



Needs, Boundaries & Relational Patterns

Moving from Overextending to Understanding

Reflection, Rootwork & Integration Guide

Before You Begin

This guide is not about fixing every relationship in your life. It is about understanding how your nervous system responds in connection. Connection does not only mean romantic partnership.

Connection can mean:

- Friendships
- Family relationships
- Coworkers
- Supervisors
- Community spaces
- Creative collaborations
- Clients or professional roles
- Group dynamics
- Social media/community interactions
- Chosen family
- Caregiving roles
- Situations where you feel responsible for others

This guide focuses on the foundational rootwork underneath relational patterns.

The goal is not to analyze another person.

The goal is to understand:

What happens inside of me when connection feels uncertain, demanding, unsafe, overwhelming, or unclear?

Because many people know what they do in relationships.

- They know they overgive.
- They know they say yes when they mean no.
- They know they avoid hard conversations.
- They know they shut down.
- They know they overexplain.
- They know they become resentful.
- They know they carry more than they want to carry.

But knowing the behavior is not the same thing as understanding the pattern.

This guide helps you slow down and ask:

- **What is this pattern protecting?**
- **What need is underneath this?**
- **What did I learn about being safe, accepted, useful, or connected?**
- **Where am I overextending instead of communicating honestly?**
- **What boundary becomes clearer when I understand the need?**

Behavior is not random.

Behavior is communication.

And when we understand the meaning of behavior, we move from shame into clarity.



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Important Disclaimer

This guide is intended for **psychoeducation, reflection, and personal growth**.

It is not therapy, diagnosis, crisis care, medical advice, couples counseling, workplace mediation, legal advice, or a replacement for individualized mental health treatment.

Using this guide, purchasing REVAM materials, or participating in REVAM content does **not** create a therapist-client relationship.

This guide may bring up awareness around relational patterns, family conditioning, workplace stress, trauma responses, attachment wounds, neurodivergence, unmet needs, resentment, shutdown, people-pleasing, or emotional overwhelm. Please move through this material at your own pace.

If this material brings up overwhelming distress, trauma responses, relationship safety concerns, workplace safety concerns, or fear for your safety, seek support from a licensed mental health provider, crisis resource, human resources professional, legal professional, or trusted support system as appropriate.

If you are in immediate danger, contact emergency services in your area. In the United States, the **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** provides free and confidential support by call, text, or chat; **Crisis Text Line** offers free 24/7 text support by texting **HOME** to **741741**; and the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** provides confidential support by calling **1-800-799-SAFE (7233)**, chatting online, or texting **START** to **88788**.

If a relationship or environment includes coercion, threats, stalking, physical violence, sexual coercion, intimidation, financial control, retaliation, harassment, discrimination, isolation, or fear of harm, do not use this guide to confront someone alone. Prioritize safety planning and individualized support.

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How to Use This Guide

You are allowed to:

- Go slowly
- Skip sections
- Pause when needed
- Come back later
- Write only a few words
- Reflect on one relationship at a time
- Use this with a therapist or trusted support person
- Stop if reflection becomes too activating

This guide is not asking you to force insight.

It is asking you to notice.

Awareness is enough to begin.



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Grounding Check-In

Before starting, pause and ask:

What is my current capacity?

- Low
- Medium
- High
- Unsure

What sensations do I notice in my body?

Do I feel resourced enough to reflect on relationships today?

If not, pause.

Regulation comes before reflection.

Say:

“I am reflecting. I am not failing.”

“I can pause when needed.”

“My patterns make sense.”

“Understanding creates choice.”

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Section 1: This Is Not Just About Boundaries

Psychoeducation

Before we can talk about boundaries, we have to talk about needs.

Because boundaries without needs-awareness often become vague, inconsistent, reactive, or performative.

A lot of people are taught boundaries like they are a script:

- Just say no.
- Just be direct.
- Just stop letting people do that.
- Just communicate better.

But if you were not taught how to recognize your needs, honor your capacity, or trust your internal cues, then boundaries are not going to feel simple.

- They may feel confusing
- They may feel late.
- They may only show up after resentment has already built.
- They may only come out once you are
 - Overwhelmed
 - Flooded
 - Sharp
 - Avoidant
 - Already in shutdown.

That does not mean you are bad at boundaries.

It may mean your boundaries are trying to form on top of unclear needs.

This can happen anywhere:

- **With a friend who vents to you constantly**
- **With a coworker who keeps adding tasks to your plate**
- **With family members who expect access to you**
- **With a supervisor who assumes you can always take more**
- **With community members who mistake your care for unlimited availability**
- **With clients, students, or people you support professionally**
- **With social groups where belonging feels tied to being agreeable**

Needs are the foundation of boundaries.

When needs are unclear, boundaries will often feel unclear too.

So instead of starting with:

“Why can’t I hold a boundary?”

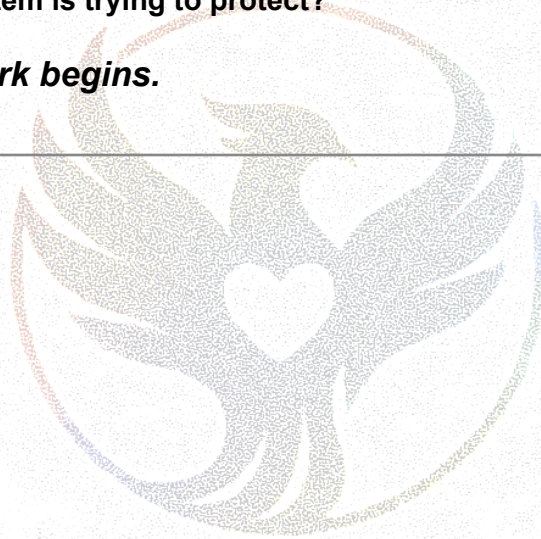
We begin with:

“Do I know what I need?”

“Do I know when I am reaching capacity?”

“Do I know what my system is trying to protect?”

That is where the work begins.



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Reflection

Think about relationships generally, not only romantic ones.

Where do boundaries feel hardest for you?

- Friendships
- Family
- Coworkers
- Supervisors
- Clients/customers
- Community spaces
- Social media
- Caregiving roles
- Chosen family
- Professional collaborations
- Group settings

Other:

Do boundaries usually feel:

- Confusing
- Late
- Selfish
- Sharp
- Inconsistent
- Overwhelming
- Unsafe
- Easier after resentment builds
- Easier in some relationships than others

Other:

What needs are hard for you to recognize?

What needs are hard for you to express?

Where do you wait until resentment builds before realizing a boundary was needed?

Rootwork Question

What would you have needed to know, feel, or trust before the boundary became necessary?



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Section 2: The Experience — “I Give a Lot, but Feel Unseen”

Psychoeducation

For a lot of people, this work begins with an experience they can feel before they have language for it.

- “I give a lot but feel unseen.”
- “I shut down when it’s too much.”
- “I don’t know how to ask for what I need.”
- “I say yes and then feel resentful.”
- “I avoid hard conversations.”
- “I overexplain because I don’t feel understood.”
- “I go quiet when I’m overwhelmed.”
- “I feel responsible for keeping things smooth.”
- “I become the dependable one, then feel trapped by that role.”

These patterns can show up in friendships, families, workplaces, professional roles, and community spaces.

- You may be the friend everyone calls during crisis.
- You may be the coworker who gets extra work because you are reliable.
- You may be the family member who
 - Organizes
 - Remembers
 - Translates
 - Mediates
 - Emotionally absorbs.
- You may be the community builder who cares deeply but feels drained because care becomes expected.
- You may be the professional who is praised for being
 - Available
 - Responsive
 - Emotionally attuned
 - While privately feeling depleted.

These are deeply human experiences.

And many people turn these experiences into evidence that something is wrong with them.

They begin to believe:

- **Maybe I'm too sensitive.**
- **Maybe I'm too needy.**
- **Maybe I'm bad at relationships.**
- **Maybe I'm selfish for having needs.**
- **Maybe I'm failing because I cannot do this like other people do.**

But these are patterns, not failures.

A failure sounds like a character flaw.

A pattern tells us there is repetition, meaning, and history.

A pattern tells us this did not come out of nowhere.

- It was learned
- It was reinforced.
- It was adapted.

And at some point, it likely did something important for you.



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Reflection

Which of these feels familiar?

- I give a lot but feel unseen.
- I shut down when it is too much.
- I do not know how to ask for what I need.
- I say yes when I mean no.
- I avoid hard conversations.
- I overexplain when I feel misunderstood.
- I become resentful after overextending.
- I go quiet when I feel overwhelmed.
- I do not recognize my needs until later.
- I become the dependable one and then feel trapped.
- I feel responsible for other people's emotions.

What pattern feels most familiar right now?

Where does this pattern show up most?

What have you told yourself this pattern means about you?

What might it mean if this is a pattern, not a character flaw?

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Action Tool: Pattern Naming

Complete:

When I feel _____, my system tends to _____.

Example:

“When I feel pressure, my system tends to people-please.”

Your version:



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Section 3: Behavior Is Communication

Psychoeducation

This is the rootwork frame:

Behavior is communication.

Patterns communicate:

- Unmet needs
- Safety concerns
- Capacity limits
- Overwhelm.

That means when you look at a behavior, the first question is not:

“How do I stop this?”

The first question is:

“What is this saying?”

- **What is it saying about my need for safety?**
- **What is it saying about my fear of conflict?**
- **What is it saying about my capacity?**
- **What is it saying about what my system expects will happen if I do not protect this way?**

For many people, especially those who were:

- Shamed
- Neglected
- Parentified
- Traumatized
- Chronically misunderstood,
- Punished for having needs

Direct expression did not always feel:

- Safe
- Effective
- Available.

So the system found other ways.

Overgiving may communicate:

→ **“I do not trust that support will come unless I create it myself.”**

People-pleasing may communicate:

→ **“Conflict feels dangerous, so I must preserve connection.”**

Avoidance may communicate:

→ **“I am already overloaded and cannot absorb one more thing.”**

Shutdown may communicate:

→ **“I am at capacity and no longer have access to expression.”**

Overexplaining may communicate:

→ **“I need to be understood because being misunderstood has felt unsafe.”**

Resentment may communicate:

→ **“A need has been ignored, minimized, or carried alone for too long.”**

This frame is compassionate, but it is not passive.

Understanding a pattern is not excusing harm.

It is how we get accurate enough to change it responsibly.

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Reflection

Choose one behavior that shows up in your relationships.

What do you usually call this behavior?

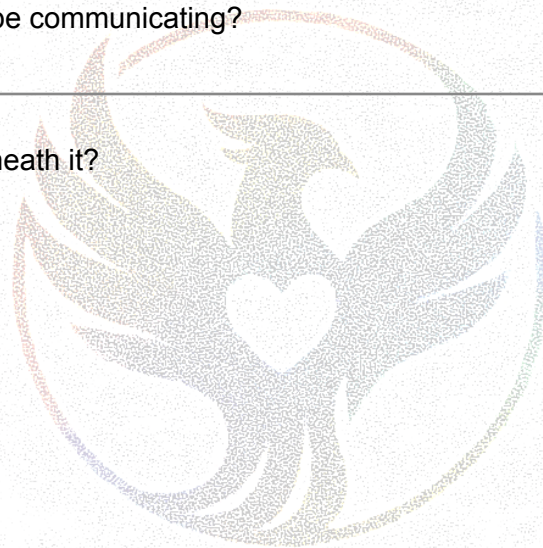
Example: dramatic, avoidant, needy, controlling, weak, too much, selfish.

What might this behavior be communicating?

What need may be underneath it?

- Safety
- Rest
- Reassurance
- Clarity
- Connection
- Autonomy
- Predictability
- Space
- Support
- Repair
- Reduced input
- Time to process
- Respect
- Fairness
- Reciprocity

Other:



Action Tool: Behavior Translation

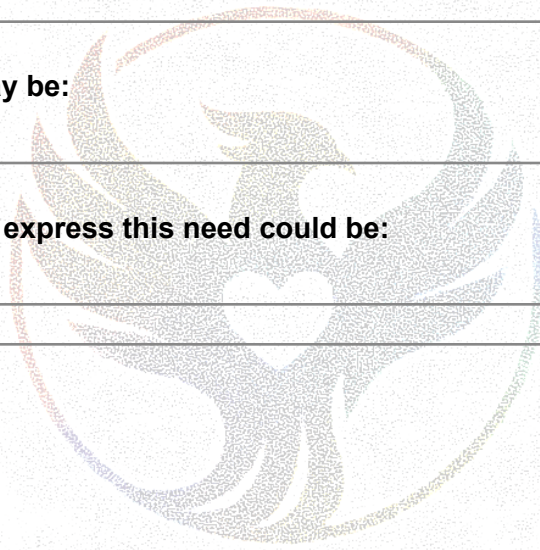
The behavior is:

Shame says it means:

Rootwork says it may be communicating:

The need underneath may be:

One more honest way to express this need could be:



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Section 4: What Are Needs?

Psychoeducation

Needs are biological and emotional requirements.

- They are not weaknesses.
- They are not proof of dependency.
- They are not something you graduate out of when you become strong.

Human beings need:

- **Safety**
- **Connection**
- **Rest**
- **Autonomy**
- **Predictability**
- **Reciprocity**
- **Clarity**
- **Respect**

Because nervous systems require certain conditions to regulate.

A need is something your system requires in order to function with more stability.

Safety: Means I do not feel threatened.

Connection: Means I do not feel alone, rejected, excluded, or relationally cut off.

Rest: Means my body and mind get recovery, not just performance.

Autonomy: Means I have some agency, choice, and room to be myself.

Predictability: Means my system can orient and does not have to remain hypervigilant.

Reciprocity: Means care, effort, and responsibility are not only flowing one way.

Clarity: Means I am not left guessing what is expected, implied, or unspoken.

Respect: Means my limits, time, body, energy, identity, and needs are treated as real.

Many people were taught to treat needs like preferences.

- As if rest is optional.
- As if emotional safety is extra.
- As if wanting clarity is being difficult.
- As if wanting predictability is controlling.
- As if wanting reciprocity is selfish.

But needs do not disappear because they are minimized.

They just start coming out sideways.



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Reflection

Which needs feel easiest to recognize?

- Safety
- Connection
- Rest
- Autonomy
- Predictability
- Reassurance
- Space
- Support
- Clarity
- Repair
- Reduced stimulation
- Time to process
- Reciprocity
- Respect

Which needs feel hardest to recognize?

Which needs feel hardest to express?

What did you learn about having needs?

Were your needs treated as valid, inconvenient, dramatic, selfish, or too much?

Action Tool: Need Clarity Practice

Think of a recent moment when you felt activated.

What happened?

Who was involved?

What did I feel in my body?

What did I do?

What did I need?

What would have helped me express that need earlier?



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Section 5: The Pattern Cycle

Psychoeducation

Unmet needs do not go away.

They become:

- Indirect
- Amplified
- Behavior-based.

This is the cycle:

- **A need is present.**
- **Your nervous system scans for safety.**
- **If the need feels**
 - *Unsafe*
 - *Unclear*
 - *Unsupported*
- **Your system reaches for a pattern.**

That pattern brings short-term relief.
But it often creates long-term cost.

For example:

You need support, but asking feels vulnerable.
So you overgive instead.

Short-term relief: things get handled.

Long-term cost: resentment and exhaustion.

Or:

You need clarity, but asking feels like you may be judged or dismissed.
So you overexplain, overprepare, or rehearse.

Short-term relief: you try to prevent misunderstanding.

Long-term cost: exhaustion, mental loops, and pressure.

Or:

You need rest, but rest feels like failure.
So you keep saying yes.

Short-term relief: approval, less conflict, continued belonging.
Long-term cost: depletion and resentment.

Or:

You need space, but naming that feels unsafe.
So you disappear, avoid, or shut down.

Short-term relief: pressure decreases.
Long-term cost: disconnection grows.

The pattern is trying to help you.

But it may also be costing you.

That is why we do not shame the pattern.

We study it.

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Reflection

Choose one repeating pattern.

What need may come before the pattern?

What does your nervous system scan for?

- Rejection
- Conflict
- Disappointment
- Being misunderstood
- Being controlled
- Being ignored
- Being overwhelmed
- Being excluded
- Being judged
- Someone being upset
- Not being supported
- Being seen as selfish
- Losing belonging



What pattern follows?

What relief does the pattern create?

What does the pattern cost later?

Action Tool: Pattern Cycle Map

Need:

Threat scan:

“My nervous system worries that...”

Pattern:

Short-term relief:

Long-term cost:

A more direct need expression could be:

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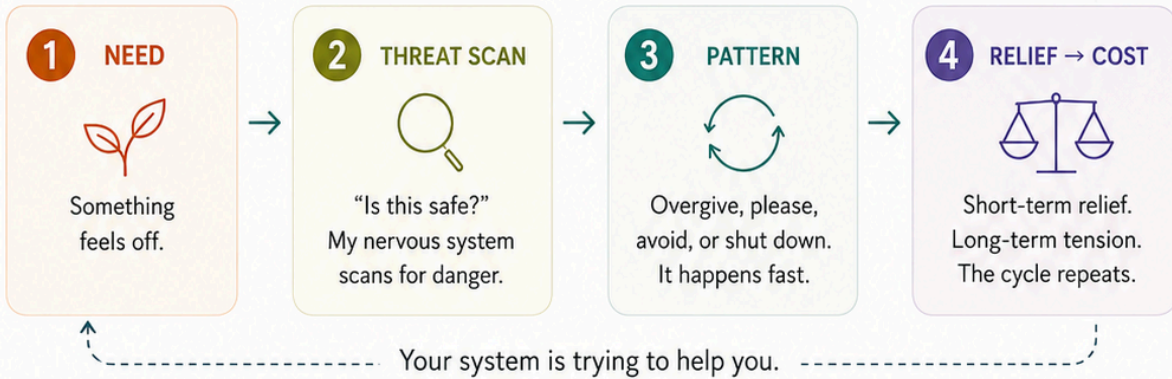
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H E A L I N G

• A VISUAL MAP •



The Cycle: How Patterns Form & Repeat



Common Patterns

OVERGIVING "I'll just do it."	PEOPLE-PLEASING "I'll just agree."	AVOIDANCE "Not right now."	SHUTDOWN "I can't."
WHY Keeps things stable.	WHY Keeps connection safe.	WHY Reduces overwhelm.	WHY Protects capacity.
INSIDE "If I handle it, it won't go wrong."	INSIDE "If I agree, this stays okay."	INSIDE "This is too much."	INSIDE "My system is full."
COST Exhaustion + resentment.	COST Loss of self.	COST Problems grow.	COST Disconnection.



Phoenix Within REVAM Healing

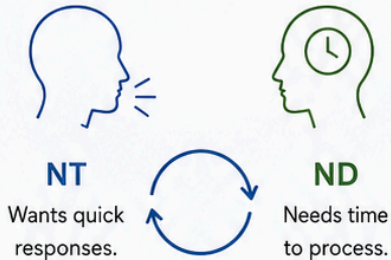




When Two Nervous Systems Interact

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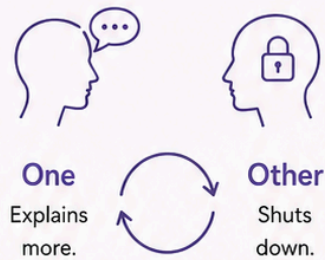
NT + ND DYNAMIC



CYCLE: Pressure → Overwhelm → Withdrawal

Both feel misunderstood.

ND + ND DYNAMIC



CYCLE: More input → Less capacity

Both feel overwhelmed.

THE TRUTH



The pattern is not the problem.

The system is trying to feel safe.



WHAT HELPS

- ✓ Notice without shame.
- ✓ Name the need.
- ✓ Slow the moment.
- ✓ Communicate capacity.



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What did I need?
- What was my pattern trying to do?
- What small shift can I try?



REMEMBER

- ♥ You are not too much.
- ♥ You adapted.
- ♥ Now you get to choose.



BE GENTLE.

This work is deep.
Take your time.



SEEK SUPPORT.

Talk to someone you trust or a professional when you need it.



NOT LINEAR.

Cycles may repeat.
That's part of healing.



YOU ARE LEARNING.

Every moment of awareness creates a new future.

Section 6: Common Patterns Across Relationships

Psychoeducation

Common adaptations include:

- Overgiving
- People-pleasing
- Avoidance
- Shutdown
- Overexplaining
- Overfunctioning
- Resentment
- Control
- Self-abandonment

Different people use different combinations depending on what their system learned.

- **Some people overgive before they ever let themselves need.**
- **Some people people-please until resentment builds and then abruptly shut down.**
- **Some avoid until the pressure gets so high they either flood or disappear.**
- **Some overexplain when they feel misunderstood, then feel ashamed for “doing too much.”**
- **Some become the dependable one in every system and then feel unseen when no one notices the cost.**
- **Some cycle through multiple patterns depending on the situation, the relationship, and their current capacity.**

Do not get too attached to only one label.

The deeper question is:

Which strategies does my system trust when discomfort rises?

That is what we are tracking.

Reflection

Which patterns does your system tend to use?

- overgiving
- People-pleasing
- Avoidance
- Shutdown
- Overexplaining
- Controlling
- Emotional withdrawal
- Resentment
- Fixing
- Self-abandonment
- Overpreparing
- Becoming the dependable one
- Minimizing your own needs

Which pattern shows up first?

Which pattern shows up when you are at capacity?

Which pattern do people misunderstand most?

Where does this pattern show up most?

- Friendships
- Family
- Workplace
- Community
- Caregiving
- Professional roles
- Online spaces
- Group dynamics

Other:

Section 7: Overgiving

Psychoeducation

Overgiving often functions to increase control and reduce unpredictability.

Internally, it can sound like:

“If I handle it, it won’t go wrong.”

This pattern often develops in environments where support was

- Inconsistent
- Disappointing
- Unreliable
- Came with too much cost.

So instead of waiting, asking, risking, or depending, the system learns:

- Just do it yourself.
- Do it first.
- Do it better.
- Do it before it becomes a problem.

Overgiving can show up anywhere.

- You become the friend who always checks in first.
- You become the family member who remembers everyone’s needs.
- You become the coworker who takes on the extra task because it feels easier than watching something fall apart.
- You become the community member who
 - **Organizes**
 - **Responds**
 - **Supports**
 - **Holds the emotional labor.**
- You become the professional who gives more access than you actually have capacity for.

From the outside, it can look generous.

And it may be generous.

But the root is often anxiety, fear, and preemptive protection.

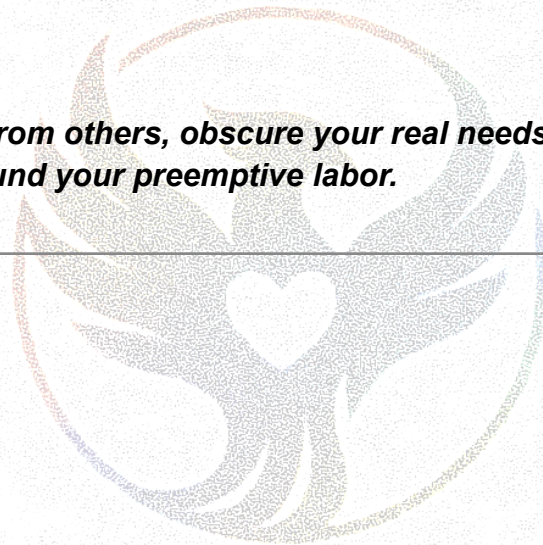
Underneath may be:

- I do not trust this will get handled unless I handle it.
- I do not want to feel disappointed again.
- I do not want to need and then not receive.
- I do not want to risk someone being upset.
- I do not want to feel the grief of unequal effort.

Overgiving may be protective, but it can also prevent shared responsibility, clear requests, and honest mutuality.

Overgiving can become control.
Not malicious control.
But still control.

It can remove choice from others, obscure your real needs, and keep the whole system organized around your preemptive labor.



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Reflection

Where do you overgive?

What do you usually handle before anyone asks?

What are you afraid may happen if you do not handle it?

What disappointment are you trying to avoid?

What need is hidden underneath the overgiving?

Where has overgiving been praised?

Where has overgiving become expected?

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Action Tool: Overgiving Translation

I overgive by:

It helps me avoid:

It protects me from feeling:

The need underneath is:

A more direct request could be:

Shared responsibility could look like:



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Section 8: People-Pleasing

Psychoeducation

People-pleasing often functions to maintain connection and prevent conflict.

Internally, it can sound like:

“If I agree, this will stay safe.”

This pattern often develops when disagreement felt dangerous, when harmony was valued over honesty, or when relational tension felt too costly to survive.

People-pleasing is often misunderstood as kindness.

But kindness and self-erasure are not the same thing.

- A friend asks for emotional support when you are already empty.
- A coworker asks if you can “quickly” help with something.
- A family member assumes you will:
 - Attend
 - Host
 - Call
 - Respond
 - Forgive
 - Show up.

Someone asks:

“Are you okay with that?”

And you already feel the answer in your body.

No.

Not really.

But you say yes because you can already feel the discomfort of their disappointment, confusion, frustration, silence, or hurt.

So the system makes a fast calculation:

My truth feels riskier than my compliance.

That is not weakness.

That is adaptation.

But the cost is high.

You lose clarity with yourself.

The other person gets false data.

And resentment builds in the space where honesty should have been.



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Reflection

Where do you say yes when your body says no?

What emotions in others feel hardest for you to tolerate?

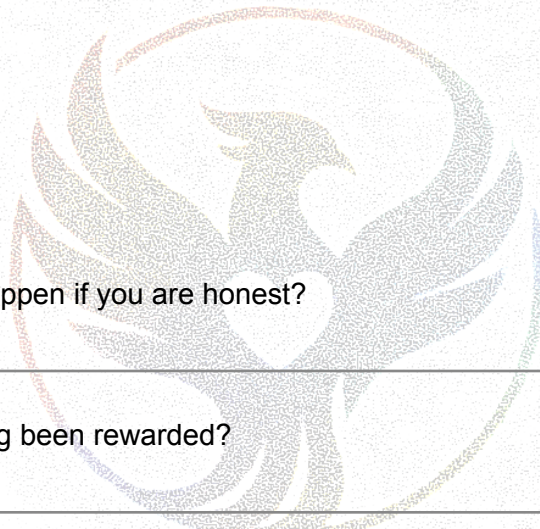
- Disappointment
- Anger
- Sadness
- Confusion
- Frustration
- Silence
- Disapproval
- Rejection
- Being questioned
- Being misunderstood

What are you afraid will happen if you are honest?

Where has people-pleasing been rewarded?

What does people-pleasing cost you?

Who gets access to you that your body may not have consented to?



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Action Tool: People-Pleasing Pause

Before saying yes, ask:

Do I actually want to say yes?

Do I have capacity for this?

Am I saying yes to avoid someone's reaction?

Am I afraid of being seen as difficult, selfish, or unavailable?

What would a more honest response be?

Try:

"Let me check my capacity first."

"I want to be honest, I'm not able to commit to that."

"I need time before I answer."

"I care, and I do not have capacity for this right now."

"I can support in this specific way, but I cannot take on the whole thing."

Your version:

Section 9: Avoidance

Psychoeducation

Avoidance often functions to reduce immediate stress.

Internally, it can sound like:

“I can’t handle this right now.”

Avoidance is not always about not caring.

Often, it is about not having enough capacity, enough words, enough regulation, or enough trust that the situation will stay manageable.

Avoidance can look like:

- Procrastination
- Silence
- Delayed responses
- Changing the subject
- Staying busy
- Not bringing up something important
- Not checking the email
- Not opening the message
- Waiting for the “right time”
- Rehearsing the conversation but not having it
- Letting something remain vague because clarity feels risky

You know something needs to happen.

You think about it repeatedly.

You rehearse it.

You dread it.

You tell yourself you will do it later when you feel clearer, calmer, more prepared, less busy, less activated, or more resourced.

But later keeps moving.

Avoidance protects in the short term by reducing activation.

But in the long term, it often increases dread, confusion, and disconnection.

Avoidance is frequently judged as laziness, immaturity, or indifference when it may actually be a sign of overwhelm, fear, or low capacity.

Reflection

What do you avoid in relationships or responsibilities?

What do you tell yourself about why you are avoiding it?

What feels too overwhelming about addressing it?

What are you afraid will happen once it starts?

What does avoidance protect you from short-term?

What does it cost long-term?



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Action Tool: Avoidance Bridge

Choose one avoided conversation, task, or need.

What I am avoiding:

Why it feels hard:

What I fear will happen:

What support would make this more manageable:

One small step, not the whole thing:

Examples:

- Write bullet points
- Ask for a scheduled time
- Send a short text
- Practice with someone safe
- Name that you need slow pacing
- Ask for one topic at a time
- Open the email but do not respond yet
- Draft the message before sending
- Ask for clarification in writing

Section 10: Shutdown

Psychoeducation

Shutdown often functions to protect from overload.

Internally, it can sound like:

→ **“My system is full. I can’t respond.”**

Shutdown happens when the body can no longer keep processing at the level the moment is demanding.

That can look like:

- Going quiet
- Going blank
- Dissociating
- Losing words
- Feeling numb
- Needing to leave
- Not being able to engage
- Staring but not processing
- Feeling like the power went out
- Not being able to respond to a text
- Being unable to make a decision
- Feeling frozen in a meeting, group chat, or family conversation

A situation may start manageable.

Then the pace increases.

More questions come.

The emotional intensity rises.

More expectations are placed on you.

The pressure to respond grows.

And suddenly your system is no longer participating the way it was five minutes ago.

The outside may interpret that as not caring, being rude, being unprofessional, stonewalling, or withdrawing on purpose.

But internally, it may feel like the power just went out.

A shutdown pattern can deeply affect relationships and responsibilities.

But blame will not solve it.

Understanding capacity, timing, pacing, and repair is what helps.

Reflection

What does shutdown look like for you?

What usually happens right before shutdown?

What does your body feel like?

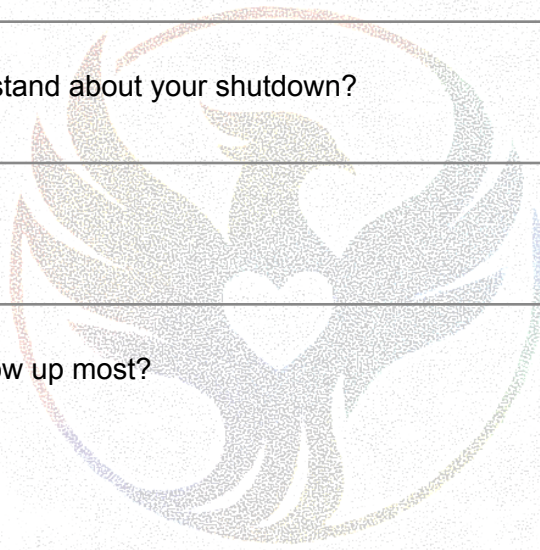
What do people misunderstand about your shutdown?

What helps you return?

Where does shutdown show up most?

- Friendships
- Family
- Workplace
- Conflict
- Group settings
- Professional roles
- Digital communication
- Decision-making

Other:



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Action Tool: Shutdown with Return

Shutdown needs support and accountability.

Try:

“I am shutting down.”

“I cannot keep processing right now.”

“I need _____ minutes.”

“I will come back at _____.”

In non-romantic or professional settings, this may sound like:

“I need a little time to process this before I respond.”

“Can I follow up by email?”

“I want to give this a thoughtful answer, and I need time.”

“I am at capacity right now. I can return to this later.”

Your version:

What helps you regulate during the pause?

What helps others know you are not abandoning the conversation or responsibility?

Section 11: Protection and Cost

Psychoeducation

Every adaptation has a cost.

- Overgiving may keep things moving, but it can leave you exhausted and quietly furious.
- People-pleasing may preserve peace in the moment, but it builds distance between your inner truth and your outer behavior.
- Avoidance may reduce short-term stress, but it often increases long-term fear.
- Shutdown may protect from overload, but it can leave you and others feeling alone, confused, or disconnected.
- Overexplaining may help you feel understood, but it can exhaust you and overwhelm others.
- Being the dependable one may create approval, but it can trap you inside a role where your needs become invisible.

This is where rootwork and accountability meet.

Compassion says:

This pattern makes sense.

Accountability says:

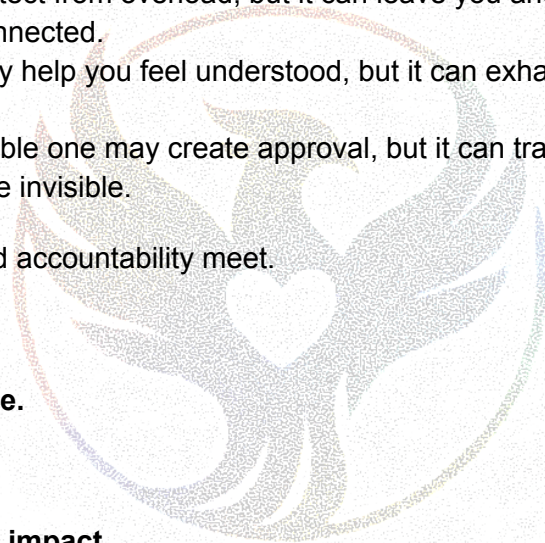
And this pattern still has impact.

We need both.

If you only hold compassion, you can stay stuck.

If you only hold accountability, you may stay ashamed.

Growth happens when both are true at the same time.



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Reflection

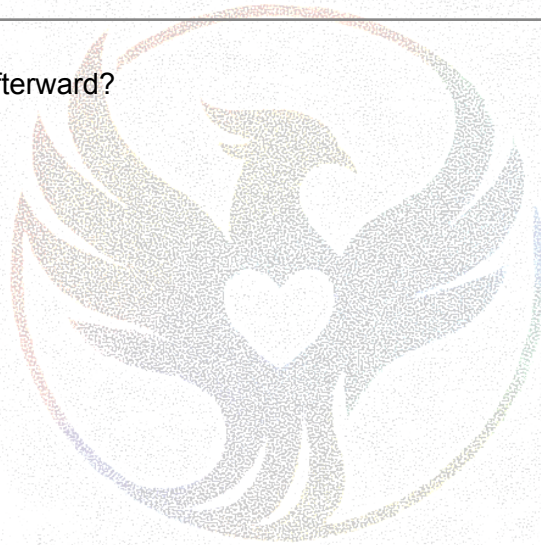
What does your pattern protect you from?

What does it cost you?

What does it cost your relationships, work, community, or sense of self?

What emotions show up afterward?

- Resentment
- Guilt
- Shame
- Sadness
- Anger
- Loneliness
- Confusion
- Exhaustion
- Regret
- Numbness
- Disconnection



Other:

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Action Tool: Both Truths Statement

Complete:

This pattern makes sense because:

And this pattern still impacts me/my relationships by:

A more accountable next step could be:



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Section 12: What Would Happen If I Didn't Do This?

Psychoeducation

Every pattern solves something.

Ask:

“What would happen if I didn't do this?”

This question gets underneath the behavior.

If I did not overgive, what would I fear?

- Disappointment?
- Collapse?
- Being unsupported?
- Someone being upset?
- Being seen as uncaring?

If I did not people-please, what would I fear?

- Conflict?
- Rejection?
- Disconnection?
- Being seen as selfish?
- Losing approval?

If I did not avoid, what would I fear?

- Flooding?
- Failure?
- Not being able to manage what follows?
- Not having the right words?

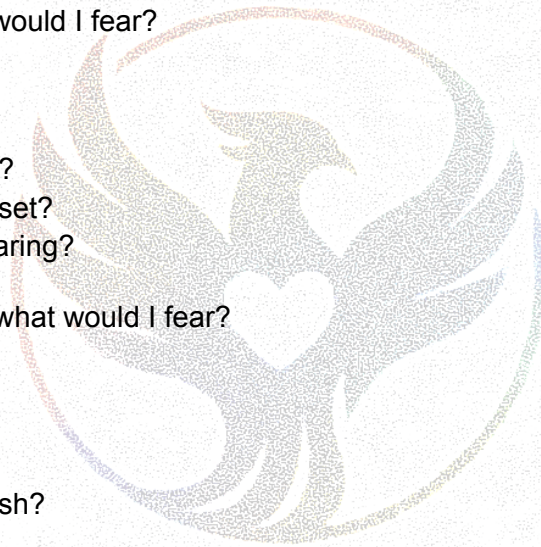
If I did not shut down, what would I fear?

- Overload?
- Escalation?
- Losing control completely?
- Saying something wrong?

This is how we reach the root.

Because once you understand what the pattern is protecting, you stop fighting only the surface.

Now you know what actually needs care.



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Reflection

If I did not overgive, I fear:

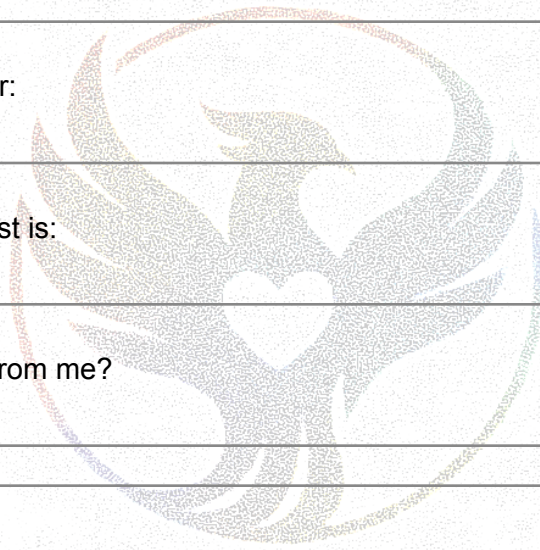
If I did not people-please, I fear:

If I did not avoid, I fear:

If I did not shut down, I fear:

The fear that feels strongest is:

What does this fear need from me?



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Section 13: Where It Began

Psychoeducation

You learned what was safe to express and what had consequences.

Children and young people are always learning:

- What gets comfort?
- What gets punished?
- What gets ignored?
- What gets called dramatic?
- What gets rewarded?
- What gets too big for the room?
 - ***If sadness got dismissed, you may stop showing sadness.***
 - ***If anger got punished, you may turn anger inward.***
 - ***If needs got ignored, you may stop noticing them.***
 - ***If responsibility got praised, you may overidentify with being the capable one.***
 - ***If being useful got you approval, you may confuse usefulness with worth.***
 - ***If being low-maintenance got you belonging, you may struggle to ask for more.***
 - ***If collapse was the only way people noticed you were struggling, your body may have learned to go all the way down before help feels available.***

This is why patterns make sense in context.

They were not created in isolation.

Reflection

What happened when you expressed needs growing up?

Were your needs responded to, ignored, minimized, punished, or misunderstood?

What felt safe to express?

What felt unsafe to express?

What role did you learn to play?

- Responsible one
- Peacemaker
- Quiet one
- Helper
- Strong one
- Invisible one
- High-achiever
- Easy one
- Caretaker
- Problem-solver
- Mediator
- Emotional support person

Other:

Complete:

“I learned that my needs were...”



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Section 14: Cultural and Role Expectations

Psychoeducation

Your environment shaped your relational behavior.

Some environments reinforce:

- Harmony over honesty
- Responsibility over rest
- Others' needs first
- Self-sufficiency over interdependence
- Being agreeable over being authentic
- Being useful over being supported
- Keeping the peace over telling the truth
- Handling it yourself over asking for help

This is where rootwork has to be bigger than the individual.

Not all patterns come only from family.

Some come from:

- Culture
- Community
- survival conditions
- generational trauma
- Migration
- Racism
- Poverty
- Gendered expectations
- Workplace hierarchies
- Religious expectations
- Systems that reward self-sacrifice.
 - In some environments, keeping the peace is not just a preference. It is how people survived conflict.
 - In some environments, rest is treated like laziness because overwork was tied to survival.
 - In some environments, tending to others before yourself is praised as virtue, even when it becomes self-erasure.
 - In some workplaces, being “reliable” means being quietly overused.
 - In some families, being “good” means being available.
 - In some communities, being committed means having no limits.

So when someone struggles to honor their needs, it is not always because they lack insight.

Sometimes they are trying to unlearn a whole moral framework.

That deserves depth and compassion.

Reflection

Was harmony prioritized over honesty?

Were you expected to prioritize others?

Was conflict discouraged?

Was independence or self-reliance emphasized?

Were you expected to be strong, agreeable, helpful, or low-maintenance?

Where do you feel pressure to be available?

Where do you feel pressure to not disappoint people?

Complete:

“I was expected to...”

What expectation are you ready to question?

Section 15: Gender Conditioning

Psychoeducation

Gender conditioning shapes relational behavior deeply.

- Many women and femme people are taught to be emotionally available, accommodating, pleasant, and self-sacrificing.
- Many men and masc people are taught to suppress tenderness, move away from vulnerability, overidentify with productivity, and treat emotional need as weakness.
- Nonbinary, trans, and gender-expansive people may also carry layers of being misread, pressured into roles that never fit, or expected to perform safety for others while navigating their own.

Gender conditioning affects friendships, workplaces, families, community roles, and professional spaces.

It affects who gets expected to take notes.

- **Who organizes the birthday.**
- **Who checks in after conflict.**
- **Who remembers emotional details.**
- **Who is allowed to be direct.**
- **Who gets called aggressive.**
- **Who gets called dramatic.**
- **Who gets rewarded for being calm.**
- **Who gets punished for having needs.**
- **Who is expected to provide.**
- **Who is expected to nurture.**
- **Who is expected to not break.**

These scripts are not always chosen.

But they often become internalized.

So when we talk about relational patterns, we also have to talk about the social conditioning that trained them.

Reflection

What were you taught about having needs?

What were you taught about being direct?

What were you taught about conflict?

What were you taught about softness, anger, tenderness, or strength?

What gendered role were you expected to perform?

Where does that role show up now?

- Friendships
- Family
- Workplace
- Community
- Caregiving
- Leadership
- Emotional labor
- Professional roles

What part of that role no longer fits?

Section 16: Neurodivergence and Processing

Psychoeducation

Neurodivergent systems often process more input, reach overwhelm faster, and need more recovery.

This is not deficiency.

It is difference in processing demands, capacity, and regulation needs.

Many neurodivergent people are taking in more than is visible to others:

- More sensory information
- More emotional detail
- More contextual data
- More internal effort to organize, interpret, respond, filter, and sequence

So what looks “small” to one person may not be small in processing load to another. This matters across all relationships.

- **A meeting may require recovery time.**
- **A group chat may feel overwhelming.**
- **A friend’s emotional venting may exceed your capacity even if you care.**
- **A family gathering may overload your sensory system before anything “bad” happens.**
- **A supervisor’s vague feedback may create spiraling because your system needs clarity.**
- **A community event may feel meaningful and still be draining.**
- **A neurodivergent person may care deeply and still need longer processing time.**
- **They may value connection and still hit capacity faster.**
- **They may want clarity and still become overwhelmed by too much verbal input.**
- **They may know their boundary and still not access it quickly enough under stress.**

None of that means the need is not real.

It means the processing pathway is different.

Reflection

If applicable, where does neurodivergence affect your relational patterns?

- Processing time
- Sensory overwhelm
- Emotional regulation
- Delayed need awareness
- Shutdown
- Overexplaining
- Difficulty with sudden questions
- Needing recovery time
- Masking
- Inconsistent access to boundaries
- Overwhelm during conflict
- Group dynamics
- Workplace expectations
- Digital communication

Other:

Do you notice your needs during the moment or after the interaction ends?

What does your system need in order to communicate more clearly?

Complete:

“My system works best when...”

Section 17: Capacity and Boundaries

Psychoeducation

Capacity affects timing of communication, emotional tolerance, and boundary consistency.

Many people judge themselves as inconsistent when what is actually changing is capacity.

A boundary you can hold when rested may collapse when overstimulated.

A conversation you can have on a quiet day may become impossible after

- Masking
- Caregiving
- Conflict
- Work stress
- Sensory overload.

A need you can name after reflection may be inaccessible in real time.

Someone may say:

“But yesterday you said it was fine.”

And today you are flooded, irritable, or needing space.

That can look inconsistent from the outside.

But often, the missing variable is capacity.

Capacity is not character.

It is current internal resource.

If you do not respect capacity, patterns will keep stepping in.

Boundaries are not just an intellectual skill.

They are also a nervous system skill.

Reflection

Where do your boundaries become harder when your capacity is low?

What makes your capacity lower?

- Stress
- Sensory overload
- Lack of sleep
- Emotional labor
- Conflict
- Masking
- Caregiving
- Work demands
- Hunger/thirst
- Physical pain
- Unclear expectations
- Social demands
- Too many transitions

Other:

What boundary can you access when regulated, but lose access to when activated?

What support would help you hold it earlier?



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Action Tool: Capacity-Based Boundary

My need is:

My capacity right now is:

- low
- medium
- high
- unsure

The boundary I can realistically communicate is:

If I cannot communicate fully right now, I can say:

Examples:

“I need time to process this. I am not ignoring it. I will come back to it.”

“I want to respond thoughtfully. I need more time.”

“I cannot take this on right now.”

“I can help with one part, but not the whole thing.”

Your version:

Section 18: Patterns in Connection

Psychoeducation

This section is about how your patterns show up around other people generally.

Not just romantic partners.

Every relational space has a nervous system impact.

- A friendship can activate fear of rejection.
- A workplace can activate fear of failure.
- A family gathering can activate old roles.
- A community space can activate the pressure to be useful.
- A professional role can activate over-responsibility.
- A group chat can activate urgency, comparison, or fear of being misunderstood.

Relational patterns are often about what your system believes connection requires.

You may have learned:

- Connection requires agreement.
- Connection requires usefulness.
- Connection requires being easy.
- Connection requires not needing too much.
- Connection requires staying available.
- Connection requires emotional labor.
- Connection requires being strong.
- Connection requires keeping the peace.

When these beliefs are active, your behavior may move before your conscious awareness does.

- You may overextend before checking capacity.
- You may agree before noticing resentment.
- You may avoid before naming fear.
- You may shut down before knowing what you need.
- You may overexplain before trusting that you are allowed to be misunderstood and still safe.

The work here is to ask:

What does my system believe this relationship requires from me?

Reflection

Choose one relationship or relational space.

- Friendship
- Family
- Coworker
- Supervisor
- Client/customer
- Community group
- Chosen family
- Caregiving relationship
- Online space
- Professional collaboration

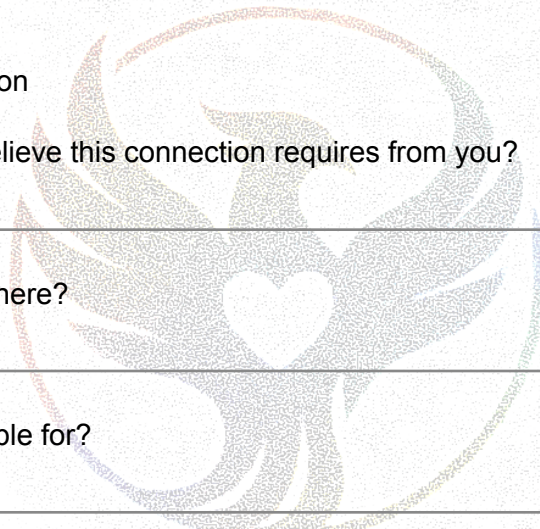
What does your system believe this connection requires from you?

What role do you fall into there?

What do you feel responsible for?

What need do you minimize in that space?

What pattern shows up most?



Action Tool: Connection Requirement Check

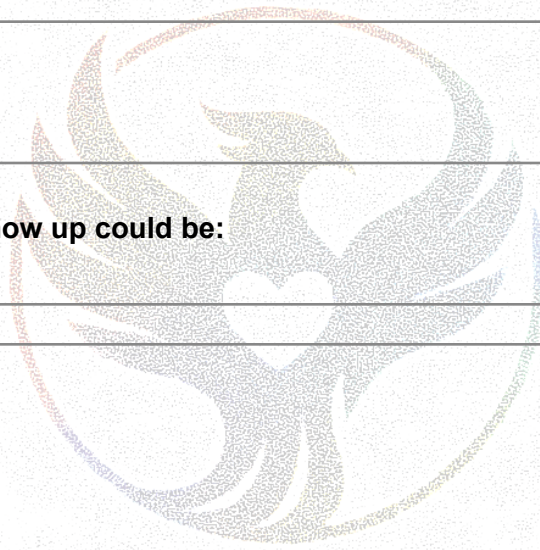
In this relationship/space, I feel I have to be:

I learned this because:

This role protects me from:

This role costs me:

A more honest way to show up could be:



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Section 19: Meaning vs Misinterpretation

Psychoeducation

Behavior carries meaning, but it is often misunderstood.

What you do is not always what others hear.

- You withdraw for space, and someone hears rejection.
- You ask questions for clarity, and someone hears challenge.
- You overexplain to be understood, and someone hears defensiveness.
- You say yes to preserve connection, and someone assumes you are truly available.
- You stop responding because you are overwhelmed, and someone assumes you do not care.
- You become highly responsible, and people assume you do not need support.

This can happen in friendships, workplaces, families, and community spaces.

Miscommunication happens when:

- Intent does not match impact
- Internal experience does not match external expression
- Capacity limits are not visible
- Needs are indirect
- Roles are assumed instead of named

The goal is not to obsess over how everyone interprets you.

The goal is to notice where your behavior may not be communicating what you actually mean.

Rootwork asks:

What did this behavior mean to me?

What might it have communicated outwardly?

What need did I not say directly?

Reflection

Choose one relational moment.

What did you do?

What did you mean through your behavior?

What might the other person or group have interpreted?

What need did you not say directly?

What could you clarify next time?

Complete:

“I meant _____, but it may have been heard as _____.”

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Action Tool: Clarifying Impact Without Shame

Try:

“I realize my response may have come across as _____. What I was trying to communicate was _____.”

“I said yes quickly, but I want to be honest that I need to check my capacity.”

“I went quiet because I was overwhelmed, not because I did not care.”

“I asked a lot of questions because I needed clarity, not because I was challenging you.”

Your version:



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Section 20: Capacity, Processing, and Delayed Needs

Psychoeducation

Some people know what they need in the moment.

Some people know after.

For many neurodivergent people, trauma survivors, high-masking people, and people who learned to override their needs, awareness may come late.

Delayed need awareness does not mean the need was fake.

It means access came later.

- You may realize after the meeting that you were overwhelmed.
- You may realize after the hangout that you needed rest.
- You may realize after saying yes that you did not have capacity.
- You may realize after the family event that your body was tense the entire time.
- You may realize after the text exchange that you felt pressured.
- You may realize after the conversation that you needed more time to think.

This can be frustrating because people may experience your delayed clarity as inconsistency.

But often, it is not inconsistency.

It is access.

The need was present before the language arrived.

This is why reflection matters.

Reflection teaches you to recognize patterns earlier over time.

Not perfectly.

Earlier.

Reflection

Do you usually recognize your needs:

- In the moment
- After the interaction
- Only once I am alone
- Only when I am already resentful
- Only when I shut down
- Only when my body forces me to stop
- It depends on the relationship/context

Where do you tend to realize your needs late?

What body cues may have been present earlier?

What makes it hard to notice your needs in real time?

What helps you access clarity?

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Action Tool: Delayed Need Review

After an interaction, ask:

What happened?

What did my body feel during it?

What did I say yes/no to?

What do I realize now that I needed?

What cue can I watch for earlier next time?

What can I communicate now, if needed?

Example:

“After thinking about it, I realized I do not have capacity to take this on. I wanted to let you know before I overcommit.”

Section 21: When the Pattern Gets Louder

Psychoeducation

When needs are unclear, unsupported, or unsafe to express, the pattern often gets louder. You may do more of what you already know.

Not because you are failing.

Because your system doubles down on familiar protection.

- **The one who explains, explains more.**
- **The one who withdraws, withdraws more.**
- **The one who overfunctions, does more.**
- **The one who avoids, disappears further.**
- **The one who people-pleases says yes even harder until resentment leaks somewhere else.**
- **The dependable one becomes even more dependable until they crash.**
- **The “easy” one becomes more agreeable until they lose access to themselves.**

From the outside, it can look irrational.

But from the inside, each system is saying:

Maybe more of my strategy will finally make this safe.

This can happen:

- At work.
- In friendship.
- In family.
- In community.
- In professional roles.
- In group dynamics.

The goal is to notice when the pattern is getting louder before it becomes the only thing available.

Reflection

When you do not feel heard, what do you do more of?

When you do not feel safe, what do you do more of?

When you feel overwhelmed, what do you do more of?

When you feel responsible, what do you do more of?

When the pattern gets louder, what is it trying to protect?

Complete:

“When my pattern escalates, I...”

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Action Tool: Name the Pattern Early

Instead of waiting until resentment or shutdown takes over, try naming it sooner.

“I notice I’m starting to overextend.”

“I think I am saying yes too quickly.”

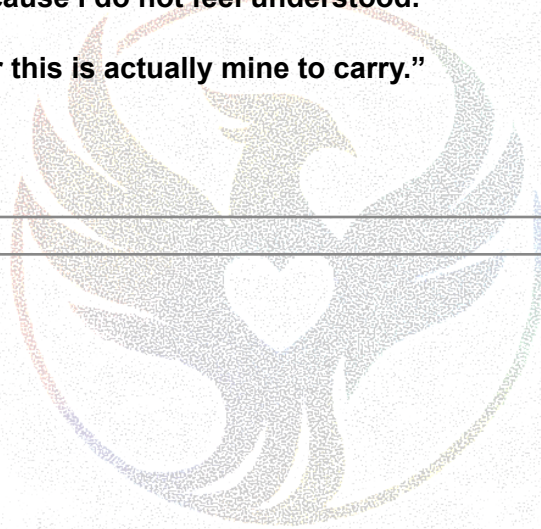
“I am noticing avoidance because this feels overwhelming.”

“I am starting to shut down and need a pause.”

“I am overexplaining because I do not feel understood.”

“I need to check whether this is actually mine to carry.”

Your version:



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Section 22: Separation — Identity vs Adaptation

Psychoeducation

Patterns are learned.

They are not who you are.

This matters because many people build identity around their adaptation.

They start saying:

- “I’m just the responsible one.”
- “I’m just the peacemaker.”
- “I’m just bad at conflict.”
- “I’m just avoidant.”
- “I’m just someone who shuts down.”
- “I’m just the friend who always shows up.”
- “I’m just the coworker who can handle it.”
- “I’m just the one people depend on.”

But when a pattern gets mistaken for personality, it becomes harder to challenge. Because now changing it feels like betraying who you are.

These patterns are not your essence.

They are responses your system learned.

You are not “an overgiver” as a fixed identity.

You may have a system that learned overgiving as protection.

That distinction creates room.

Awareness creates room.

And room creates choice.

Reflection

What pattern have you mistaken for personality?

What role have others assigned to you?

What role have you assigned to yourself?

What feels like you?

What feels like something you learned?

What adaptation are you ready to separate from your identity?

Complete:

“This is not who I am. This is something I learned: _____.”

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Section 23: Needs Clarity Moving Forward

Psychoeducation

Clarity of needs is the foundation for boundaries.

A boundary is not just a wall.

A boundary is communication about your:

- Needs
- Limits
- Capacity
- Nervous system tolerance.

Without needs clarity, boundaries often become reactive.

With needs clarity, boundaries become more grounded.

For example:

If the need is rest, the boundary may be:

→ "I cannot take on more tonight."

If the need is processing time, the boundary may be:

→ "I need time before I respond."

If the need is respect, the boundary may be:

→ "I am willing to continue this conversation when we can slow down and not insult each other."

If the need is predictability, the boundary may be:

→ "I need more notice before plans change."

If the need is reciprocity, the boundary may be:

→ "I cannot continue being the only person initiating or maintaining this."

If the need is professional capacity, the boundary may be:

→ "I am not available outside of these hours."

The boundary protects the need.

So ask:

What need am I protecting?

Reflection

What needs show up most often for you?

Which needs feel hardest to express?

What need do you tend to minimize?

What need do you wait too long to name?

Complete:

“I need more _____ in my relationships.”

Action Tool: Need to Boundary

My need is:

My limit is:

My capacity is:

The boundary may sound like:

The support I need is:

Section 24: Boundaries Reframed

Psychoeducation

Boundaries are not control.
They are communication.

Boundaries are not about forcing someone else to behave how you want.

They are about:

- Naming what you need
- What you can participate in
- What you cannot participate in
- What you will do to care for your capacity and safety.

A boundary may communicate:

- I need space.
- I need respect.
- I need time.
- I need clarity.
- I need rest.
- I need predictability.
- I need a slower pace.
- I need less input.
- I need to stop overextending.
- I need to protect my capacity.
- I need to not be available for everything.
- I need this responsibility to be shared.

Boundaries reflect capacity, limits, and nervous system tolerance.

They are not punishments.
They are not threats.

They are not proof that you do not care.
They are one way care becomes sustainable.

Reflection

Where are you overextending?

Where do you ignore your limits?

Where do you say yes and later feel resentful?

Where does your body already know a boundary is needed before your words do?

Complete:

“A boundary I may need is...”



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Action Tool: Boundary Draft

What I need:

What I can no longer keep doing:

What I am available for:

What I am not available for:

The boundary:

Examples:

“I care about this, and I do not have the capacity to be the main support person right now.”

“I can help with one part, but I cannot take on the whole task.”

“I need more notice before I can commit.”

“I am not available for work communication after this time.”

“I want to be honest that I need space before I respond.”

Your version:

Section 25: Accountability and Choice

Psychoeducation

Awareness creates responsibility, not blame.
That matters.

Understanding your patterns does not mean you are responsible for everything that shaped them.

It does mean that once you begin seeing the pattern, you have more choice in how you move forward.

Change happens through:

- Awareness
- small adjustments
- Repetition
- Repair
- Support
- Capacity-respect
- Practice



Not shame.

Not perfection.

Not forcing yourself into a version of healing that ignores your nervous system.

Accountability without shame sounds like:

→ “This pattern makes sense.”

And:

→ “This pattern still has impact.”

And:

→ “I want to begin choosing differently.”

This applies in all relational spaces.

- You can understand why you overgive and still practice shared responsibility.
- You can understand why you people-please and still practice honesty.
- You can understand why you avoid and still practice one small step.
- You can understand why you shut down and still practice return.
- You can understand why you became dependable and still stop making availability your identity.

That is rootwork.

Compassion and responsibility together.

Reflection

What pattern do you want to begin shifting?

What feels unsustainable?

What support would help you shift it?

What is one small adjustment you can practice?

Complete:

“I want to begin noticing...”

Action Tool: Awareness to Choice

I am noticing:

This pattern makes sense because:

The impact is:

One choice I have now is:

One support I need is:

Section 26: Gentle Integration

Reflection

What felt most important from this guide?

What pattern do you understand differently now?

What need deserves more attention?

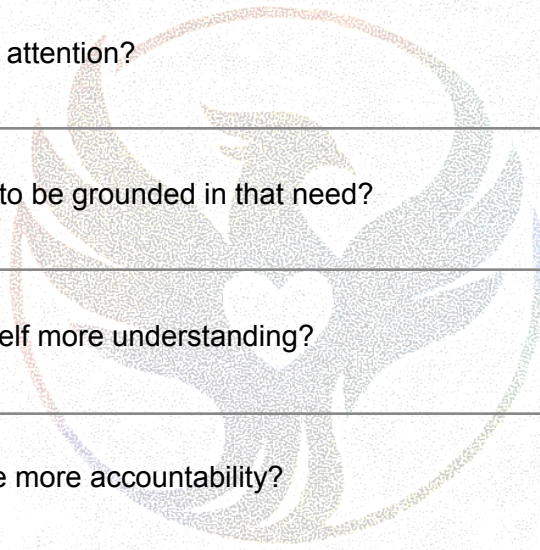
What boundary may need to be grounded in that need?

Where can you offer yourself more understanding?

Where do you need to take more accountability?

What is one small shift you can try?

What relationship or relational space needs less overextension and more honesty?



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Final Grounding

Look around the room.

Name three things you can see.

Press your feet into the ground.

Take one slow exhale.

Say:

“My patterns are not random.”

“My behavior is communication.”

“My needs matter.”

“My boundaries can become clearer as I understand my needs.”

“I can take responsibility without shaming myself.”

“Awareness gives me more choice.”

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Closing

Your patterns are not random.

They are your system's way of navigating connection, safety, and capacity.

You did not create these patterns out of nowhere.

You adapted.

And now, with understanding, you have more choice.

Boundaries come from:

- Knowing your needs
- Understanding your patterns
- Respecting your capacity
- Honoring your nervous system
- Taking accountability for impact
- Building communication that is honest, not forced

This is rootwork.

Not just stopping the behavior.

- Understanding the conditions that shaped it.
- Honoring the need underneath it.
- Taking accountability for the impact of it.
- And building something more honest from there.

Because awareness does not fix everything at once.

But awareness gives you choice.

And choice is where healing starts.

— Phoenix Within REVAM Healing