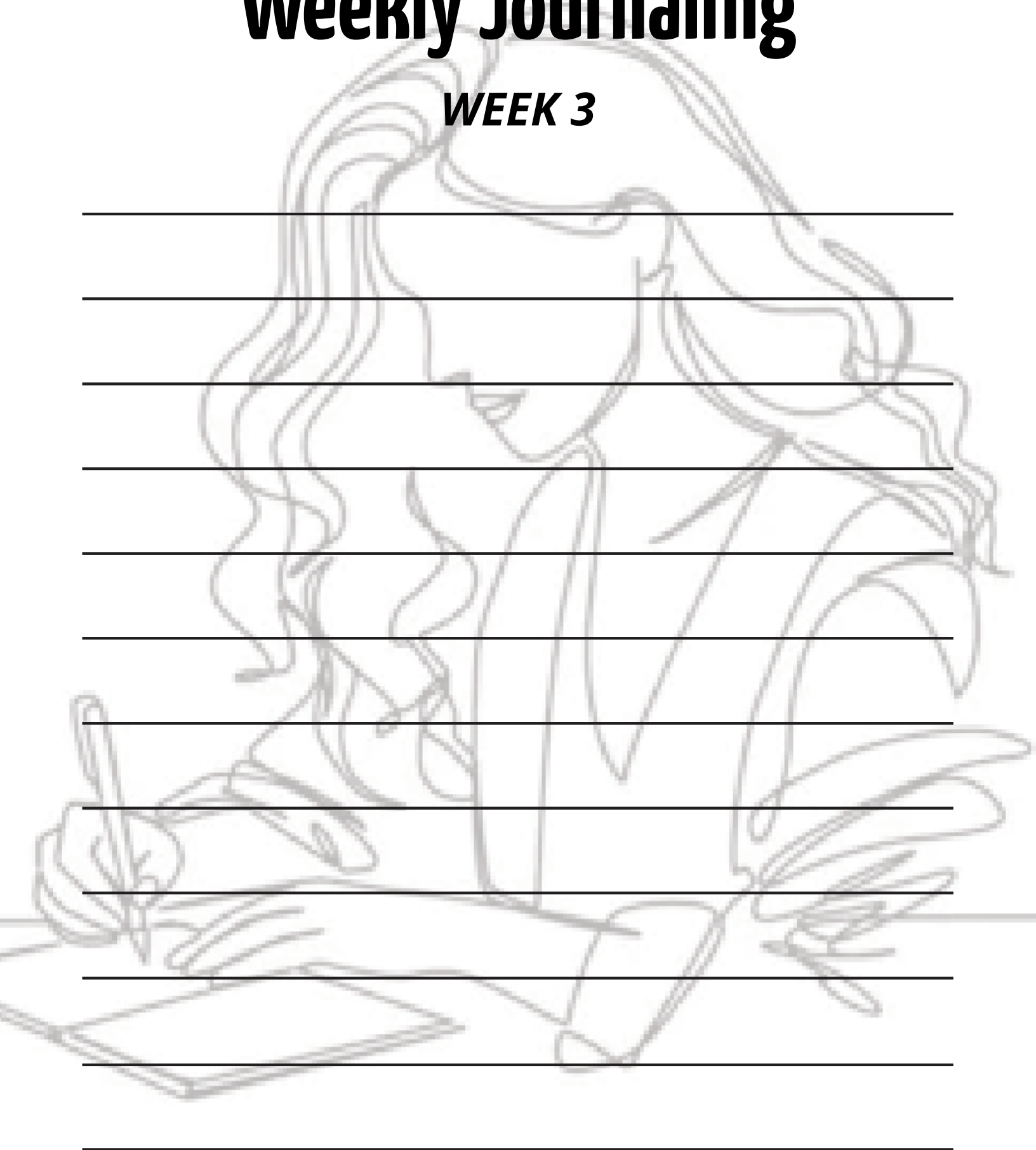
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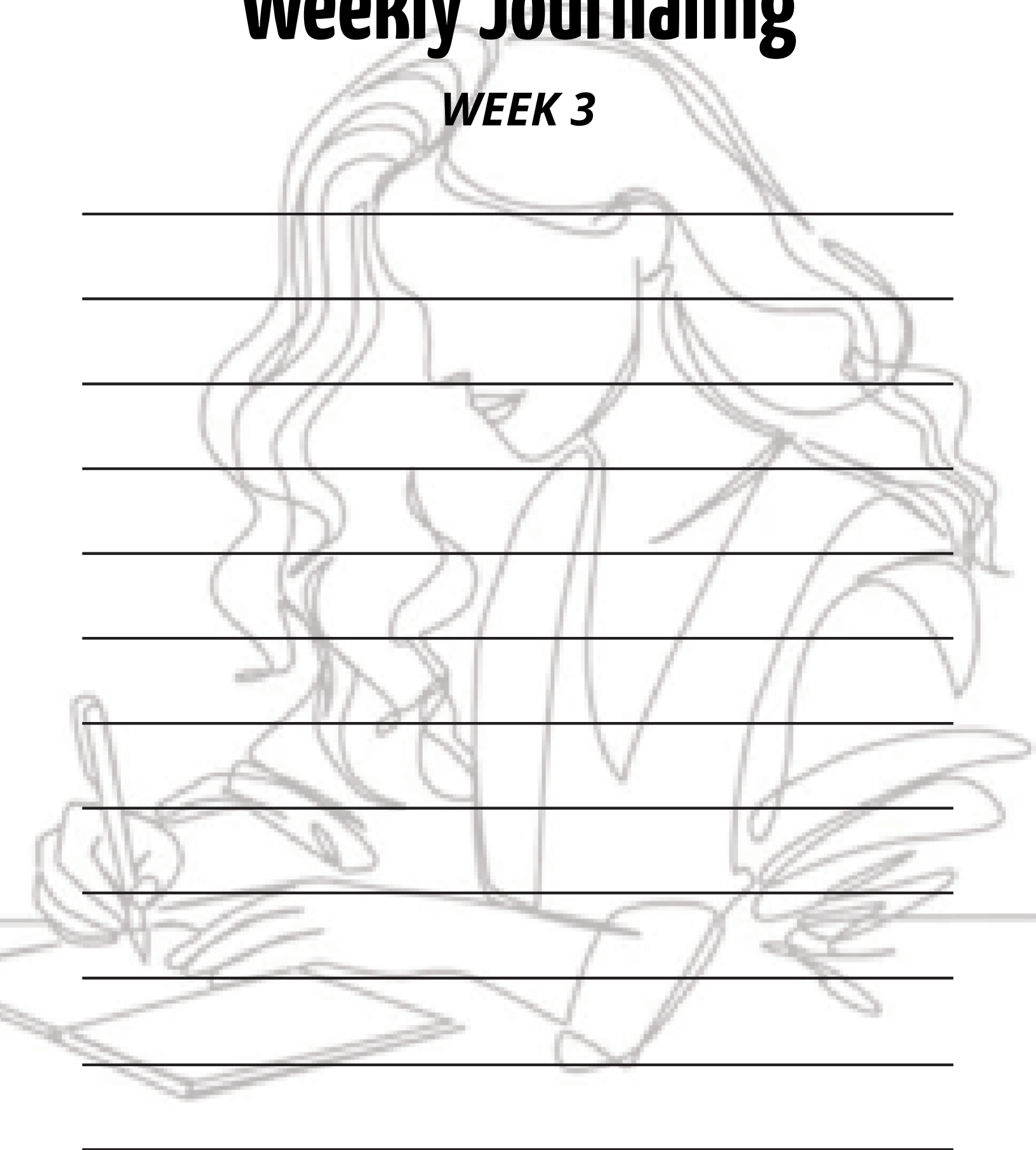
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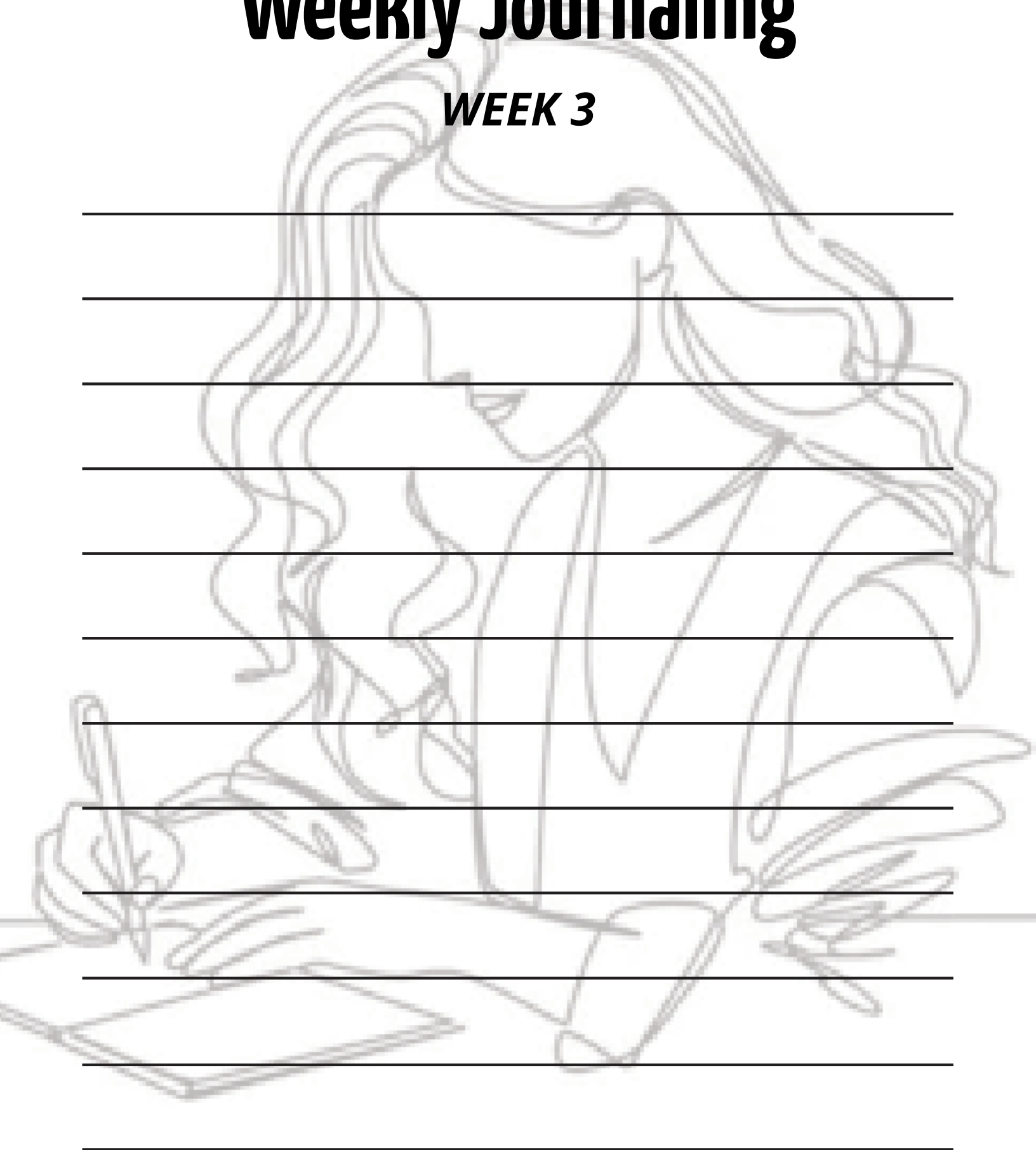
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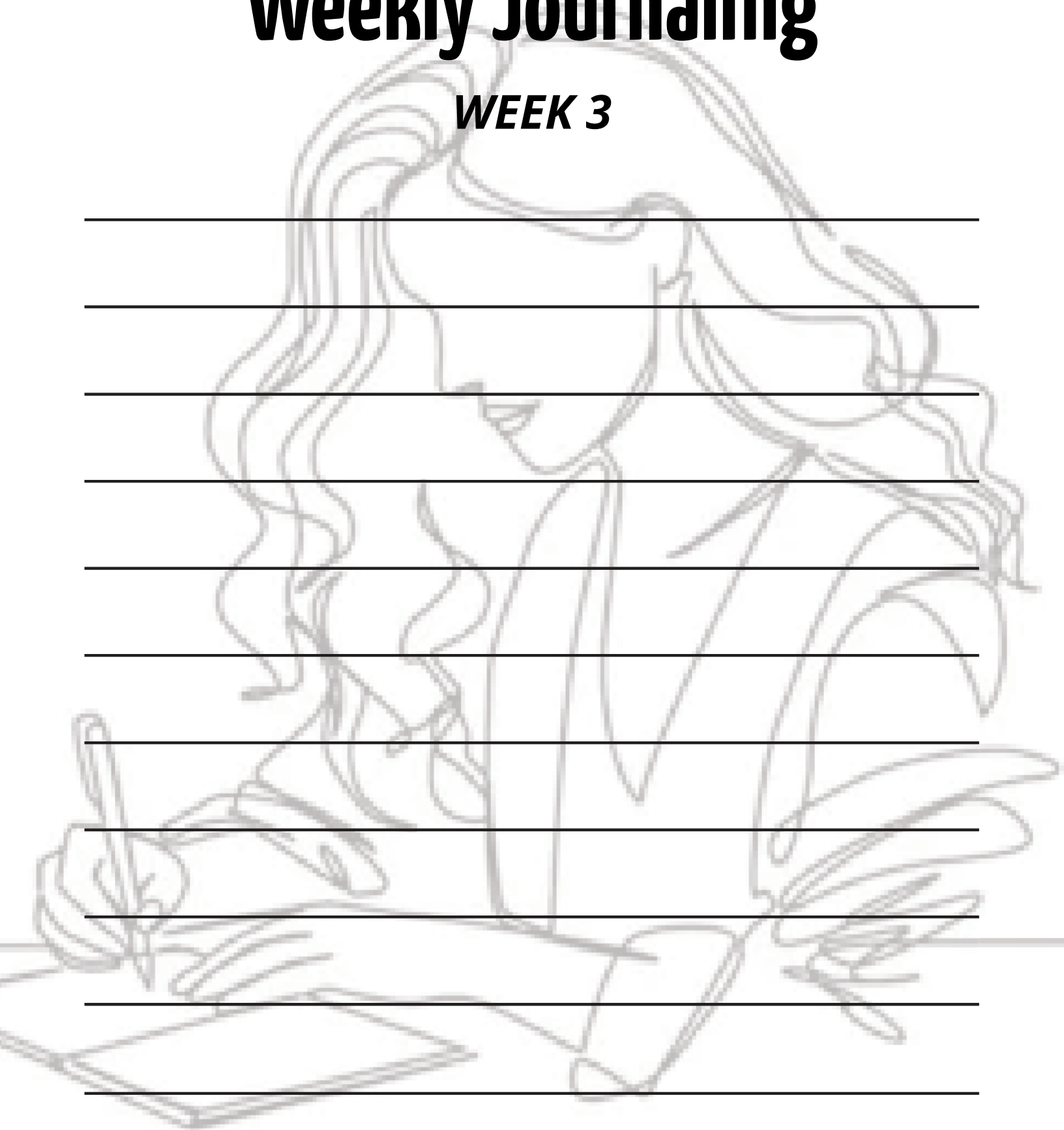
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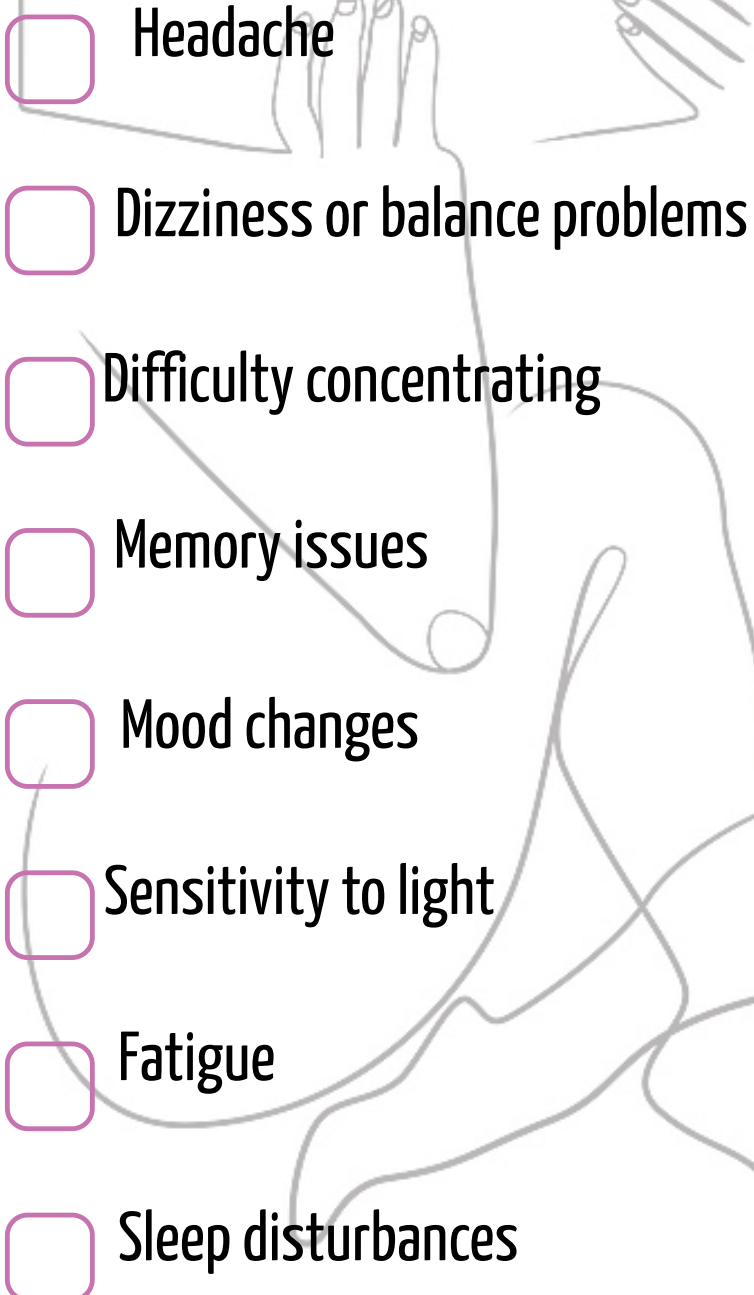
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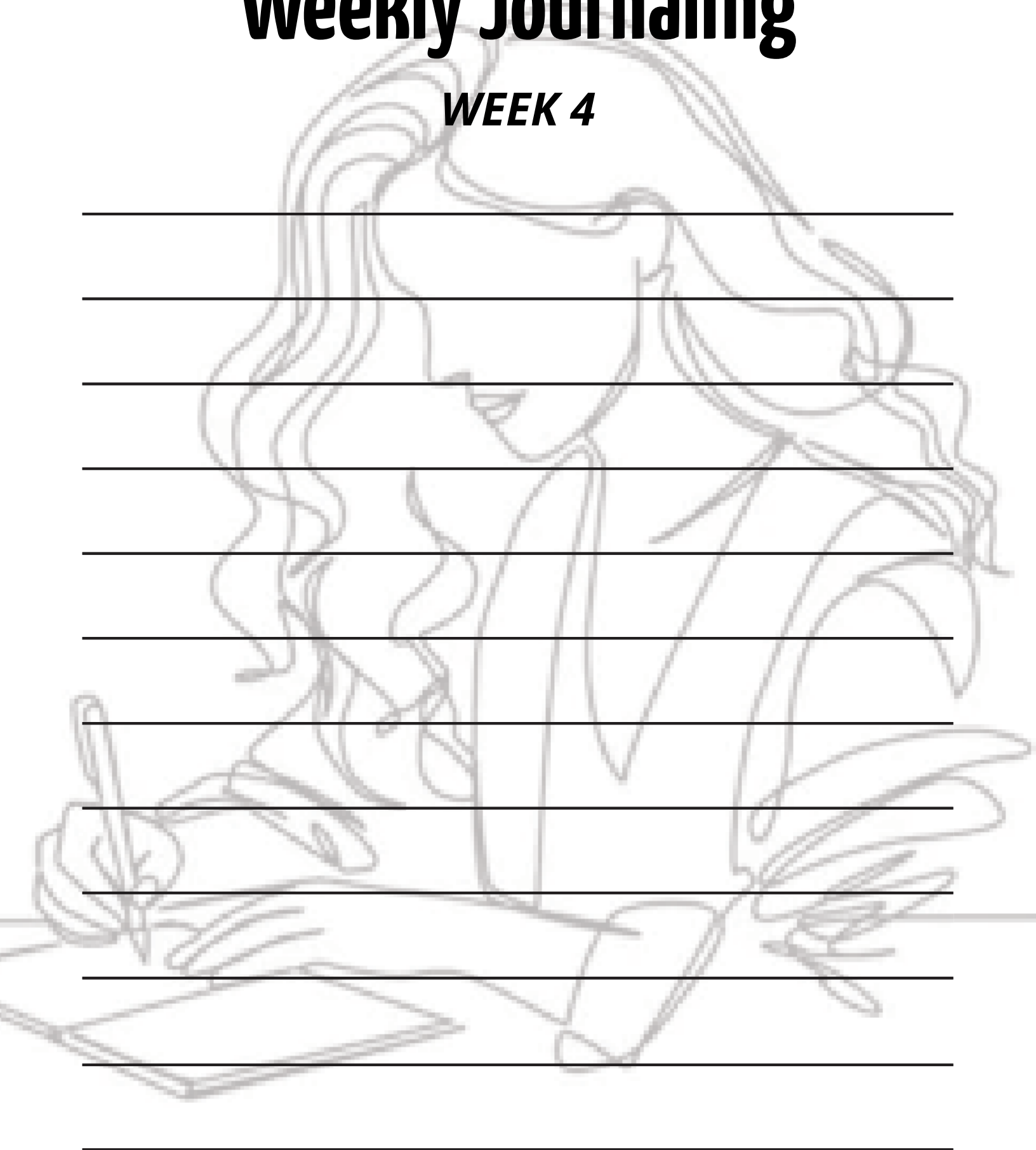
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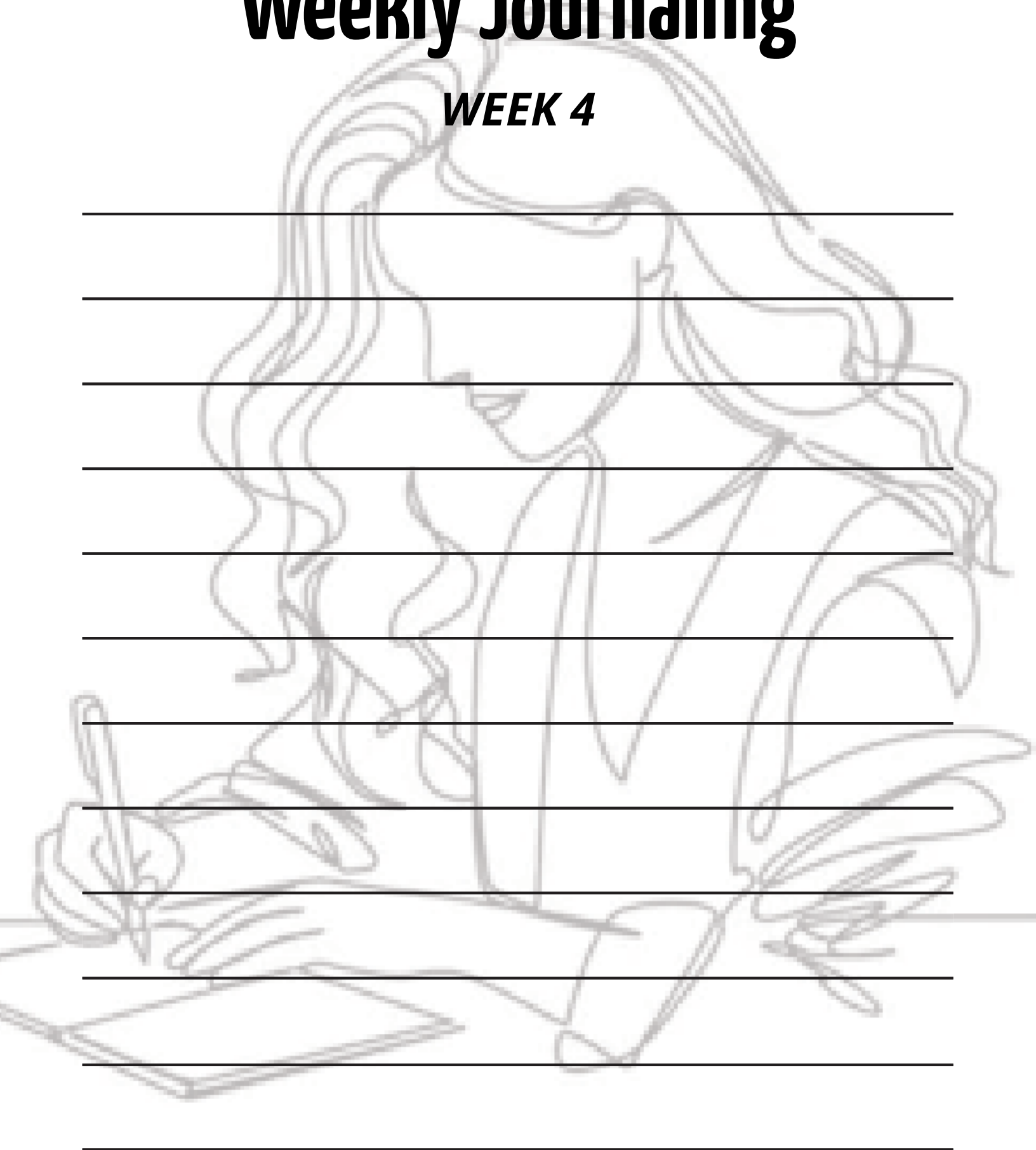
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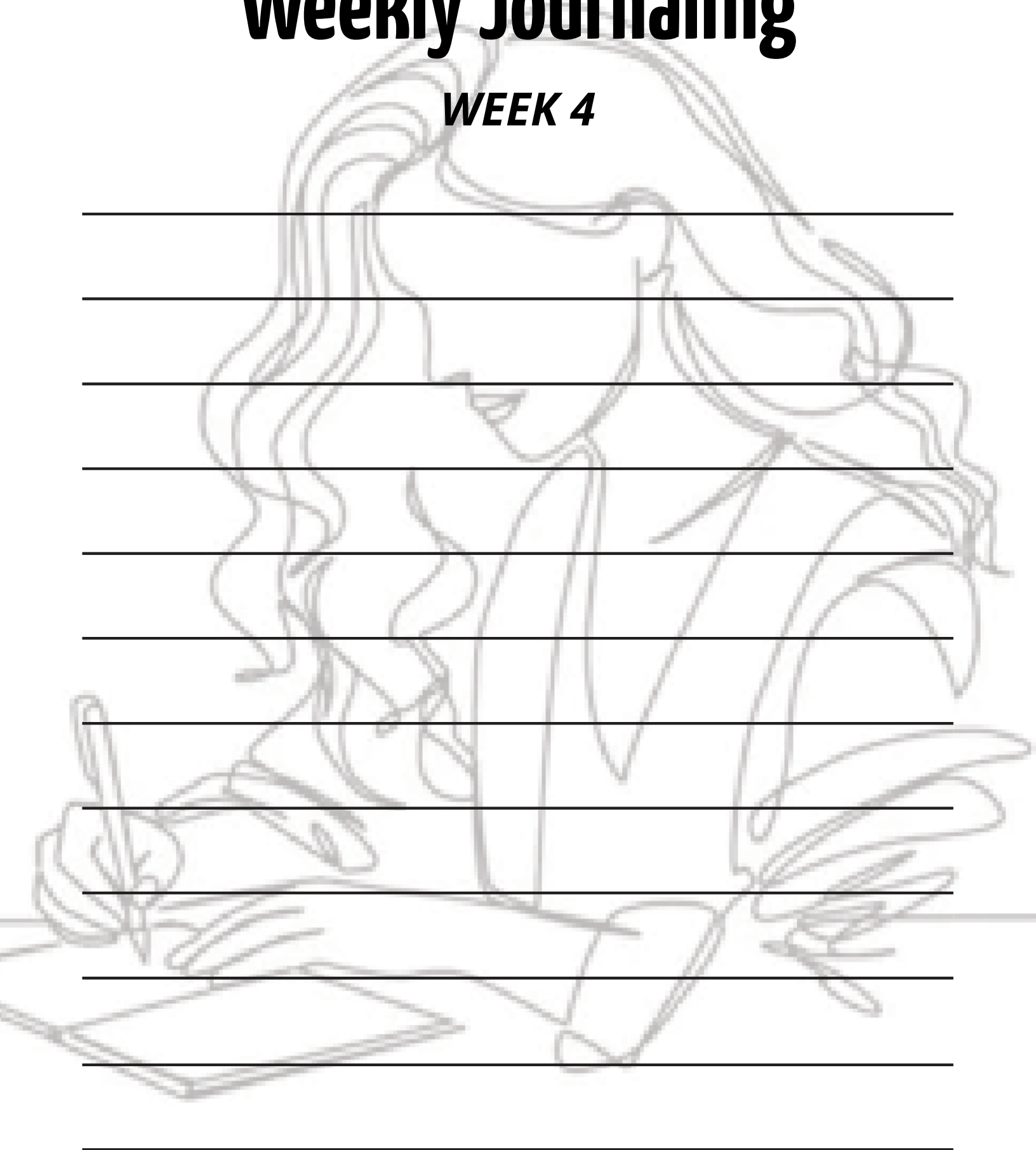
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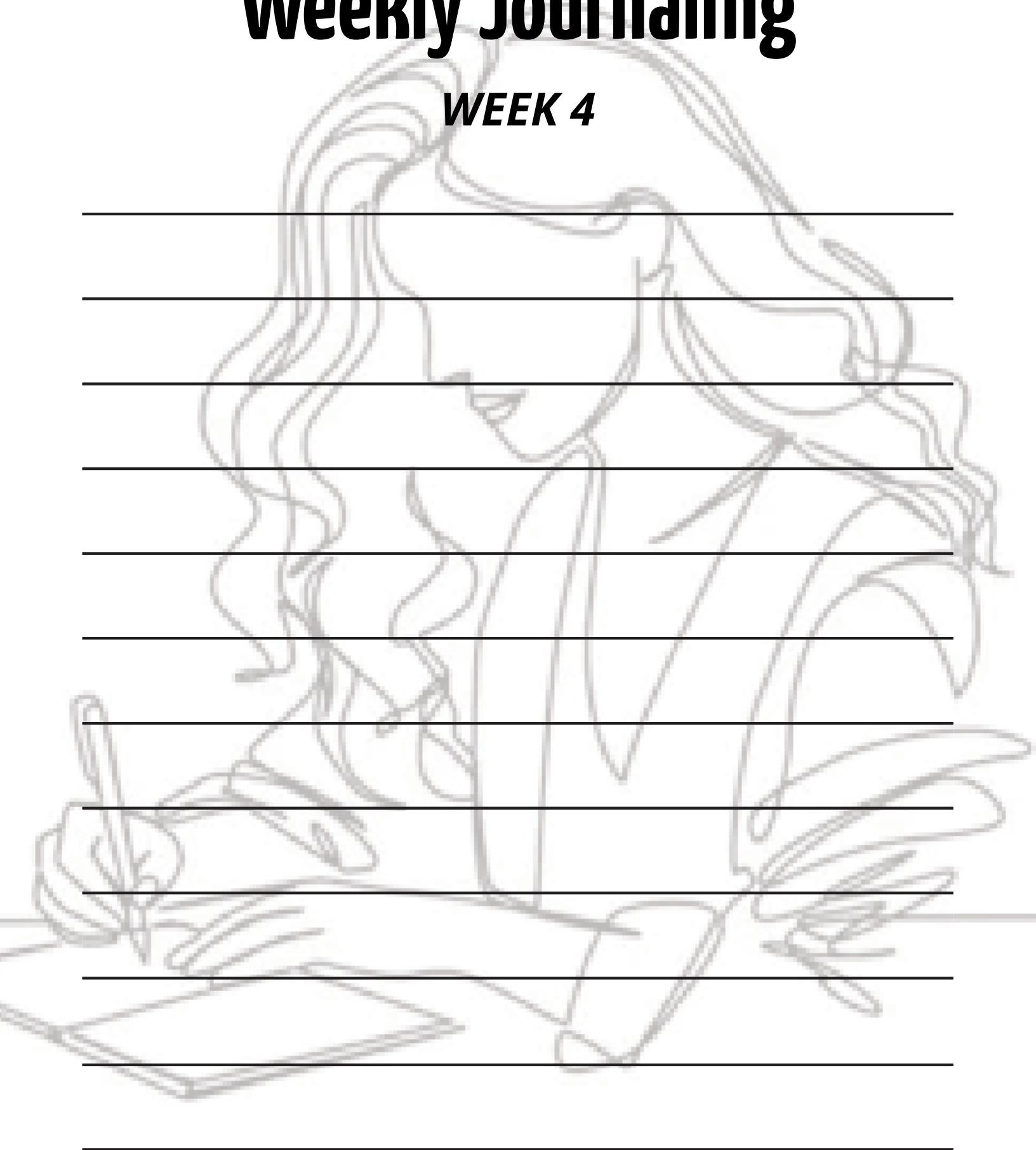
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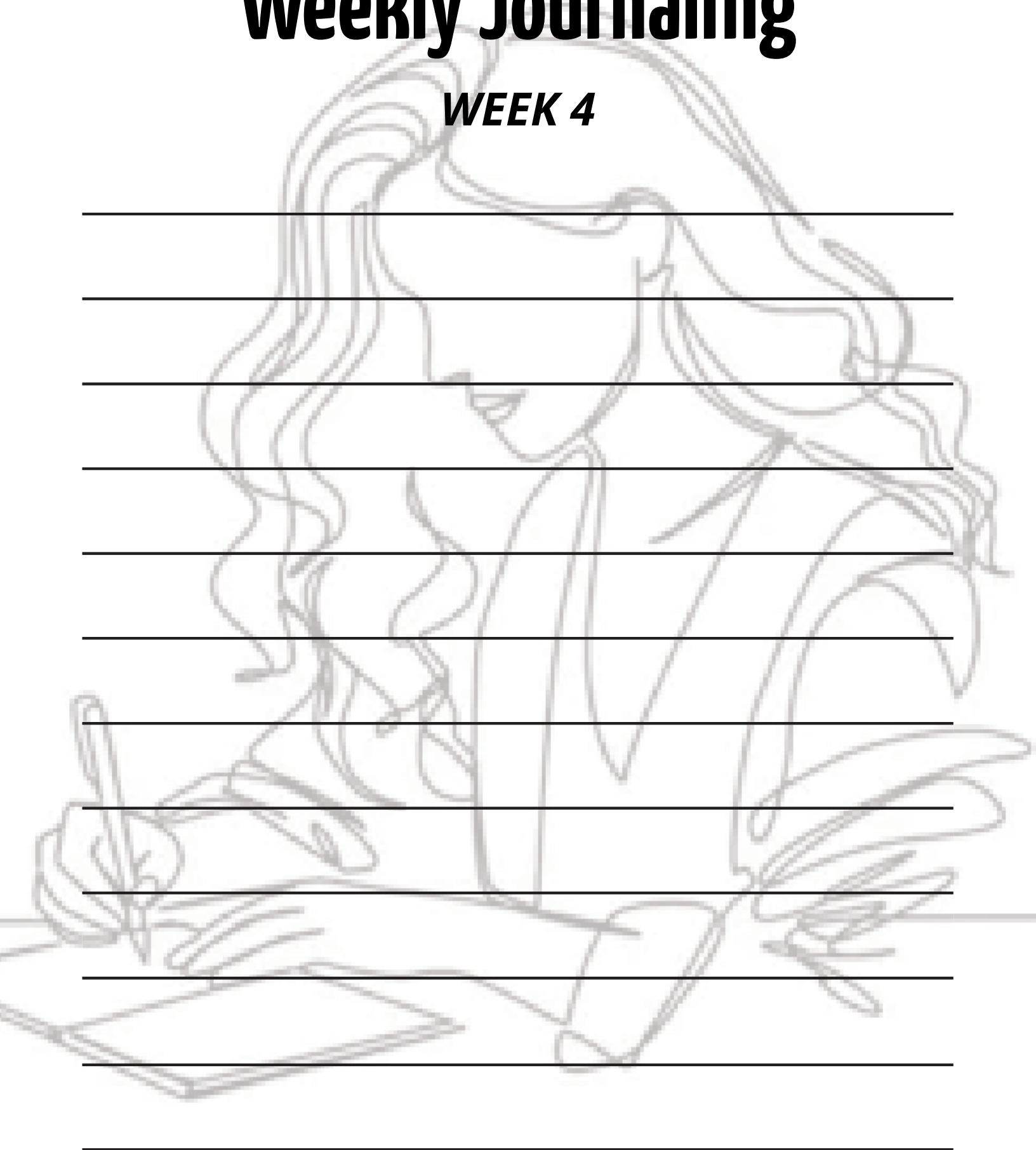
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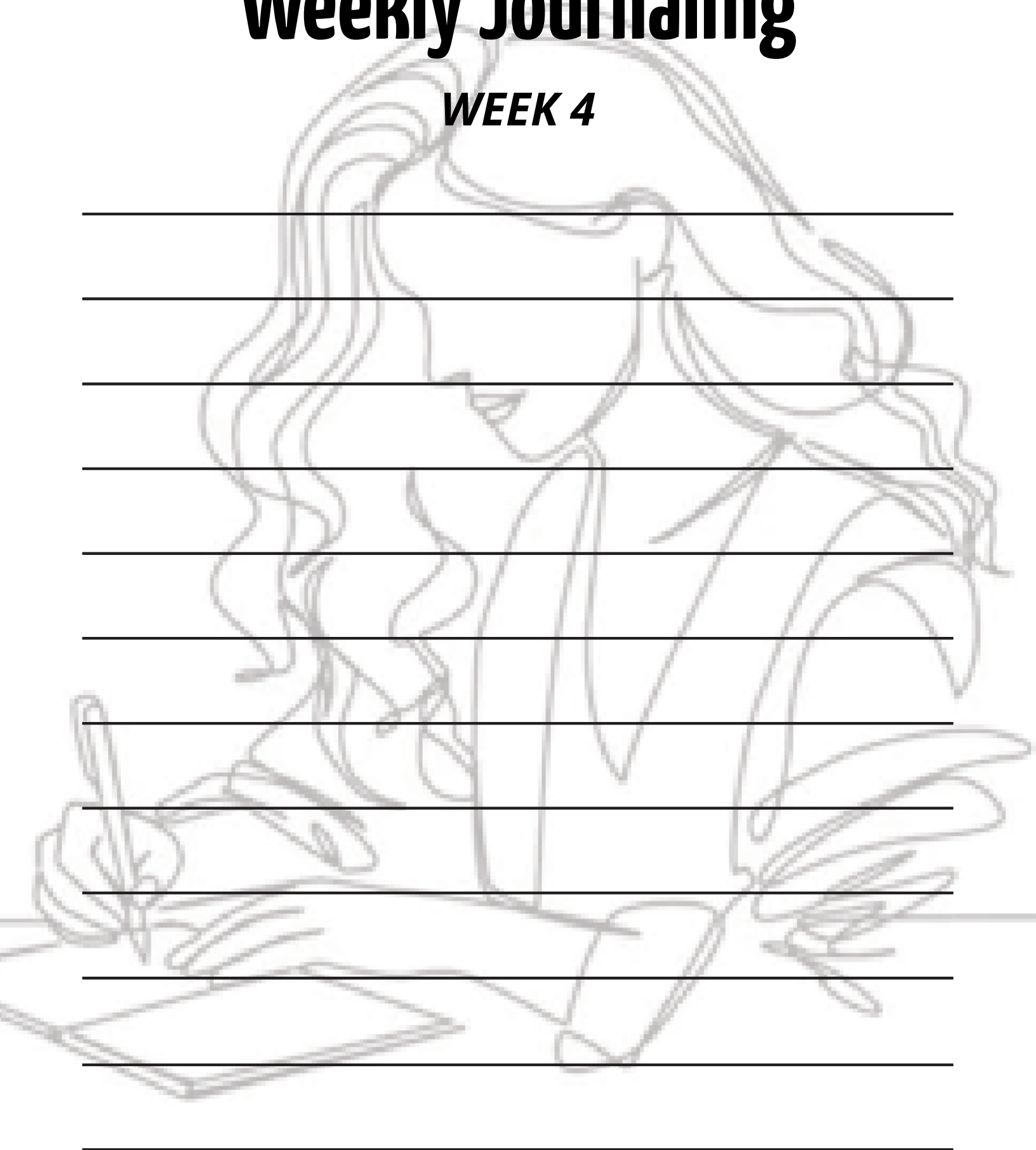
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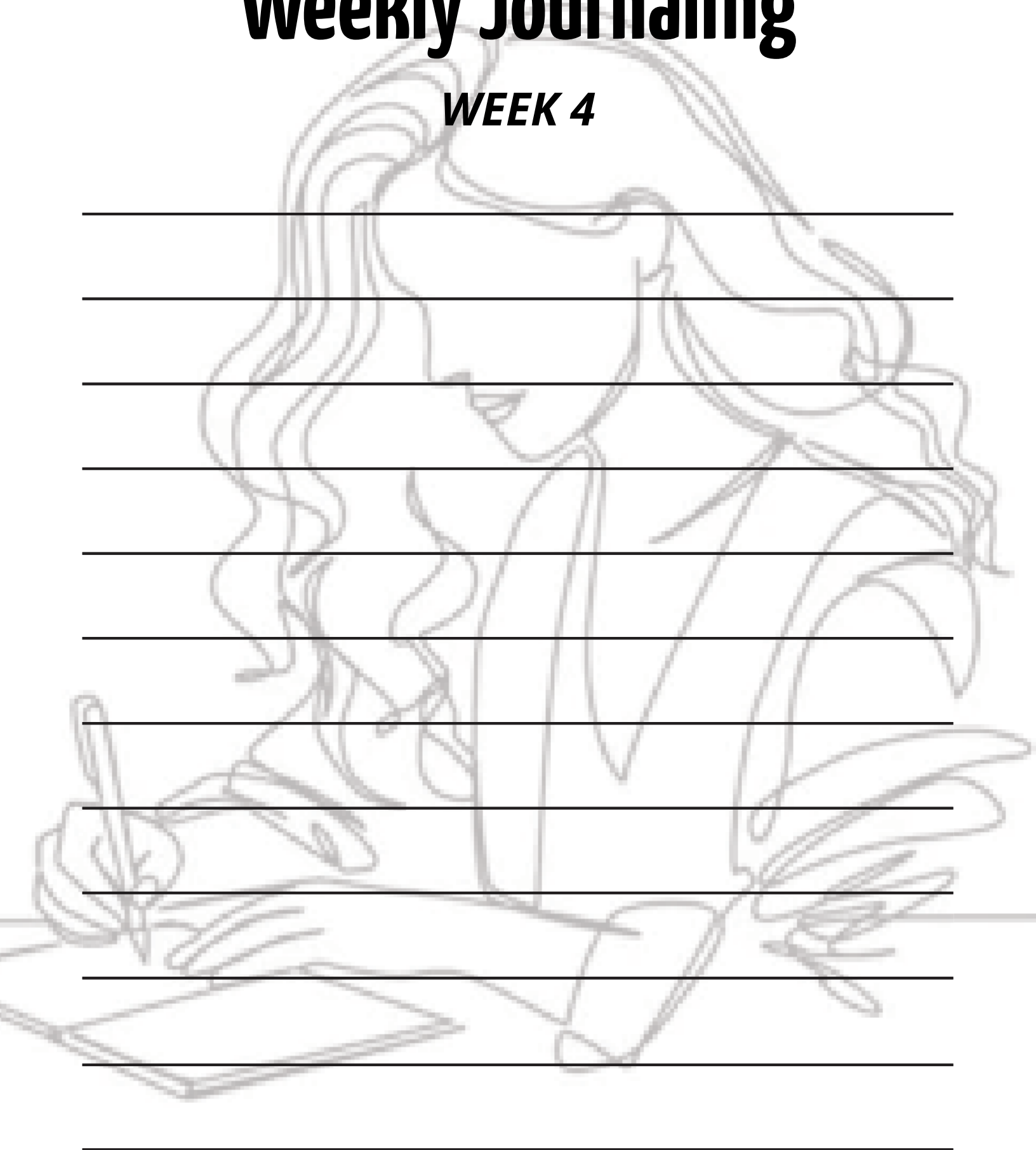
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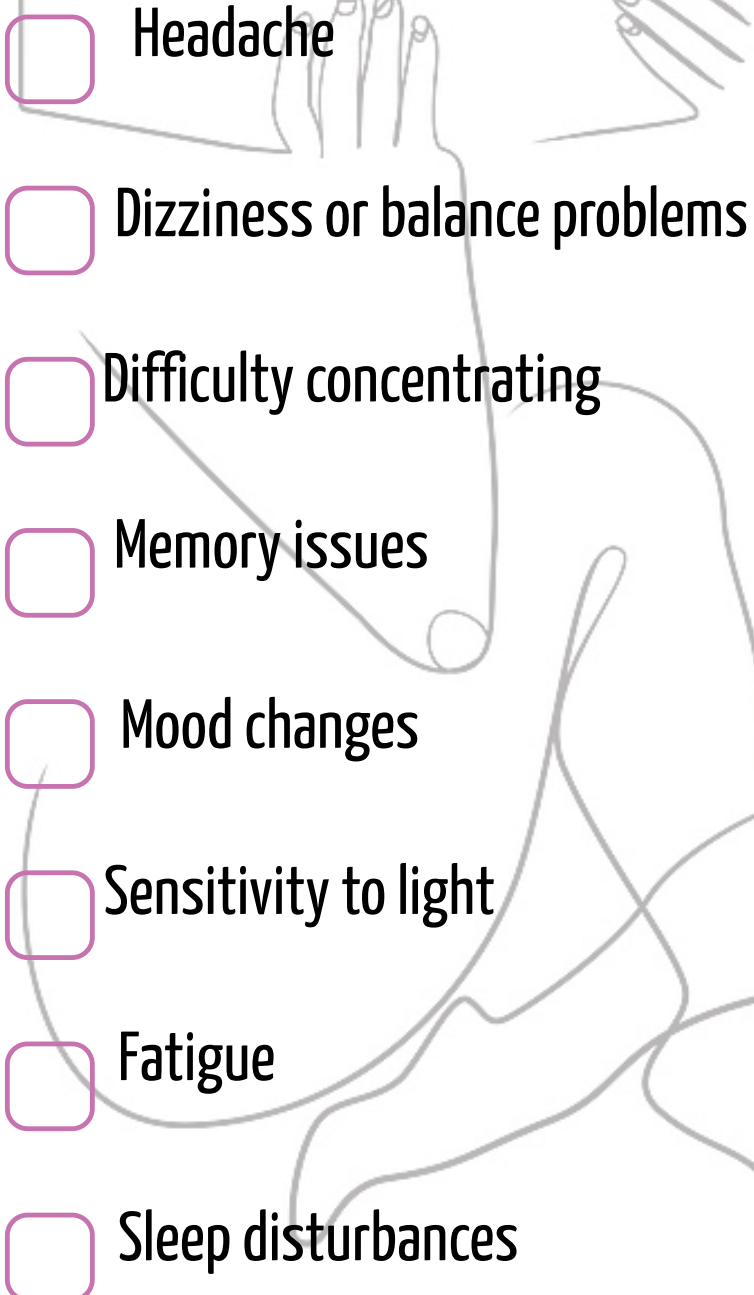
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# This is the start of something good

Now that you've identified you have a brain injury, this guide is here to walk you through the early steps of healing. It offers practical strategies to help you better understand your symptoms and make informed, conscious choices to support your recovery and overall well-being

Healing from a brain injury is a deeply personal journey. While others may have gone through similar experiences, every brain injury is unique. No two recoveries look exactly the same, and that's okay.

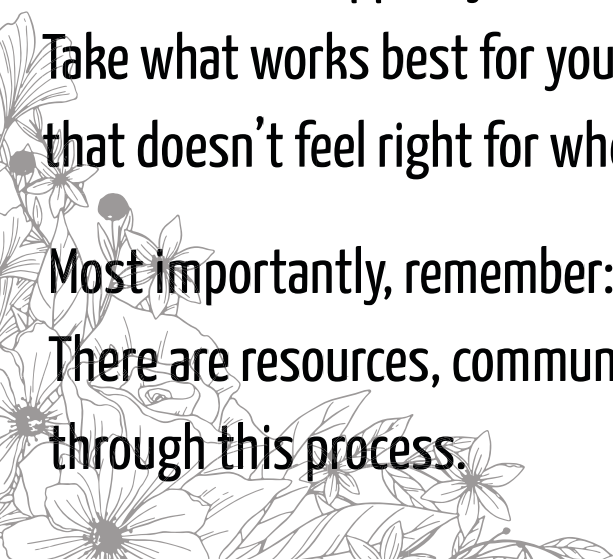
Try not to compare your progress to anyone else's, your path is valid just as it is.

Within this guide, you'll find a range of tools and practices, these strategies are meant to support your healing, but they aren't the only options.

Take what works best for you and your lifestyle, and leave behind anything that doesn't feel right for where you are right now.

Most importantly, remember: you are not alone.

There are resources, communities, and supports available to walk with you through this process.



# Resources

In Alberta

**Family Violence Information Line**

1-780-310-1818

**Alberta Abuse Helpline**

1-855-443-5722

**Alberta's One Line for Sexual  
Violence**

1-866-403-8000

**Distress Line**

780-482-4357

**Brite Line (2SLGBTQIA+ Community  
Supports)**

1-844-702-7483

**Mental Health Help Line**

1-877-303-2642

**Seniors Abuse Helpline**

780-454-8888



# Resources

In British Columbia

**VictimLinkBC**

1-800-563-0808

**Reporting Child Abuse**

1-800-663-9122

**Battered Women's Support  
Services Crisis Line**

1-855-687-1868

**Salal Sexual Violence Support  
Centre**

1-877-392-7583

**BC 24/7 Community and Social  
Services Helpline**

211

**Youth Against Violence Line**

1-800-680-4264

**Seniors Abuse and Information Line**

1-866-437-1940

# Resources

In Manitoba

**Domestic Violence Crisis Line**

1-877-977-0007

**Klinik Crisis Line**

1-888-322-3019

**Support Services for Older Adults  
Intake**

1-888-333-3121

**Klinik Sexual Assault Crisis Line**

1-888-292-7565

**Manitoba farm, rural and northern  
support services**

1-866-367-3276

**Victim Services**

1-866-484-2846

**Seniors Abuse Support Line**

1-888-896-7183

# Resources

In New Brunswick

## **Child Protection Services**

1-833-733-7835

## **Chimo Helpline**

1-800-667-5005

## **Courage Centre - Beausejour Family Crisis Resource Centre**

506-533-9100

## **Crossroads for Women 24/7 Crisis Line**

1-844-853-0811

## **Emergency Social Services**

1-800-442-9799

## **Sexual Violence New Brunswick**

1-888-579-2888

## **Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868 or text #686868

# Resources

In Newfoundland and Labrador

**Domestic Violence Help Line**

1-888-709-7090

**End Sexual Violence NL**

1-800-726-2743

**Seniors NL Resource Centre**

1-800-563-5599

**Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

# Resources

In Northwest Territories

**NWT Helpline**

811

**NWT Senior's Information Line**

1-800-661-0878

**YWCA NWT Shelter from Family  
Violence 24/7 Crisis Line**

1-866-223-7775

**Native Women's Association of the  
NWT Victim Services**

1-866-299-1011

**Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

# Resources

In Nova Scotia

## **Adult Protection Services**

1-800-225-7225

## **Eskasoni 24/7 Crisis Line**

1-855-379-2099

## **Neighbours, Friends and Family**

1-855-225-0220

## **Child Protection Services**

1-866-922-2434

## **Nova Scotia 24/7 Community and Social Services Helpline**

211

## **Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

# Resources

In Nunavut

**Elders Support Line**

1-866-684-5056

**Emergency Measures 24/7 Line**

1-800-693-1666

**Kamatsiaqtut Nunavut Helpline**

1-800-265-3333

**Qimaavik Shelter 24/7 Crisis Line**

867-979-4500

**Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

# Resources

In Ontario

## **Assaulted Women's Helpline**

1-866-863-0511 or text #7233

## **Fem'aide Support Line**

1-877-336-2433

## **Ontario Community and Social Services Helpline**

211

## **Seniors Safety Line**

1-866-299-1011

## **Talk4Healing Helpline for Indigenous Women**

1-855-554-4325

## **Victim Support Line**

1-888-579-2888

## **Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868 or text #686868



# Resources

In Prince Edward Island

**PEI Mental Health and Addictions**

1-833-553-6983

**PEI Rape and Sexual Assault Centre**

902-368-8055

**Chief Mary Bernard Memorial  
Women's Shelter 24/7 Crisis Line**

1-855-297-2332

**Child Abuse Reporting**

1-877-341-3101 // 1-800-341-6868

**PEI Family Violence Prevention  
Services 24/7 Crisis and Support Line**

1-800-240-9894

**Adult Protection Services**

902-368-4790

**Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

# *Resources*

In Quebec

**Child and Youth Protection Services**

1-800-567-6810

**Crime Victims Assistance Centre**

1-866-532-2822

**Kids Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

**The Mistreatment Helpline**

1-888-489-2287

**Quebec Community and Social  
Services Helpline**

211

**Sexual Violence Helpline**

1-888-933-9007

**SOS Violence Conjugale 24/7**

1-800-363-9010