

THE MIGRAINE RELIEF SERIES · ANGER, GRIEF & LETTING GO

Book 53 of 58

53

Two Steps Ahead of Pain

*On living in fear of the next episode, even when
nothing is happening right now*

ROD GABRIEL ZR

Author of Living with Visual Aura Migraine



THE MIGRAINE RELIEF SERIES · ANGER, GRIEF &
LETTING GO · BOOK 53 OF 58

Two Steps Ahead of Pain

*On living in fear of the next episode, even when
nothing is happening right now*

Designed with spacious type, warm colors, and generous white space for visual comfort — especially for readers navigating aura, light sensitivity, or neurological strain.

A note on care. This mini-book shares one person's lived experience and general wellness practices. It is not medical advice, and it is not a substitute for diagnosis or treatment by a qualified healthcare professional. Migraine has many forms and causes. Always consult your doctor about your symptoms, your triggers, and any medication or treatment decisions.

© ROD GABRIEL ZR. Part of The Migraine Relief Series, a companion collection to *Living with Visual Aura Migraine: Finding Relief Through the Rough Times* by Rod Gabriel ZR.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

A letter to you

How much of our suffering comes from the event itself, and how much comes from our fight against the fact that it doesn't match what we expected?

This book sits with a particular kind of suffering: not the pain itself, but the anticipation of it. *What if it comes back?* That question can occupy real mental space even on days entirely free of symptoms — which means anticipation, left unexamined, can cost you more days than the migraine ever actually claims.

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The experience: pain-free, and still bracing

Some of my hardest days had no migraine in them at all. Just a quiet, constant bracing — a background hum of *what if* running underneath everything else, present even when every actual symptom was absent.

The automatic thought: 'what if it comes back?'

The question sounds reasonable, even responsible. It rarely stays a single question. It becomes a constant undertone, quietly coloring plans, moods, and ordinary afternoons that had nothing actually wrong with them.

“What if it comes back” can occupy a pain-free day just as fully as an actual migraine occupies a painful one. The cost is real either way.

The emotion and the reaction

Anticipatory dread rarely announces itself loudly. It shows up as a slight hesitation before committing to plans, a quiet scanning of how the day is going, a reluctance to fully relax into a good moment in case it gets interrupted.

The chain of anticipation

□ The anticipation chain

Experience: a pain-free day, otherwise unremarkable.

↓ Automatic thought: *'what if it comes back today?'*

↓ Emotion: low-grade dread, a reluctance to fully relax.

↓ Reaction: hedging plans, staying quietly braced, half-present.

↓ Observation: *'I am spending a pain-free day as though it weren't pain-free.'*

↓ Possibility: noticing the gap between the actual day and the feared one lets the actual day back in.

PAUSE & REFLECT

Counting your own bracing

How many genuinely pain-free hours this week did I spend quietly braced for pain anyway?

What would today look like if I trusted my plan enough to stop anticipating?

The observation: counting the days actually lost

It's worth counting honestly: how many days did migraine itself actually claim this month, versus how many days anticipation quietly claimed on migraine's behalf, without migraine ever showing up at all? For many of us, the second number is larger.

The possibility of letting go

You already have a plan, built earlier in this collection, for the day migraine actually arrives. That plan is exactly what makes it safe to stop anticipating on every other day. You don't need to live two steps ahead of pain that isn't here yet.

You have a plan for when it happens.

*You don't need to live as if it's
happening all the time.*

YOUR SPACE

My notes

[illegible]



CLOSING

Keep going, gently

Anticipation can claim days migraine never touches.
Counting that cost honestly is the first step toward
getting those days back.

How much of our suffering comes from the event
itself, and how much comes from our fight against the
fact that it doesn't match what we expected?

*Next in the series: **A World Too Bright** — an
intimate look at visual aura, and the strangeness of a
body that temporarily changes how you perceive the
world.*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

ROD GABRIEL ZR

This closing collection returns once more to the voice at the heart of *Living with Visual Aura Migraine* — not to explain another symptom, but to sit with the feelings that so often ride alongside one: anger that things aren't as they should be, and grief for the versions of days, people, and himself that pain quietly rewrote.

One question runs underneath every book here: how much of our suffering comes from the event itself, and how much comes from our fight against the fact that the event doesn't match what we expected? He doesn't have a tidy answer. He has ten honest attempts at sitting with the question anyway.

Want the whole journey?

This guide is adapted from the complete book, *Living with Visual Aura Migraine: Finding Relief Through the Rough Times* — the full story, with every practice, every episode, and every lesson in one place.

The Migraine Relief Series

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The Identity Series — on reclaiming yourself from the condition:

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