

Trauma Response Worksheet Pack

55 printable worksheets for the fight, flight, freeze and fawn responses

Free from whatsmytraumaresponse.com

These worksheets are self-reflection and psychoeducation tools. They are not therapy, they cannot diagnose anything, and they are not crisis support. If the work stirs up more than you can settle, a trauma-informed therapist is the right next step. If you are in crisis, contact your local emergency services; in the US you can call or text 988.

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1. Fight Response Worksheet

The fight response feels like it goes from zero to a hundred, but it almost never does. There is a sequence — a trigger, a body signal, a story, an escalation — and the anger only feels instant because nobody has ever mapped the steps. This worksheet maps them, then builds an exit ramp at the last step where you still have a choice.

Who this is for: Anyone whose anger arrives faster than their thinking: snapping at people you love, needing to win arguments, feeling attacked by feedback, and regretting the intensity an hour later.

Do sections 1 and 2 about a specific recent blowup, not about your anger in general — generalities produce nothing you can act on. Pick an incident small enough to examine without reliving it.

Section 3 is the working core: you are hunting for your point of no return, the moment after which the explosion was going to happen no matter what. The exit ramp you write in section 4 has to fire BEFORE that point, which is why finding it precisely matters more than anything else on this sheet.

1.1 The last blowup, in slow motion

Reconstruct one incident step by step.

Write the sequence as if describing security-camera footage: what happened, then what happened next. No interpretations yet — just the observable chain from the first trigger to the aftermath.

What was the very first moment something shifted? (What was said or done?)

What did your body do first — heat, jaw, fists, voice volume, leaning in?

What did you say or do at the peak?

How long did it take to come back down, and what did you feel then?

1.2 The story under the anger

Find the threat your nervous system was answering.

Fight fires when some part of you concludes an attack is underway. The attack is rarely physical — it is usually disrespect, injustice, being controlled, or being made small. Name the specific threat and the anger starts making sense.

Complete the sentence: "In that moment, I was protecting myself from..."

What would it have meant about you if you had NOT fought back?

Where have you felt that exact threat before — earliest memory you can find?

1.3 Your escalation ladder

Rate the rungs and mark the point of no return.

Fill in the table for your typical escalation: the rung, what it looks or feels like, and a 0-10 intensity score. Then draw a line above the last rung where you can still choose — that line is your point of no return.

Rung	What it looks/feels like	Intensity 0-10

After filling the table: my point of no return is rung number ____, and the signal I can actually notice in time is:

1.4 The exit ramp

Script one move that fires before the line.

An exit ramp is a physical action plus a sentence, rehearsed in advance, executed at the signal you named above. Leaving the room without a sentence reads as storming off and escalates the other person; the sentence is what makes it a pause instead of a punishment.

My physical move (leave the room, sit down, hands under cold water, step outside):

My sentence, word for word ("I want to get this right and I'm too heated — give me 20 minutes"):

When I come back, the first thing I will say is:

1.5 Repair, if the blowup already happened

A repair that is not just an apology.

Repair after a fight response has three parts: own the behaviour specifically, name the impact without explaining your trigger as an excuse, and say what you are practising instead. Write one for the incident from section 1.

"What I did was..." (the behaviour, specifically, no "but"):

"I imagine that felt..." (the impact on them):

"What I'm practising is..." (your exit ramp from section 4):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/fight-response/

2. Flight Response Worksheet

Flight rarely looks like running. It looks like a full calendar, a side project, a workout streak, a sudden urge to reorganise the kitchen at 11pm — anything that keeps you moving so the feeling underneath never catches up. This worksheet is an audit of what the motion is for, and a set of small, tolerable experiments in stopping.

Who this is for: Anyone who cannot sit still with their own thoughts: chronic busyness, escape fantasies, leaving relationships or jobs the moment they get difficult, anxiety that spikes the second the to-do list empties.

Section 1 is a seven-day log — carry it with you or fill it in each evening. Do not skip to the staying practice first: without the log you will practise stillness in the easy moments and bolt in the ones that matter.

The five-minute stays in section 3 are deliberately small. The goal is not to become someone who meditates for an hour; it is to teach your nervous system, in doses it can tolerate, that the feeling you have been outrunning is survivable.

2.1 Seven days of motion

Log each urge to move, and what you were moving away from.

Each time you notice yourself reaching for busyness — checking your phone, adding a task, planning an exit — note it in the table. The third column is the important one: what was happening, or about to be felt, right before the urge?

Day	The urge (what I reached for)	What was I about to feel?

At the end of the week: the feeling my motion most often protects me from is:

2.2 The escape inventory

Name your exits — the honourable and the disguised.

Flight has socially rewarded disguises: overworking, over-exercising, over-planning, always having a backup option. List yours honestly, including the ones that get you praised.

My most respectable escape (the one people compliment me on):

My 2am escape (the one I do when nobody is watching):

The relationship, job or conversation I am currently half-out-the-door on:

What staying there one more month would require me to feel:

2.3 The five-minute stay

A daily experiment in not leaving.

Once a day, when you notice the urge to bolt (from the log above), stay put for five minutes before acting on it. Sit down, feet on the floor, name what you feel in your body — not your thoughts, your body. Then you are free to move. Record each stay here.

Stay 1 — what I felt in my body, and what happened to the urge by minute five:

Stay 2 — what I felt, and what happened to the urge:

Stay 3 — what I felt, and what happened to the urge:

After several stays: the urge typically peaks at minute ____ and then:

2.4 Sorting real exits from trauma exits

A test for when leaving is wisdom and when it is a symptom.

Sometimes leaving IS the right call — flight energy exists because escape sometimes saves you. Run your current escape plan through these questions to tell the difference.

If I imagine staying, the feeling is mostly: (a) dread of a real ongoing harm, or (b) restlessness/suffocation with nothing I can point to?

Have I left this same situation-shape before (different job, same month; different partner, same stage)?

What would I need to feel safe enough to decide this slowly, over two weeks, instead of tonight?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/flight-response/

3. Freeze Response Worksheet

Freeze is the response that gets mistaken for laziness, spaciness or not caring — including by the person doing the freezing. Underneath, it is a nervous system that learned to survive by going still and going away. This worksheet maps how your particular shutdown arrives, and builds a thaw sequence that starts with the body, because "just do it" has never once thawed anyone.

Who this is for: Anyone who goes blank under pressure, watches deadlines pass from inside a fog, loses hours to scrolling or staring, and describes themselves as numb more often than sad.

Fill in sections 1 and 2 while you are NOT frozen — the whole point is to prepare instructions your future foggy self can follow without having to think. Keep the printed sheet somewhere visible, because when freeze hits you will not go looking for it.

The thaw protocol in section 3 is ordered deliberately: body first, then environment, then one tiny task. Reversing the order — trying to think your way out before your body has come back online — is the mistake this sheet exists to prevent.

3.1 Your shutdown, mapped

Reconstruct how freeze actually arrives for you.

Think of the last time you went into the fog. Trace it backwards: freeze always has an on-ramp, even when it feels like a light switch.

What was the demand or threat right before the shutdown? (A task, a message, a conflict, too many things at once?)

What did the first 60 seconds look like from the outside? (Stopped replying, opened a new tab, went still?)

What does the fog feel like from the inside — where does your attention go?

How long does a typical shutdown last, and what usually ends it?

3.2 Early fog signals

Catch the freeze before it sets.

Freeze is easiest to interrupt in the first two minutes. Rate how reliably each signal shows up for you (0 = never, 5 = every time), then circle the two you could realistically notice in the moment.

Rereading the same sentence without taking it in (0-5):

Body going heavy, cold, or very still (0-5):

Sound going distant / feeling behind glass (0-5):

Suddenly "needing" to do something trivial instead (0-5):

My two most catchable signals are:

3.3 The thaw protocol

Body, then environment, then one tiny task.

Write your own version of each step, specific enough to follow while foggy. Step 1 must be physical and require zero decisions. Step 3 must be embarrassingly small — "open the document" is a task; "do the report" is a threat.

STEP 1 — Body (pick one, write it exactly): stand up and push against a wall for 30 seconds / hold ice / cold water on face / 10 slow stamps of the feet. Mine:

STEP 2 — Environment (one change: open a window, put on one specific song, move to another room). Mine:

STEP 3 — One tiny task (the two-minute version of the thing I froze on). My default tiny task:

STEP 4 — If still frozen after steps 1-3, I will text/call this person and say these words:

3.4 The freeze log

One week of shutdowns and thaws.

Log each freeze this week. You are looking for two patterns: which demands reliably trigger the fog, and which thaw step actually moves you.

Day	Trigger/demand	How long frozen	What thawed me
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3.5 What the freeze protected

The question under the pattern.

Freeze develops where neither fighting nor fleeing was safe — often very early. This is reflection, not excavation: answer at whatever depth feels steady.

When I was young, what happened when I showed big feelings or made demands?

Complete the sentence: "Going still and quiet kept me safe from..."

What am I now able to do about threats that my younger self could not?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/freeze-response/

4. Fawn Response Worksheet

The fawn response is the hardest pattern to see from the inside, because it looks like being nice. But there is a difference between kindness and appeasement: kindness is a choice, fawning is a reflex that fires before you know what you actually want. This worksheet catches the reflex on paper — the yeses, the apologies, the mind-reading — and then starts the slower work of finding out what you want underneath it.

Who this is for: Anyone who says yes before checking, apologises for existing, manages everyone's moods, cannot answer "what do you want?", and feels responsible for feelings that are not theirs.

Start with the log in section 1 and run it for a full week before doing anything else. Fawning is automatic, so the first task is simply to see it — most people are shocked by their count, and the shock is useful.

Section 4 asks you to practise a "no". Choose the lowest-stakes situation you can find, and read the guilt paragraph first: guilt after a boundary is not evidence you did something wrong. For a fawn pattern, guilt is usually evidence the boundary was real.

4.1 The appeasement log

One week of automatic yeses, sorries and mood-management.

Tally every time you: said yes without checking if you wanted to, apologised when you had done nothing wrong, changed your stated opinion to match the room, or worked to fix a mood you did not cause. One line per incident.

Day	What I did (yes / sorry / mirrored / mood-managed)	Who with	What I actually wanted

End of week — my count was _____, and the person/context I fawn hardest around is:

4.2 The wants inventory

Recover the preferences underneath the reflex.

Years of fawning bury your preferences so deep that "I don't mind" becomes true. Answer these quickly, without deciding whether the answers are reasonable — reasonableness is the fawn talking.

A food I pretend to like less than I do, or dislike but eat anyway:

Something I do "for us" that I would stop tomorrow if it upset nobody:

An opinion I hold that the people closest to me have never heard:

If everyone I know were guaranteed to be fine with it, this weekend I would:

4.3 The responsibility sort

Separate what is yours to carry from what never was.

Fawning runs on the belief that other people's emotions are your job. Take one person whose moods you manage and sort the load honestly.

The person whose emotional weather I monitor most:

What is genuinely mine (my tone, my honesty, my repair when I get it wrong):

What I carry that is actually theirs (their disappointment, their temper, their choices):

One thing from the second list I will experiment with putting down this week:

4.4 Two scripted nos

Practise refusal with the guilt planned for.

A fawn-friendly no has three parts: a warm opener, a clear refusal without a fake excuse, and a full stop where the over-explanation used to go. Guilt will arrive afterwards; it peaks and passes like a wave, usually within a day. Script two.

Low-stakes no #1 — situation, and my exact words ("Thanks for thinking of me — I can't take that on.):

Low-stakes no #2 — situation, and my exact words:

What I will do when the guilt wave arrives (not: take it back):

Afterwards — what actually happened vs what I feared would happen:

4.5 The relationship audit

Notice which connections require the fawning.

Some relationships survive your honesty; some were built on your appeasement. This is information you already have — the log from section 1 contains it.

People I can already disagree with, without my chest tightening:

People around whom my real self goes quiet:

One safe relationship where I will practise a small honest preference this week ("actually, I'd rather..."):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/fawn-response/

5. Healing the Fawn Response: An 8-Week Plan

Most fawn advice fails because it starts at step five: "set boundaries!" with someone who cannot yet feel what they want. This plan sequences the work — noticing first, preferences second, tiny refusals third, real boundaries last — because each stage only works on top of the previous one.

Who this is for: Anyone who understands their people-pleasing perfectly and is still doing it — the gap this plan closes is between insight and order of operations.

Each fortnight has one focus and one written check-in. Do not skip ahead when a stage feels easy — the early stages are building the sensing capacity the later stages spend. If a week goes badly, repeat it; the calendar serves you, not the reverse.

5.1 Weeks 1-2: Notice, change nothing

Log the fawning without fixing it.

Changing nothing is the assignment. Each evening, note the day's automatic yeses, unnecessary apologies, and mood-management. You are training the observer that every later stage depends on.

End of week 1 — my daily average count, and the situation that surprised me most:

End of week 2 — what I now notice DURING rather than after:

5.2 Weeks 3-4: Find the preference

Answer "what do I want?" three times a day, in low stakes.

Coffee or tea, which route to walk, which film — three explicit preference checks daily, said out loud or written, regardless of whether you act on them. Stakes stay low on purpose: you are rebuilding a signal, not renegotiating your marriage.

The preference that was hardest to locate this fortnight:

A preference I stated out loud, and what happened:

5.3 Weeks 5-6: The small no

One refusal per week, chosen for low stakes, scripted in advance.

Script it, say it, ride the guilt wave without retracting, write down what actually happened. Two clean nos in a fortnight is a pass; five is not better.

No #1 — my words, their reaction, my guilt level 0-10 at one hour and at one day:

No #2 — my words, their reaction, guilt at one hour and one day:

5.4 Weeks 7-8: One boundary that holds

Pick a single recurring intrusion and hold the line on it.

Choose one repeating situation (the Sunday calls, the extra shifts, the friend who vents for hours). State the boundary once, kindly; then your only job is consistency when it is tested — and it will be tested.

My one boundary, in one sentence:

How it was tested, and what I did:

Week 8 review — what changed in me, and which relationship needs the honest look:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/fawn-recovery-plan/

6. Journal Prompts for the Fawn Response

Journaling with a fawn pattern has a failure mode: the journal becomes one more place to be good, and every entry curdles into self-criticism. These prompts are structured against that — history first (where appeasement was learned), then pattern (where it fires now), then experiment (what to try) — with self-blame explicitly off the menu.

Who this is for: Anyone whose people-pleasing insight lives in their head and needs somewhere concrete to go, ten minutes at a time.

One prompt per sitting, ten minutes, then stop — even mid-sentence. Fawn journaling expands to fill any container with self-examination, so the container matters. If an entry turns into a case against yourself, close the notebook and answer this instead: "What would I say to a friend who wrote this?"

6.1 Where it was learned (prompts 1-10)

The history, with compassion for the child who adapted.

Answer these about your younger self in the third person if that makes them easier.

Whose mood ran the household I grew up in, and how did I learn to read it?

What happened, or what did I fear would happen, when I disappointed someone?

When did being "easy" or "mature for my age" get me love or safety?

What did I stop asking for, and roughly when?

Who benefited from my agreeableness — and would they say so?

6.2 Where it fires now (prompts 11-20)

Present-tense pattern-spotting.

Pick the prompt closest to something that happened this week.

Replay the last yes I regretted: what did I feel in my body in the half-second before saying it?

Whose disappointment am I currently managing in advance, and how?

What opinion did I soften this week, and what was the unsoftened version?

Where am I being paid in "being needed" instead of in care that actually feeds me?

What would the people around me lose if I stopped fawning — and who would celebrate?

6.3 What to try (prompts 21-30)

Experiments, small enough to actually run.

End each of these entries with one concrete, dated intention.

What is the smallest honest preference I could state tomorrow, and to whom?

Write the no I wish I had said this month, word for word, as practice.

What would a week of "let me check and get back to you" instead of instant yes change?

Which relationship is safe enough to show a real disagreement — and what would I disagree about?

If my worth were settled and not up for negotiation, what would Tuesday look like?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/fawn-journal-prompts/

7. Saying No: A Worksheet for People-Pleasers

For a fawn pattern, "just say no" is like telling someone afraid of heights to "just look down". This sheet makes no smaller: scripts you fill in before you need them, a ladder from easiest refusal to hardest, and — the part everyone skips — a written plan for the guilt afterwards, because the guilt is where most nos get taken back.

Who this is for: Anyone who says yes in the moment and spends the next week resenting it, or whose nos come out so padded with apology that nobody hears them.

A workable no has three parts: warmth ("thanks for asking me"), the refusal itself with no fake excuse ("I can't take that on"), and a full stop where the paragraph of justification used to go. Excuses invite negotiation; full stops end it. Kind and short is the target.

7.1 Your no ladder

Rank refusals from easiest to hardest.

Fill the table from 1 (a telemarketer) to 6 (the person whose disappointment frightens you most). You will practise from the bottom up — never start at the top.

Rung	Who / what I'd be refusing	Fear 0-10

7.2 Scripts for your bottom three rungs

Word-for-word, written before you need them.

Use the three-part shape. Then read each aloud twice — a no your mouth has already said is far easier to say again.

Rung 1 script:

Rung 2 script:

Rung 3 script:

My "buying time" line for surprise asks ("Let me check my week and come back to you tomorrow"):

7.3 The guilt plan

Decide now what you will do when the wave hits.

Post-boundary guilt peaks within hours and fades within about a day — unless you feed it by retracting. Write your holding plan.

When guilt arrives I will (call/text this person, walk, re-read this line I wrote to myself):

The sentence I will NOT send (the take-it-back text), written here so it goes nowhere else:

After my first real no — what actually happened, and how long the guilt truly lasted:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/saying-no/

8. People-Pleasing Audit: A Scored Self-Check

This is a rating sheet, not a quiz with a verdict. Twenty statements, four areas — yes-saying, apology, opinion-hiding, mood-managing — scored by hand so you can see not just how much you appease but WHERE. Most people find one area carrying scores the others do not, and that area is where the work starts.

Who this is for: Anyone who suspects "I'm just nice" is doing a lot of load-bearing work, and wants a number instead of a vibe.

Rate each statement 1 (not me) to 5 (exactly me) for the last six months, not your best week. Add each block's subtotal, then the total out of 100. Do the adding by hand — the pause while you add is where the honesty happens. Rough bands: under 40, situational appeasement most people carry; 40-65, a pattern with real costs worth working on; over 65, fawning is likely organising your relationships, and the fawn worksheet plus support is the route.

8.1 Block A — The automatic yes

Whether your yes happens before your check.

Score for what you do, not what you believe.

I agree to things and only later discover I did not want to. (1-5)

I cannot recall the last time I declined a direct request from someone close. (1-5)

I volunteer before anyone asks, to get ahead of being asked. (1-5)

Cancelling on me is a relief more often than a disappointment. (1-5)

My calendar contains commitments I resent. (1-5) — Block A subtotal /25:

8.2 Block B — Apology and shrinking

How often you pre-emptively make yourself small.

Include the disguised apologies: "sorry to bother you", "quick question", "no worries if not".

I apologise for things that need no apology — my needs, my presence, my emails. (1-5)

I soften requests until they are barely requests. (1-5)

When someone bumps into me, I say sorry. (1-5)

I downplay achievements so nobody feels I'm too much. (1-5)

Taking up time in a conversation feels like a debt to repay. (1-5) — Block B subtotal /25:

8.3 Block C — The hidden self

How much of your real opinion ever surfaces.

Score against the people you are closest to — that is where hiding costs most.

People who know me well would still struggle to name my strong opinions. (1-5)

I have agreed out loud with things I disagreed with, this month. (1-5)

I match my tastes to the room — music, food, plans. (1-5)

Being asked "what do YOU want?" produces static, not an answer. (1-5)

I have hobbies or views my partner/best friend has never heard about. (1-5) — Block C subtotal /25:

8.4 Block D — Mood management

Whether other people's feelings are your full-time job.

This block usually scores highest in people who grew up around volatility.

I scan faces and tone for trouble the moment I enter a room. (1-5)

Someone else's bad mood feels like my emergency to fix. (1-5)

I rehearse conversations to pre-empt every possible upset. (1-5)

Conflict anywhere near me feels physically dangerous. (1-5)

I feel guilty relaxing while anyone near me is unhappy. (1-5) — Block D subtotal /25. TOTAL /100:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/people-pleasing-audit/

9. Anger Iceberg Worksheet

Anger is the visible tenth of the iceberg. Below the waterline sits what the anger protects — hurt, fear, shame, grief, powerlessness — feelings that were once less safe to show than rage. This worksheet takes one real incident and maps both layers, because anger you can name from below is anger you can finally do something with.

Who this is for: Anyone whose anger is easy to reach while every other feeling seems locked — or who keeps having the same argument that is never really about the dishes.

Work from one specific recent incident of anger — the smaller and more recent, the better. The waterline question in section 2 is the hinge: you are asking what you would have felt in that moment if anger had not been available. The first honest answer is often quieter and younger than expected.

9.1 Above the waterline

What the anger looked like from outside.

Describe the visible layer without judging it.

The incident, in two sentences:

What my anger did (raised voice, sarcasm, silence, the look, the message I sent):

What I told myself the anger was about, at the time:

9.2 Below the waterline

The feeling the anger stood in front of.

Circle every feeling that was plausibly underneath, then write about the strongest: hurt / embarrassed / dismissed / afraid / powerless / ashamed / unimportant / betrayed / exhausted / grieving.

If anger had not been available in that moment, I think I would have felt:

The last time I felt that underneath-feeling as a child, what was happening?

What made the underneath-feeling less safe to show than anger?

9.3 Saying the bottom of the iceberg out loud

Translate one angry sentence into its under-the-line version.

The skill: same message, sourced from the real feeling. "You never listen to me!" becomes "I felt unimportant when the decision was made without me." Do it for your incident.

What I actually said (or wanted to say), verbatim:

The translation, sourced from the underneath-feeling:

Who I could realistically say the translated version to, and when:

9.4 Your recurring icebergs

Spot the pattern across incidents.

Fill this in over a week or two as new flashes of anger arrive.

Trigger	Anger looked like	Underneath was

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/anger-iceberg/

10. Journal Prompts for the Fight Response

Journaling with a fight pattern has its own trap: the entry becomes a prosecution — of the person who wronged you, or of yourself for blowing up again. These prompts steer between the two. They treat your anger as a bodyguard worth interviewing rather than an enemy worth fighting, which is the only interview it will actually sit for.

Who this is for: Anyone quick to argue and slow to feel, whose journal keeps turning into closing arguments.

One prompt, ten minutes, by hand if you can. If an entry heats up into a case against someone, pause and add one line: "and what else was I feeling besides right?" That question is the whole method.

10.1 Interviewing the bodyguard (1-8)

Get curious about what the fight protects.

Write about your anger in the third person if that unlocks it: "the guard showed up when..."

When did fighting back first work for me — what did it stop or win?

What does my anger believe would happen if it took a day off?

Who was I before I was tough? What happened to that person?

What compliment makes me most uncomfortable, and what does that reveal?

10.2 The cost ledger (9-16)

Count what the armor spends.

Honest accounting, no self-flagellation — costs, not verdicts.

Which relationship is currently paying the highest price for my temper or control?

What do people around me not tell me, because of how I might react?

When did I last apologise first? What made that possible or impossible?

What would I know about the people I love if I were safer to be honest with?

10.3 Experiments in lowering the shield (17-24)

Small vulnerability, chosen and dated.

End each entry with one concrete intention small enough to survive contact with real life.

What is one sentence of the under-the-anger truth ("that actually hurt") I could say this week, and to whom?

Where could I deliberately lose a low-stakes argument, just to feel what happens?

Write the repair text I have been too proud to send. (Sending is optional; writing is not.)

If I trusted that respect did not require fear, what would I do differently tomorrow?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/fight-journal-prompts/

11. Repair After Conflict: A Worksheet

What damages relationships is rarely the fight — it is the fight with no repair, stacked on the last fight with no repair. Repair is a learnable sequence: cool down fully, own your part specifically, hear their side without re-arming, and agree one thing for next time. This sheet walks one real conflict through all four steps.

Who this is for: Anyone who goes quiet and lets it blow over instead of repairing, or whose apologies keep detonating into round two.

Repair attempted while either of you is still activated becomes round two — the physiology guarantees it. The test in section 1 must genuinely pass first, even if that takes a day. Late repair beats hot repair every time.

11.1 Am I actually cool yet?

A physiological check, not a vibe check.

All four must be true before you approach.

Can I think of one thing I did that made it worse? (If literally nothing: not ready.)

Can I imagine their version being partly reasonable without my jaw tightening?

Is my goal connection, or is it winning the debrief? Honestly:

Body check — shoulders, jaw, chest. What do I notice?

11.2 The ownership script

Your part, with the word "but" banned.

"I'm sorry I shouted, but you..." is not an apology, it is an opening statement. Write yours clean: behaviour, impact, practice.

What I did (specific, observable, no context yet):

What it likely felt like on their side:

What I am practising instead (from the fight response worksheet, if you have done it):

The full script in one breath — write it, then read it aloud once:

11.3 Receiving their side

Prepare for the hard part: listening without re-arming.

When they tell you how it was for them, your fight response will offer you corrections to make. Plan your counter-moves now.

The correction I will most be tempted to make ("that's not what I said!"):

What I will do instead, physically (breathe out slowly, nod, ask "what else?"):

The one question I will ask them:

11.4 One agreement for next time

Close with a single concrete change, not a treaty.

One agreement, testable, two-sided if possible: "if either of us hits 7/10 we take twenty minutes and come back."
More than one agreement means none will hold.

Our (or my) one agreement:

How we will both know it is being invoked, not weaponised:

A week later — was it used, and did it hold?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/repair-after-conflict/

12. Journal Prompts for the Flight Response

People with a flight pattern often own three unfinished journals — the journaling itself became another sprint, then another exit. These prompts are built for that nervous system: short sittings, one question at a time, and permission to write badly, because for a flight pattern the finish line is sitting down at all.

Who this is for: Anyone whose coping is motion — overwork, overplanning, always one foot out the door — and who abandons reflective practices at day four.

Set a timer for eight minutes and stop when it rings, even mid-thought — leaving a thread unfinished makes returning easier, which for this pattern is the entire game. Skipped days are expected; just return. Prompts are grouped: what the running is from, what it costs, and what staying might look like.

12.1 What the running is from (1-8)

The feeling under the velocity.

Answer whichever question snags — the snag is the signal.

When my plans all collapse and an evening goes empty, the first feeling that arrives is:

What thought does my busyness successfully keep me from finishing?

When did staying — in a house, a room, a conversation — first feel dangerous?

What am I afraid would catch up with me if I slowed to walking pace?

12.2 What the running costs (9-16)

The ledger of a life in motion.

Costs, counted kindly.

What have I quit at the exact moment it got real? (Jobs, people, projects — list without excuses.)

Who has stopped expecting me to stay? How do I know?

What does my body do with the adrenaline I feed it? (Sleep, gut, jaw, heart.)

Which current escape fantasy is really a feeling I could name instead?

12.3 What staying might look like (17-24)

Experiments in remaining.

Each entry closes with something small and dated.

What is one commitment I could keep this week at 80% effort instead of fleeing at 100%-or-nothing?

Write about a time I stayed through discomfort and something good happened after.

If I trusted that I could leave ANYTIME, what would I be willing to stay for?

What would "home" have to feel like for my body to believe it? Describe it in senses, not concepts.

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/flight-journal-prompts/

13. Staying Present: A Worksheet for the Flight Response

Presence is a capacity, not a virtue — and for a flight-patterned nervous system it is a capacity that was pruned for good reasons. This sheet rebuilds it by grades: ninety seconds before a tolerated urge, then five minutes, then presence during mildly hard conversations. Nobody meditates their way out of flight from a standing start.

Who this is for: Anyone who leaves rooms, conversations and moments mentally long before their body follows — and wants a graded path back, not a lecture on mindfulness.

Establish your baseline in section 1 first — most people overestimate it. Then practise at your grade for a week before moving up. Moving up too fast produces flooding, then abandonment, then "mindfulness doesn't work for me". The grades exist because dose matters more than technique.

13.1 Your presence baseline

Measure honestly where staying currently breaks.

Time these once each, phone in another room. No judgment — this is a tape measure.

Sitting doing nothing, eyes open: the urge to move became strong at ____ seconds.

In my last conversation, I first mentally left at roughly what point, and where did I go?

The situation where presence breaks fastest for me (queues, credits, silence at dinner):

13.2 Grade 1: The 90-second surf

Ride one urge per day without acting on it.

When the urge to check/plan/leave arrives: feet on floor, breathe out longer than in, and describe the urge like weather until it crests. Urges crest — that is their one weakness. Log five surfs.

Day	The urge	Peak intensity 0-10	Seconds until it eased

13.3 Grade 2: Five present minutes, daily

One routine activity done with full attention.

Pick one daily activity (the shower, the first coffee, the walk to the station) and be only there for it — senses, not commentary. When you leave, return without ceremony. Same activity all week.

My chosen activity:

Day 3 note — how many times I left and returned, and what pulled me:

Day 7 note — what I noticed about the activity that I had never noticed:

13.4 Grade 3: Present during the hard thing

Staying while mildly uncomfortable — the real target.

Choose one mildly difficult conversation or moment this week and set a private intention to remain — body still, attention here — while it is uncomfortable. Not the hardest conversation. A 4/10.

The moment I chose, and why it is a 4/10 not an 8/10:

Where my attention tried to go, and what brought it back:

What I caught (in them, in me) that I would have missed at speed:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/staying-present/

14. Busyness Audit: A Worksheet

Your calendar is a record of decisions, and for a flight pattern many of those decisions were made by the anxiety rather than by you. This audit takes one real week and sorts it: what was chosen, what was escape wearing a lanyard, and what one honest gap would cost — and buy.

Who this is for: Anyone whose busyness is load-bearing: proud of the full diary, secretly frightened of the empty one.

Use last week's actual calendar, not an idealised week. The sorting test for each block is one question: "if all anxiety were absent, would this still be here?" Answer fast — slow answers are usually negotiations.

14.1 The sort

Every block from last week, categorised.

C = chosen (survives the no-anxiety test). E = escape (exists to outrun something). M = mixed. List the big blocks.

Commitment	Hours	C / E / M	If E: escaping what?

14.2 Price the escapes

What the E-hours cost and what they protect you from.

Escapes are not free — they are paid for in sleep, presence and relationships. Total them.

My E-hours per week, roughly:

What those hours cost me (name the specific sleep, people, health):

What they successfully protect me from feeling:

The escape I am LEAST willing to give up — which usually marks the most important feeling:

14.3 Design one honest gap

A planned, protected, empty ninety minutes.

Not a productivity rest. A real gap: no phone, no optimisation, one week from now, in the diary. The plan is the container that makes the emptiness survivable.

My gap — day, time, place:

What I am allowed in it (walk, sit, stare, nothing) and what is banned:

Prediction — what I think will happen in me at minute 10, 40 and 80:

Afterwards — what actually happened, and what the urge to fill it felt like:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/busyness-audit/

15. Journal Prompts for the Freeze Response

The freeze response and the blank page are old enemies: the same fog that stalls tasks stalls sentences. So these prompts start smaller than usual — warm-up questions with one-word answers, sensory lists, fill-in-the-blanks — and only then move toward the deeper material. If you have ever sat staring at a beautiful empty notebook, this order is for you.

Who this is for: Anyone who feels more numb than sad, loses hours to fog, and finds "just write your feelings" laughable because the feelings are exactly what is offline.

Always begin with one warm-up prompt, even on good days — it is the ignition sequence. Write for ten minutes maximum. If nothing comes, copy the prompt out by hand and answer with single words; single words count. The enemy is the blank page, not the shallow entry.

15.1 Ignition (1-8): answers can be one word

Warm-ups that bypass the fog.

These ask your senses and your body, which stay online when narrative doesn't.

Right now: three things I can see, two I can hear, one I can feel touching me. (List them.)

My body today is mostly: heavy / hollow / buzzing / distant / tight / quiet. (Circle, then add one sentence if one comes.)

If my fog had a colour and a texture today, it would be:

Fill in: "Today the hardest thing to start was _____, and the moment it stalled was _____."

15.2 The fog, examined (9-16)

Curiosity about the shutdown itself.

Move here only after ignition. Third person allowed.

What does the fog protect me from knowing or feeling? First guess, without censoring:

When I "lose" an evening, where do I actually go? Describe the nowhere.

What demand most reliably summons the shutdown — and whose voice does that demand sound like?

What happened, back then, when I responded instead of going still?

15.3 Thaw notes (17-24)

Evidence-gathering about what brings you back.

These build your personal thaw manual, one observation at a time.

The last time I came back from the fog, what was the first sign life had returned?

Which people can I be foggy AROUND without the fog deepening? What do they do differently?

Write instructions to a friend for taking care of me mid-freeze. (This is really a letter to my own future self.)

What tiny thing did I manage today anyway? (It counts. Write why it counts.)

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/freeze-journal-prompts/

16. Task Paralysis Worksheet

Task paralysis is not laziness with better branding — it is very often a freeze response with a to-do list attached. Somewhere, this task became a threat: too big, too vague, too judged, too much like the things that used to end badly. This sheet finds where the threat lives in the task, then shrinks the next step until it slips underneath it.

Who this is for: Anyone staring at the same undone task for days — fully aware of the deadline, fully unable to begin — while doing dishes they do not care about.

Bring the actual task you are avoiding and fill this in about it right now — the sheet works as an intervention, not a theory. Expect resistance around section 2; the questions get close to why the task is a threat, and threats defend themselves.

16.1 Locate the threat in the task

Find which part your system is treating as danger.

Tasks freeze at a specific point, not everywhere. Interrogate yours.

The task, as it is written in my head right now:

Which check applies? Too big (no single next action) / too vague (don't know what done looks like) / too judged (someone will evaluate it) / too loaded (it resembles something with history):

The precise moment I freeze: opening the file? the first sentence? hitting send? Name it:

If this task went badly, what am I afraid it would prove about me?

16.2 Shrink below the threat line

Cut the next step down until it stops registering as danger.

Keep halving the step until you feel the click of "oh, I could do that now" — that click is your nervous system approving the size. "Write the report" → "open the document" → "type one bad sentence I'm allowed to delete".

The task, halved:

Halved again:

Halved until I felt the click — my under-the-line step is:

When I will do it (within the next hour beats tomorrow):

16.3 The unstick log

Build evidence about your exits from paralysis.

Over two weeks, log each stuck-then-unstuck cycle. Patterns appear fast.

Task	Threat type	What finally moved me	How bad was it really?

16.4 Ban the recovery-wrecker

Handle the shame spiral that re-freezes you.

The sequence that keeps paralysis alive: freeze → shame about freezing → more threat → deeper freeze. The intervention point is the self-commentary immediately after you notice you are stuck.

What I currently say to myself when I realise I've been stuck for an hour:

What I would say to a friend in the same chair:

My replacement line, written to be believable rather than saccharine ("this is a freeze, not a character flaw — body first, then the tiny step"):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/task-paralysis/

17. Grounding Techniques Worksheet

Grounding lists are everywhere; grounding that works when you are actually flooded is rarer, because nobody tested the list on their own nervous system in advance. This sheet is the test: eight techniques across three channels, each tried and scored while calm-ish, so your personal top three are already chosen before the day you need them.

Who this is for: Anyone who has read "5-4-3-2-1" a dozen times and still goes blank in the moment it is needed.

Try each technique for a full two minutes on an ordinary day, then score it 0-10 for how much more "here" you felt. Anything scoring 6+ goes on your menu in section 3. Techniques only work under fire if they were rehearsed out of it — that is the entire trick of this sheet.

17.1 Sensory channel

Grounding through what your senses can reach.

Score each after a two-minute trial.

5-4-3-2-1: name 5 things seen, 4 heard, 3 touched, 2 smelled, 1 tasted. Score /10:

Temperature shift: ice cube in hand, or cold water on wrists and face. Score /10:

Strong taste or smell (mint, lemon, coffee beans). Score /10:

17.2 Body channel

Grounding through muscle and weight.

Usually strongest for freeze and flight patterns.

Push: palms hard against a wall, 30 seconds, feel the push back. Score /10:

Feet and gravity: stand, press feet down, notice the floor holding you. Score /10:

Slow exhale: breathe out longer than in, six times ("out-breath twice the in-breath"). Score /10:

17.3 Mental channel + your menu

Cognitive anchors, then the final pick.

Finish by writing your top three where you will find them.

Categories: name every animal (or football team, or capital city) you can for one minute. Score /10:

Orienting facts: say aloud your name, age, today's date, where you are, and one thing that is true now that was not true "then". Score /10:

MY MENU — top three, in order, copied onto a card or phone lockscreen:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/grounding-techniques/

18. Window of Tolerance Worksheet

The window of tolerance is the zone where you can feel things without being run by them — above it lives fight/flight (racing, rage, panic), below it lives freeze (numb, foggy, collapsed). The concept only becomes useful when you know YOUR versions of each zone, which is what this sheet maps.

Who this is for: Anyone who swings between too activated and totally shut down, and wants to catch the exits from the window earlier.

Sections 1 and 2 build your personal map — do them in one sitting. Section 3 is a week of tracking with that map in hand. The payoff is early detection: the signs you list for "leaving the window" become tripwires that tell you to deploy grounding while it can still work.

18.1 Your three zones, in your words

Describe how each zone actually feels in you.

Use body words, not diagnosis words.

INSIDE my window I am: (how does your body feel, what can you do here that you can't elsewhere?)

ABOVE the window (hyper-arousal) looks like this in me: (racing thoughts? snapping? pacing? heart?)

BELOW the window (hypo-arousal) looks like this in me: (fog? heaviness? scrolling? distant sound?)

18.2 Shrinkers and wideners

What moves your window's edges.

Windows are not fixed. List yours honestly, including the unflattering ones.

Reliable shrinkers (poor sleep, alcohol, certain people, hunger, news, pain):

Reliable wideners (movement, specific people, food rhythm, time outdoors, therapy):

One shrinker I could reduce this week, and one widener I could schedule:

18.3 A week at the window

Track your zone twice a day.

Morning and evening: which zone, and what had just happened. Patterns show within days.

Day	AM zone (above/in/below)	PM zone	What pushed me out (if I left)

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/window-of-tolerance/

19. Trigger Map Worksheet

A trigger is a doorbell wired to the past: something small now — a tone, a phrase, a delay in reply — rings an alarm installed long ago. You cannot uninstall the wiring by willpower, but a mapped trigger loses much of its ambush power. This sheet builds the map: inventory, anatomy of one trigger, then if-then plans for the two that run you most.

Who this is for: Anyone whose reactions sometimes arrive outsized and pre-formed — and who is tired of discovering their triggers only mid-explosion or mid-shutdown.

Work from recent ordinary-life examples, not your worst memories — the map needs the doorbell, not the whole house. If listing a trigger starts to pull you into reliving rather than remembering, stop, ground (feet, exhale, look around the room), and pick a milder one. Mapping should feel like studying, not re-entering.

19.1 The inventory

List your known and suspected tripwires.

Categories help recall: tones of voice, phrases, silences, places, dates, smells, behaviours (lateness, closed doors, being watched while working).

Trigger cue	My instant reaction (F/F/F/F)	Intensity 0-10	Sure or suspected?

19.2 Anatomy of one trigger

Slow one incident down to its frames.

Pick a mid-intensity trigger from the table and dissect its last firing.

The cue, precisely (not "criticism" but "the sigh before the feedback"):

First body signal, and how many seconds before the reaction proper:

What the alarm believes is happening (the old situation it matches):

What was ACTUALLY happening, established afterwards:

19.3 If-then plans for the top two

Pre-decide your response so the moment doesn't.

Format: "If [cue] and I feel [first body signal], then I will [ground move] and say [line] before responding."

Pre-decisions survive flooding; intentions do not.

Trigger 1 if-then, written in full:

Trigger 2 if-then, written in full:

Who I will tell about these plans (saying them aloud doubles follow-through):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/trigger-map/

20. Early Warning Signs Worksheet

Every trauma response has a launch sequence, and the countdown is where intervention actually works — by the time fight is shouting, flight is booking, freeze is fogged and fawn has said yes, the window has mostly closed. This sheet catalogues your personal countdown across three channels, then wires one action to the earliest catchable signal.

Who this is for: Anyone who only recognises their trauma response in the rear-view mirror and wants to move the recognition earlier, minute by minute.

Memory of the launch is clearest right after a launch. Take your most recent episode and rewind it slowly: what was happening one minute before it was undeniable? Five minutes? An hour? The signals you find become the rows of section 1.

20.1 Your countdown, three channels

Body, thought and behaviour signals, ordered by earliness.

Body signals usually fire first and get noticed last — give that column extra attention.

How early?	Body sign	Thought sign	Behaviour sign

20.2 The earliest catchable signal

Choose your tripwire.

Not the earliest signal — the earliest one you could realistically NOTICE in daily life. For most people that is a behaviour (re-reading a message five times, opening the fridge again, going quiet in a meeting).

My tripwire signal is:

It typically means I am ____ minutes/hours from a full response:

The response it predicts (fight / flight / freeze / fawn / a blend):

20.3 Wire the tripwire

One pre-decided action, attached to the signal.

Small and immediate beats ideal: a scheduled pause, your top grounding move, a text to a named person, stepping outside. Write it as an if-then and put a copy where the tripwire tends to fire.

My if-then: "If I catch [tripwire], then I will [action] within two minutes."

Where the written copy lives (desk, phone notes, kitchen):

After its first real firing — did I catch it, and what happened next?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/early-warning-signs/

21. Hypervigilance Worksheet

Hypervigilance is a sentry who saved your life once and never got the order to stand down: scanning rooms, reading micro-expressions, rehearsing disasters, sleeping shallow. The sentry cannot be fired — but it can be retrained with evidence and given scheduled off-duty hours, which is what this sheet builds.

Who this is for: Anyone who sits facing the door, hears every night-noise, exhausts themselves reading everyone's mood, and calls it "just being observant".

This work goes badly when framed as "my vigilance is stupid" — it was intelligent once, and arguing with it triggers it. The frame that works: the sentry's threat-detection stays; its threat-ASSESSMENT gets updated with data. Sections 2 and 3 are that data collection.

21.1 The scanning log

Two days of noticing the noticing.

Each time you catch yourself scanning (rooms, faces, tones, exits), log it. The volume surprises everyone.

When/where	What I was scanning for	Threat level I felt 0-10	Anything actually there?

21.2 The prediction audit

Test the alarm's accuracy against outcomes.

For one week, write down each specific threat-prediction the vigilance makes ("she's angry with me", "this email means trouble") and, later, what actually happened. You are building the sentry's error rate — gently, in writing, where it can be seen.

Prediction 1 → outcome:

Prediction 2 → outcome:

Prediction 3 → outcome:

My alarm's hit rate this week, honestly:

21.3 Scheduled stand-down

Off-duty minutes, graded up slowly.

Pick a genuinely safe daily context (your own sofa, a trusted friend's kitchen). For five minutes: sit with your back supported, let your eyes rest on one neutral thing instead of sweeping, exhale long. The sentry will object; log the objection and continue. Add minutes weekly.

My stand-down context and time:

What the sentry said during minute one:

Day 7 — what five off-duty minutes feels like now compared to day 1:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/hypervigilance/

22. Emotional Flashbacks Worksheet

An emotional flashback has no pictures — you do not see the past, you FEEL it: suddenly small, ashamed, desperate or doomed, at an intensity the present moment cannot explain. Because there is no image, most people mislabel them as mood swings or "being crazy". Naming them is half the cure; this sheet does the naming, then builds your way back.

Who this is for: Anyone who gets abruptly flooded with shame, dread or smallness out of proportion to what just happened — especially with a childhood that required a lot of surviving.

Fill in sections 1 and 2 on a steady day. The return protocol in section 2 must be printed or copied somewhere findable, because mid-flashback you will not remember you own it. Section 3 is for after episodes — debriefing is what shortens the next one.

22.1 Your flashback signature

How you tell a flashback from a mood.

The tell is disproportion plus familiarity: too big for now, exactly the size of then.

The feeling-cluster my flashbacks bring (circle/add): tiny / ashamed / doomed / desperate to appease / trapped / abandoned:

How old do I feel mid-episode, roughly?

Three recent moments that were probably flashbacks, in hindsight:

22.2 The return protocol

Your steps back to the present, written for a flooded reader.

Keep the language simple — you are writing for yourself at your youngest. The spine: name it, locate now, comfort the part that time-travelled, then move the body.

STEP 1 — The naming line I will say: ("This is a flashback. It is a memory of a feeling. I am not in danger now.")

STEP 2 — Three facts that prove it is now, not then (my age, my address, one thing I can do now that I couldn't then):

STEP 3 — What the young part gets told (write the actual sentence, kind and brief):

STEP 4 — The body move that ends my episodes best (cold water, walking, wrapping in a blanket, calling _____):

22.3 The debrief log

After each episode, extract the learning.

Same four questions each time. Episodes debriefed tend to arrive with more warning and leave sooner.

Date	Trigger (best guess)	How long it lasted	What helped me back

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/emotional-flashbacks/

23. Inner Child Worksheet

Inner child work is not about believing a literal child lives inside you — it is a structured way to relate to the feelings and needs you carried at ages when nobody helped you carry them. Done gently, it converts self-contempt ("why am I like this?") into something workable ("of course that part panics; look what it lived through").

Who this is for: Anyone whose reactions sometimes feel younger than they are, and who suspects the harsh internal voice is aimed at a kid.

Choose ONE age to work with, and start with a mildly hard period, not the worst one. Twenty minutes maximum per sitting, then deliberately return to the present: stand, move, name the room. This work should feel tender, not annihilating — if it floods you, that is a sign it wants doing with a therapist, which is a genuinely good way to do it.

23.1 The meeting

Establish contact with one younger you.

Use a photo from that age if one exists. Third person is fine throughout.

The age I am working with, and where that child mostly was (house, school, whose care):

What a Tuesday looked like for them:

What they were good at that nobody mentioned:

Looking at them now, the first thing I feel is:

23.2 The needs inventory

Name what was needed and what actually came.

Go need by need: safety, comfort when upset, being enjoyed (not just tolerated), praise, protection, being told the truth. This is inventory, not blame — parents can be understood later; the child's ledger comes first.

The need that went most unmet:

How that child solved it themselves (the survival move — which is probably my trauma response today):

How that same solution shows up in my adult week:

23.3 The two letters

Write to the child; let the child write back.

Letter one, adult to child: what you see, what was true, what was never their fault. Letter two, child to adult, written with your non-dominant hand if you are willing (it slows the censor): what they want you to know and what they want from you now. Keep both letters.

Letter one — my opening line to them:

Letter two — what came back that surprised me:

One small thing they asked for that I can actually do this week (rest, play, a food, a boundary):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/inner-child/

24. Self-Soothing Toolkit Worksheet

Everyone already has a self-soothing toolkit — it is just that for many trauma survivors it contains things with invoices attached: the scroll, the drink, the fridge, the spending, the reassurance-texting. This sheet audits what you actually use, keeps what serves you, and tests true replacements for what does not. No shame pass required; every current soother earned its place by working at least once.

Who this is for: Anyone whose comfort strategies cost more than they give, and who wants alternatives tested BEFORE the next bad night, not invented during it.

Section 1 works only if it is honest, and honesty requires dropping the self-attack — write like a scientist logging data. Then test section 2's candidates on ordinary evenings. A soother that has never been rehearsed will lose to the phone every time; rehearsal is what changes the odds.

24.1 The current toolkit, audited

What you actually reach for, and its real price.

Include the respectable ones (overwork soothes too).

What I reach for	Soothes what feeling	Works for how long?	The invoice (cost)

24.2 Replacement candidates, by channel

Test two per channel on ordinary evenings.

Warmth (shower, blanket, tea), body (stretch, walk, weighted pressure), sound (one chosen album, a voice note from someone kind), scent, rhythm (kneading dough, knitting, shooting hoops). Score each /10 for felt effect.

Warmth candidate tested, and score:

Body candidate tested, and score:

Sound/scent candidate tested, and score:

Rhythm candidate tested, and score:

24.3 The crisis card

Your top soothers, ordered, where you will find them.

Bad moments cannot browse. Write the card: three soothers in order, one person to contact, and the line you need to read. Photograph it; make it the phone wallpaper for a while.

My three, in order:

My person, and what I am allowed to send them ("rough night, no reply needed"):

The line to read: (e.g., "This feeling is a wave. I have survived every single one so far.")

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/self-soothing-toolkit/

25. Nervous System Regulation: A Daily Plan Worksheet

Regulation is not an emergency procedure — it is a dosing schedule. A nervous system that gets small, reliable inputs of settling all day needs far fewer rescues. This sheet builds your schedule: three anchored slots, each under five minutes, attached to things you already do, tracked for two weeks because that is how long it takes to stop being a project and start being a rhythm.

Who this is for: Anyone who only regulates once already dysregulated, and wants the maintenance version — small, boring, and compounding.

Do not pick clock times; pick anchors — existing daily events your practice attaches to (kettle on, car parked, teeth brushed). Anchored habits survive chaotic days; scheduled ones die by Thursday. Keep every practice under five minutes: the system responds to frequency more than duration.

25.1 Build the three slots

Morning discharge, midday check, evening downshift.

Morning wants gentle activation and orienting (light, movement, a slow look out the window). Midday wants a pressure-release valve (exhales, shoulders, a walk to nowhere). Evening wants a downshift ritual your body can learn to recognise as the off-ramp.

MORNING — my anchor + practice (e.g., "kettle on → feet on floor, 6 long exhales, name the day's one real priority"):

MIDDAY — my anchor + practice:

EVENING — my anchor + practice (screens and lights count as inputs; decide their cutoff):

25.2 The two-week tracker

Tick the slots; score the day.

Each evening: tick which slots happened, rate the day's overall regulation 0-10. You are looking for the correlation, and you will find it.

Day	AM ✓	Midday ✓	PM ✓	Day's regulation 0-10

25.3 Review and adjust

Keep what the data supports.

After two weeks, be ruthless with practices and gentle with yourself.

Which slot got skipped most, and what would make its anchor stickier?

The correlation I noticed between ticks and scores:

One change for the next two weeks (swap a practice, move an anchor — not "try harder"):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/nervous-system-regulation/

26. Boundaries After Trauma: A Worksheet

Trauma damages boundaries at the sensor level: when your limits were repeatedly overrun — or punished — you learned to stop feeling them, because feeling a line you cannot defend is torment. So "just set boundaries" fails; the line is numb. This sheet rebuilds from the sensor up: relearning the felt signal first, then defending it in graded steps.

Who this is for: Anyone who discovers their boundaries only days after they were crossed — as resentment, exhaustion, or the vague sense of having disappeared.

Resist starting at section 3. The order is the method: first recover the SIGNAL of a crossed line (section 1), then find your lines in low-stakes territory (section 2), and only then practise defending them (section 3). Fences built where you cannot feel the property line get built in the wrong place.

26.1 Recover the signal

Learn what a crossed line feels like in your body.

Recall three recent moments you later recognised as violations — the joke at your expense, the task dumped on you, the touch or question that was too much. For each, rewind to the moment itself.

Moment 1 — what my body did AT THE TIME (tightening, smile-freeze, stomach drop, going distant):

Moment 2 — the body signal:

Moment 3 — the body signal:

My crossed-line signature seems to be:

26.2 The boundary inventory

Where your lines actually are, domain by domain.

Time / body & touch / information (what people may ask) / emotional labour / possessions & space / digital. For each domain, one line you suspect you hold.

Domain	A line I hold (or want to)	Who crosses it most	Numb or felt?

26.3 Graded defence practice

Three escalating reps over three weeks.

Week 1: state a preference where nothing is at stake. Week 2: decline a small request using a script (see the saying-no worksheet). Week 3: name a crossing in the moment — "that doesn't work for me" — with someone moderately safe. Log each rep.

Rep 1 — what I said, and the body signal before and after:

Rep 2 — what I said, what they did, what the guilt did:

Rep 3 — the in-the-moment naming: how close to the moment did I get?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/boundaries-after-trauma/

27. Trauma Bonding Recovery Worksheet

A trauma bond is what intermittent reinforcement does to a nervous system: unpredictable cycles of harm and relief bind harder than consistent love ever could, which is why leaving can feel like withdrawal from a drug — because neurologically, it nearly is. This sheet is for during and after leaving: mapping the cycle so your mind stops calling it love, and riding the urges the bond will keep sending.

Who this is for: Anyone who has left (or is leaving) a relationship that hurt them and cannot understand why they miss it this violently — or why they keep almost going back.

If you are still in danger, this worksheet is not the tool: safety planning with a domestic abuse service comes before any psychological work, and those services help with exactly the leaving-safely part. This sheet assumes you are physically safe and fighting the pull. The urge log in section 3 is the daily working tool; the cycle map in section 1 is what you re-read when the memory starts editing itself.

27.1 Map the cycle

Write the loop that built the bond.

The bond was built by a repeating sequence — tension, incident, remorse/honeymoon, calm — and the honeymoon chemicals are what you are withdrawing from. Write YOUR cycle in specifics, because specifics are what the editing memory deletes first.

The tension phase looked like:

The incident phase — what actually happened (write it plainly; this line matters most in a month):

The honeymoon — what came after, and what it felt like it proved:

How long a full loop took, and how the loops changed over time:

27.2 The two-column ledger

What the relationship claimed vs what it delivered.

Left column: the moments the bond replays (the good ones — be honest, they were real). Right column: what surrounded each one. The bond curates; this ledger un-curates.

The moment I miss	What was true either side of it

27.3 The urge log

Ride each contact-urge on paper instead of the phone.

Every urge to text, check their socials, drive past, or "just get closure": log it here FIRST, with a 20-minute delay rule before any action. Urges logged and delayed mostly die; urges argued with mostly win.

Day	Urge (text/check/return)	Trigger	Peak 0-10	Acted? (y/n)

After a week of logging — my urge pattern (time of day, trigger, duration):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/trauma-bonding-recovery/

28. Trauma Thought Record Worksheet

Standard thought records ask "is this thought rational?" — but trauma beliefs were never irrational; they were accurate once. "Trust gets punished" was a correct conclusion about somewhere you actually lived. This record honours that: instead of debating the belief, it dates it, checks its jurisdiction, and tests it as a prediction about your life now.

Who this is for: Anyone whose inner rulebook — don't need anyone, everything is my fault, calm means danger is coming — keeps winning arguments against their own experience.

Use one sheet per belief, triggered by a real recent moment. The pivotal column is "when was this first true?" — beliefs lose compulsory power when they acquire a date and an address. Expect the same three or four core beliefs to keep appearing behind dozens of surface thoughts; that shortlist IS your map.

28.1 Catch and trace one belief

From surface thought to core rule to origin.

Work down: the moment, the automatic thought, the rule underneath it, the rule's birthplace.

The moment (what happened, this week):

What went through my mind, verbatim:

The rule underneath ("which means... people always ____ / I must never ____"):

When was this rule first TRUE? Where, with whom, at what age?

28.2 The jurisdiction check

Where the rule still applies — and where it doesn't.

Old rules are not deleted; they are re-scoped. Some environments still warrant them. Most no longer do.

Situations/people in my current life where this rule is still roughly accurate:

Situations/people where the evidence says it no longer holds:

What it costs me to apply it everywhere:

28.3 Run the belief as a prediction

A small, concrete test with the result recorded.

Turn the rule into a falsifiable forecast ("if I ask for help with X, [person] will resent me") and run the cheapest safe test. The nervous system updates on lived results, not on arguments.

My prediction, written before the test:

The test I ran, and with whom:

What actually happened:

Belief strength before (/10) and after (/10) — small drops count:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/thought-record/

29. Shame Spiral Worksheet

A shame spiral is a loop, not a feeling: a trigger, a global verdict ("I'm disgusting / broken / too much"), a body collapse, then hiding — and the hiding feeds the verdict, which deepens the collapse. Loops have stages, and stages can have exits. This sheet maps your spiral and installs the ramps, including the strange, proven one: shame dies in accurate, chosen company.

Who this is for: Anyone who loses hours or days to "what is wrong with me", especially after visibility — speaking up, being seen, making an ordinary mistake.

Map your spiral from the last episode, not during one — mid-spiral, the verdict does the writing. The exit ramps in section 2 get rehearsed like fire drills: read aloud twice on ordinary days. Section 3 is optional and powerful; choose its person with real care.

29.1 Your spiral, staged

Break the loop into its actual sequence.

Recent episode, slow motion.

The trigger (often tiny — a message tone, a memory, a mirror):

The verdict — the exact global sentence shame pronounces on me:

The body collapse (where it hits: chest, face heat, the fold):

The hiding move (cancelling, going silent, the fridge, the scroll):

29.2 Exit ramps, one per stage

Pre-built interruptions matched to each stage.

Verdict-stage ramp: specificity — translate the global sentence into the specific event ("I sent a clumsy email" vs "I'm repulsive"). Body-stage ramp: posture and warmth — unfold, stand, warm drink, hand on sternum.

Hiding-stage ramp: minimum visibility — reply to one message, step outside once.

My verdict translation, practised on the last episode:

My body ramp (write the exact physical sequence):

My minimum-visibility move:

29.3 The disclosure drill

Shame's actual kryptonite, used carefully.

Shame survives in silence and dies in empathic company — but the company must be chosen: someone who has earned it, told at the right size ("I spiralled about that email for two days"), not a public confession. One rep.

My safe person, and why they qualify (they respond to vulnerability with warmth, not fixing or flinching):

What I disclosed, at what size:

What happened in my body when they responded:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/shame-spiral/

30. Dissociation Grounding Worksheet

Dissociation is a dimmer switch, not a light switch — from mild spacing-out, through "behind glass", to feeling unreal or watching yourself from outside. Different depths need different tools: what grounds a level-2 drift is useless at level 4. This sheet builds your personal fog scale, matches techniques to each level, and logs episodes so their triggers stop being mysterious.

Who this is for: Anyone who drifts — loses stretches of meetings, drives on autopilot beyond the normal, feels the world go flat or distant under stress.

Build your scale in section 1 on a present-feeling day, and put the matched techniques from section 2 somewhere your drifted self will encounter them (lock screen, desk card). One safety note: grounding yourself while driving means pulling over first — and frequent deep episodes, lost time, or being told about conversations you don't remember are reasons for a professional assessment, not just a worksheet.

30.1 Your fog scale, 1 to 5

Describe each depth in your own markers.

Example frame — 1: fully here. 2: re-reading sentences. 3: sounds distant, behind glass. 4: body on autopilot, self elsewhere. 5: unreal / outside myself.

My level 2 feels like:

My level 3 feels like:

My level 4-5 feels like (and how often I visit):

30.2 Matched techniques

Stronger input for deeper drift.

Levels 1-2: orienting (name 5 things you see, say the date aloud). Level 3: strong senses (cold water, ice, sour sweet, strong mint, stamp your feet). Levels 4-5: body and contact (push a wall, hold something textured and describe it aloud, call a person and keep talking). Test each on mild days and record what reaches you.

What reliably reaches me at level 2:

What reaches me at level 3:

What reaches me at 4-5, and who I can call:

30.3 The episode log

Two weeks of drift-tracking.

Log noticed episodes — trigger guesses improve fast once written.

When	Depth 1-5	What preceded it	What brought me back

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/dissociation-grounding/

31. Trauma-Sensitive Body Scan Worksheet

Standard body scans assume the body is neutral territory; after trauma it is not — attention itself can wake what lives there, which is why "relaxation" exercises sometimes cause panic. This is the trauma-sensitive version: short, eyes open, mapped on paper, with skipping explicitly allowed. The goal is not relaxation. It is re-establishing diplomatic relations with your own body, one safe province at a time.

Who this is for: Anyone who lives mostly from the neck up, gets ambushed by feelings their body clearly saw coming, or finds ordinary meditations weirdly threatening.

Three rules: eyes open, three minutes maximum, and any zone can be skipped without explanation — skipping is data, not failure. Start each scan at your most neutral zone (hands and feet, for most people), and end every scan by orienting outward: look around the room, name three objects. The choice and brevity are not training wheels; they are what makes the exposure tolerable enough to repeat, and repetition is everything.

31.1 The three-minute scan

A guided pass, done your way.

Seated, feet down, eyes open. Move attention: feet → hands → arms → shoulders → jaw → chest → belly, three breaths each, skipping freely. Notice temperature, weight, tension, numbness — naming, not fixing.

Zones that felt neutral or pleasant:

Zones holding tension, and what kind (grip, brace, ache, buzz):

Zones I skipped or found blank/numb (equally important):

31.2 The body map

One week of scans, recorded.

After each daily scan, log the strongest finding. Blank and numb count as findings.

Day	Most notable zone	Sensation (or numb/skipped)	Any feeling attached?

31.3 Read the map

What the week's data says.

Bodies are consistent: the same zones brace, the same zones vanish. Yours is telling you its history and its early-warning channel.

My body's repeating pattern this week:

The zone most likely to signal trouble EARLY (my body's smoke alarm):

One kindness the braced zones might respond to (heat, stretch, pressure, rest) that I will try:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/body-scan/

32. Sleep After Trauma: A Worksheet

Trauma and sleep are natural enemies: sleep requires standing down the guard, and the guard remembers why it was hired. So the hypervigilant scan the dark, the flooded replay the day, and 3am becomes an interrogation room. Standard sleep hygiene ignores all of this. This sheet works WITH the guard — a downshift runway it can trust, a plan for the 3am wake, and a protocol for nightmares.

Who this is for: Anyone who cannot fall asleep, cannot stay asleep, or wakes at 3am to a mind already mid-prosecution — and whose "tired but wired" has outlasted every herbal tea.

You cannot force a threat-primed system to sleep; you can make sleep look progressively less like an ambush. Build the runway in section 1 and fly it nightly for two weeks before judging it — consistency is the active ingredient. The 3am plan in section 2 gets written NOW and placed by the bed, because 3am-you cannot design anything.

32.1 The downshift runway

Sixty minutes of descending inputs, same order nightly.

The guard stands down for patterns, not commands. Design three descending stages — e.g., 60 min out: screens off, lights low, tomorrow's worries parked on paper; 30 min: warm shower, stretch, quiet; 10 min: bed, one boring book, long exhales. Same sequence every night until it becomes the signal.

My 60-minute stage:

My 30-minute stage:

My final 10 minutes:

The worry-parking ritual (where tomorrow's list physically goes):

32.2 The 3am protocol

Pre-written instructions for the night wake.

Rules that work: no clock-checking (the maths is fuel), no phone, no problem-solving — 3am thoughts get a parking note, not a hearing. If awake past ~20 felt minutes, get up, sit somewhere dim and warm with something profoundly boring, return when heavy. Write your version and put it bedside.

My protocol card, in my own words:

The line for the prosecuting thoughts ("noted — court reconvenes at 10am, not now"):

My dim boring place and activity:

32.3 Nightmare and night-log

Track the nights; take the charge out of the bad ones.

After a nightmare: light on, feet to floor, name where and when you are, cold water, and — if it recurs — write the dream in past tense daytime, then write it again with a changed ending (the core of a clinically used technique called imagery rehearsal). Log the week.

Night	Fell asleep (easy/hard)	Wakes	3am protocol used?	Dream notes

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/sleep-after-trauma/

33. Self-Compassion Worksheet (for People Who Find It Suspicious)

For many survivors, self-compassion sounds like letting your guard down at best and letting yourself off at worst — the inner critic, after all, believes it is the only thing standing between you and disaster. This sheet does not ask you to feel warm. It asks you to run compassion as a protocol — specific words, specific moments — and keep receipts on the results, because for sceptics the feeling follows the evidence, never the other way round.

Who this is for: Anyone whose inner voice would be reported to HR if it were a manager, and who suspects kindness toward themselves would cause immediate moral collapse.

Skip nothing in section 1 — understanding what the critic is FOR is what makes replacing it thinkable. The protocol in section 2 will feel fake at first; fake is expected and irrelevant, the way physiotherapy feels awkward and works anyway. Run it at the next three stumbles and let section 3's receipts decide.

33.1 Interview the critic

Find the job it thinks it's doing.

Critics this harsh are always protecting something. Establish what.

Write one sentence the critic actually says, verbatim, unlauded:

Whose voice or method does that resemble, honestly?

What does the critic believe would happen if it went quiet? (Laziness? Repeating the past? Becoming like someone?)

What has its regime actually cost (count: risks untaken, rest unrested, joy pre-punished):

33.2 The stumble protocol

Three moves at the moment of failure, scripted now.

When you next fail, drop a ball, or get criticised: (1) NAME — "this is a hard moment" (obvious, and it interrupts the autopilot); (2) NORMALISE — one line placing you in the species: "people fail at this; I am not uniquely defective"; (3) NEXT — what a good coach would actually say: one concrete step, zero character verdicts. Write yours.

My NAME line:

My NORMALISE line:

My NEXT-step template ("the next right move is usually ____"):

Where this card lives until it's memorised:

33.3 The receipts ledger

Critic vs protocol: measured results.

For two weeks, after each stumble note which voice ran the response and what followed in the next hour — recovery speed, next action taken, how you treated the nearest human. This is the experiment; let it rule.

Stumble	Critic or protocol?	Next hour: what I did	Recovery speed 0-10

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/self-compassion/

34. Values After Trauma: A Worksheet

Trauma recovery can quietly become a full-time job of NOT: not triggered, not spiralling, not repeating patterns — until one day the symptoms are quieter and the life is still empty, because managing wounds was the only plan. This sheet is the other half of recovery: finding what you actually value (as opposed to what survival installed), and beginning to steer by it, even while healing continues.

Who this is for: Anyone who can describe their trauma responses fluently but goes quiet at the question "so what do you want your life to be about?"

A value is a direction (honesty, making things, protecting the vulnerable), not a finish line. The trauma-specific trap is that adaptations impersonate values: "independence" that is really fear of needing anyone, "achievement" that is really outrunning shame, "peace" that is really avoidance. Section 1's test tells them apart: a chosen value feels expansive to move toward; an adaptation mostly feels like relief from threat.

34.1 Sort values from adaptations

Audit your current operating principles.

List what currently drives your big choices, then test each: expansion or threat-relief?

What drives me	Toward something, or away from threat?	Would I keep this if fully healed?

34.2 Excavate the interrupted life

What was growing before survival took over.

Trauma interrupts trajectories. Some are worth resuming; some just point at the value underneath them.

What did I love doing before it all became about coping? (Go as far back as needed.)

What do I envy in others? (Envy is a value wearing a disguise.)

When did I last lose track of time in a good way — and what value was I living in that moment?

If safety were guaranteed for a year, what would I start?

34.3 One values-led step

Steer by a value for one week, measurably.

Choose ONE value from your sorting. Define its smallest visible expression this week — an action a camera could record. Symptoms are allowed to come along; the step happens WITH the anxiety, not after it resolves.

My chosen value, in one word or phrase:

This week's camera-visible step:

What the trauma responses said about it, and what I did anyway (fill in after):

Did the step feel expansive, threat-relieving, or both? What does that tell me?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/values-after-trauma/

35. Felt Safety Worksheet

There is safety on paper — the doors are locked, the danger is years gone — and there is FELT safety, the body-level verdict that decides whether you can actually rest. Trauma splits the two: you can be perfectly safe and feel hunted. Felt safety cannot be argued into existence, but it can be cultivated — through specific people, places, postures and signals your body already half-trusts. This sheet finds your existing anchors and deliberately multiplies them.

Who this is for: Anyone told "you're safe now" more times than it has ever once worked — and who wants the version of safety their shoulders actually believe.

Section 1 hunts your history for moments the guard actually lowered — they exist, however brief. Section 2 extracts the common ingredients. Section 3 schedules more contact with them, on purpose, which is the whole intervention: felt safety grows by dosage, not decision.

35.1 The anchor hunt

Find when your body has actually stood down.

Think in moments, not eras: the friend's kitchen, the library corner, driving alone at night, the specific armchair, after swimming, with the dog.

Three moments (recent or old) when my shoulders genuinely dropped:

The people around whom my breathing deepens (list them — it may be short; short is fine):

Places where my back can face the room:

Non-human anchors (animals, water, music, weight, darkness or light):

35.2 Extract the ingredients

What your anchors share.

Common ingredients: predictability, exits visible, low social demand, warmth, rhythm, being unobserved, a competent presence. Find YOUR recipe.

Reading my anchors, the ingredients my body seems to require are:

The ingredient most missing from my daily life:

One current situation that would transform if a single ingredient were added (a lamp, a seat swap, a door position, one person):

35.3 The dosage plan

Engineer anchor-contact into an ordinary week.

Three scheduled doses this week — one place, one person (or animal), one practice — each at least fifteen minutes, treated as seriously as medication, because functionally that is what they are.

Dose 1 (place) — where and when:

Dose 2 (person/creature) — who and when:

Dose 3 (practice) — what and when:

After the week: which dose reached me most, and what did it change about the days around it?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/felt-safety/

36. Trauma Journal Prompts: 40 Questions

Journaling about trauma helps — and it can also harm, when writing turns into reliving. The difference is staging and dose. These forty prompts are ordered in four stages, from stabilising (safe on any day) to meaning-making (for steadier seasons), with the rule that you earn depth by tolerating shallowness first. Nobody gets a prize for starting at prompt 31.

Who this is for: Anyone who wants to write about what happened and what it left — with guardrails that respect how easily this particular writing floods.

Ten minutes per sitting, timer on. Start every sitting with a stage-one prompt regardless of experience. Move to a deeper stage only if the previous sitting left you within range of okay for the rest of the day. After any deep entry, close with the return ritual: name the room, the date, and one thing planned for tomorrow. If an entry hijacks the rest of your day, drop back a stage for a week — that is skill, not retreat.

36.1 Stage 1 — Steadying (prompts for any day)

Present-tense, resourcing, zero excavation.

These build the platform the rest stands on.

Three things that went un-terribly today, and my part in each:

The person, place or routine currently keeping me most stitched together:

What does my body need this week that it has been asking for quietly?

Write about something ordinary I did today as if describing a person I respect.

36.2 Stage 2 — Patterns (the trauma's present tense)

How the past runs today, without visiting the past.

Observation of now; history stays parked.

The situation this week where my reaction was bigger than the moment deserved:

Which of the four responses (fight/flight/freeze/fawn) ran my week, and through what disguise?

What do I do when someone gets too close? Trace last time, step by step:

What am I currently pretending not to know?

36.3 Stage 3 — History (dosed, past tense, one scene)

The past, visited deliberately and briefly.

One scene per sitting, written in PAST tense (tense matters — past tense keeps it a memory), mid-intensity, never the worst thing first.

A moment I adapted rather than broke — what I did to survive it, described with respect:

Something I needed to hear back then. Write it now, addressed to then-me:

What I lost that nobody ever acknowledged as a loss:

A scene I keep returning to — narrated once, past tense, then closed with the return ritual:

36.4 Stage 4 — Meaning (for steadier seasons)

Integration: what it made, what you'll make of it.

These assume stage 1-3 capacity. They are about authorship, not silver linings.

What my survival built in me that I would keep even if I could erase the cause:

The parts of my story where I have stopped being the narrator and started being the author:

What do I know about pain that makes me useful to other people?

Write the paragraph of my story that hasn't happened yet.

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/journal-prompts/

37. Trauma Response Worksheet for Teens

When stress hits hard enough, everyone's brain picks a survival move: some people get loud (fight), some get gone (flight), some go blank (freeze), some go agreeable (fawn). None of them are character flaws — they are settings your nervous system chose because at some point they worked. This sheet helps you spot your setting. It is yours; nothing here gets handed in, graded, or shown to anyone unless you decide.

Who this is for: Teenagers who keep hearing "why are you like this?" — from adults or from the voice in their own head — and want an actual answer.

Rule 1: answer with what you actually do, not what sounds best. Rule 2: skip anything that feels like too much — skipping is allowed, forcing is not. If you're filling this in and something heavy comes up, that is a sign to talk to someone you trust (a parent, school counsellor, or another solid adult), not a sign to push through alone.

37.1 Find your mode

What actually happens when things get too much.

Think of the last time you were seriously stressed — a fight at home, a pile-up at school, drama that wouldn't stop.

When it kicked off, the first thing I did was: (argued back / left or zoned into my phone / went blank and quiet / smoothed it over and said sorry)

Afterwards, on my own, I felt:

The mode I think I default to, and my second one:

One place I use it that makes sense (it protects me), and one place it backfires:

37.2 The 90-second reset

Something to actually do mid-overwhelm.

Pick two, try them this week when things spike, rate them out of 10: cold water on your face; name 5 things you can see and 4 you can hear; push your feet into the floor hard for 30 seconds; breathe out slower than you breathe in, 6 times; blast one specific song and move.

Reset 1 I tried, when, and its score /10:

Reset 2 I tried, when, and its score /10:

The one going on my phone lockscreen:

37.3 Your people map

Who actually helps, for what.

Different people are good for different things. Knowing the map beats testing it mid-crisis.

The person I can vent to who doesn't make it about them:

The adult I'd actually tell if something was properly wrong:

The friend who calms me down vs the friend who winds me up (be honest):

What I'd want someone to DO when I'm in my mode (not fix me — what actually helps: space? company? distraction? food?):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/for-teens/

38. Journal Prompts for Teens: 20 Questions

Journaling has a reputation problem — it sounds like something adults recommend instead of actually helping. Here is the honest case: writing things down moves them from the 3am brain-loop into words, where they get smaller and more handleable. That's it. That's the whole technology. These twenty prompts run shallow to deep; you control the depth, and answers can be one line.

Who this is for: Teens carrying more than their friends know about, who think better in private than out loud.

Keep it somewhere actually private (notes app with a passcode counts). One prompt at a time, any order within a level, five to ten minutes. Levels are a ladder: stay on level 1 as long as you want, and if a level-3 prompt leaves you heavier instead of lighter, go back down a level — and consider saying some of it to a real human, which is the upgrade this whole exercise points toward.

38.1 Level 1 — Surface (safe on any day)

Low-stakes, still real.

One-line answers are legitimate.

Today, out of 10, was a ____ because:

The thing currently taking up the most space in my head:

A song/show/game that gets how I feel better than people do, and why:

If my mood this week were weather, it would be:

38.2 Level 2 — Under the surface

The patterns and the people.

Getting closer to the real stuff.

The version of me at school vs the version at home vs the version alone — which is realest?

What I wish one specific person understood without me having to explain it:

When everything gets loud, I usually _____, and what that does for me is:

The thing I keep almost saying to someone:

38.3 Level 3 — The deep end (steadier days only)

The heavy stuff, at your pace.

Skip freely. Past tense helps. One prompt per sitting down here.

Something that happened that I didn't deserve — said plainly, once:

What I had to figure out alone that someone should have helped me with:

A letter to me-from-two-years-ago (they could use one):

What I want my life to look like when I have more say over it — specifics allowed:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/teen-journal-prompts/

39. Grounding Techniques for Teens

Grounding is the skill of getting back into your body and the actual room when your head has left the building — panic rising in class, rage at home, the 2am spiral. The catch: a technique only works if you can actually use it where you are, and "close your eyes and breathe deeply" is not happening in the middle of maths. This sheet sorts techniques by situation and lets you test-drive them before you need them.

Who this is for: Teens whose overwhelm shows up at school, at home, and at night — three places needing three different levels of stealth.

Try each technique once on a NORMAL day this week and score it out of 10. Under real overwhelm you will not remember a list — you will remember the one or two you already rehearsed. That is why the pocket card at the end only has three lines.

39.1 Stealth mode (usable mid-class)

Nobody can tell you're doing anything.

Score each /10 after one real try.

Feet flat, press them into the floor like you're leaving footprints in concrete, 30 seconds. Score:

Find 5 things in the room of one colour, then 4 of another. Score:

Press your thumb hard into the palm of your other hand and trace circles. Score:

Breathe in for 4, out for 6, counting on your fingers under the desk. Score:

39.2 Home mode (more options, more privacy)

When you can actually leave the room.

Bigger inputs for bigger feelings.

Cold water on face and wrists (or hold something frozen). Score:

One song, played loud, moving however — the point is motion, not dancing well. Score:

Shower, alternating warmer and cooler at the end. Score:

Go outside and walk to a fixed point and back, naming what you pass. Score:

39.3 The 2am protocol + pocket card

For the spiral, and the final card.

At 2am: sit UP (spirals feed on lying in the dark), lamp on, name out loud where you are and the actual date, then one stealth technique until your shoulders drop, then something boring until sleepy — no phone, the feed feeds it.

My 2am order-of-operations, in my own words:

MY POCKET CARD — top technique for school / for home / for 2am (three lines, then photograph it):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/grounding-for-teens/

40. Trauma Responses in Couples: A Worksheet for Two

Most recurring couple-fights are not about the dishwasher — they are two nervous systems triggering each other in a loop: one partner's fight meets the other's freeze, one's flight meets the other's fawn-then-resent. The loop, not either person, is the problem. This sheet is filled in by both of you — some parts separately, then compared — to map YOUR loop and install one circuit-breaker.

Who this is for: Couples having the same fight in the same shape for years, where both people are somehow losing.

Do this on a calm day — never mid-conflict or in its smoking aftermath. Sections 1 and 2 are done SEPARATELY first, then swapped and discussed with one rule: curiosity only, no cross-examination ("that's not what you do!" is banned). If discussing the loop reliably restarts the loop, that is meaningful data and a strong sign this mapping belongs in a couples therapist's room — which is a genuinely good use of it.

40.1 Your own side of the loop (fill in separately)

Each partner maps their own response honestly.

Own your side first — the worksheet only works in that order.

When conflict starts between us, what I typically do first (raise volume / go quiet / leave / smooth over):

What I'm usually protecting myself from in that moment (being controlled? abandoned? attacked? engulfed?):

What my move probably looks like from my partner's side, honestly:

The earliest sign IN MY BODY that I'm starting my move:

40.2 The loop, drawn together (after swapping)

Combine both sides into the actual sequence.

Fill the table as a chain: trigger → partner A's move → what that triggers in B → B's move → what that triggers in A. Most loops complete in 3-5 steps and then repeat. Name your loop something unserious ("the spiral", "doom-loop v2") — naming it makes it a shared enemy instead of each other.

Step	Who	The move	What it triggers in the other

Our loop's name, and which step is the cheapest place to interrupt it:

40.3 The pause protocol

One agreed circuit-breaker, with a return time.

The three parts that make pauses work: an agreed SIGNAL either can use without penalty ("yellow", a hand sign); a fixed RETURN TIME (20-45 minutes — pauses without return times are abandonment to an anxious system and escape to an avoidant one); and a RULE for the gap (separate rooms, no drafting comebacks, each does their own settling).

Our signal:

Our return time, and who restarts the conversation:

What each of us will actually do during the pause (list per person):

After its first real use — what worked, what needs adjusting:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/couples/

41. Couples Trigger Map

Living with someone means eventually standing on every tripwire they have — usually blind. This worksheet turns the minefield into a map: each of you documents your own triggers, your tells, and crucially your CARE INSTRUCTIONS — what actually helps when you're triggered, and what pours petrol. Exchanged, these two pages prevent more midnight fights than most communication techniques.

Who this is for: Couples where at least one partner carries real history, and both are tired of finding the tripwires by detonation.

Each partner fills in their own map — you are the only authority on your triggers, and guessing your partner's is both banned and beside the point. Exchange pages on a calm evening and walk each other through them. Two rules for the exchange: triggers explain reactions, they do not excuse behaviour (a trigger is not a permission slip); and a shared trigger-map is a gift, never ammunition — quoting someone's map at them mid-argument ("classic, that's your abandonment thing") is the one way to guarantee it never gets updated again.

41.1 My triggers, documented

The tripwires your partner needs to know exist.

Include the origin only where you want to — "old wound, long story" is a complete entry.

Trigger (be specific)	What it sets off in me	Intensity 0-10	Backstory shared? (y/n/partly)

41.2 My tells

How my partner can see it starting.

Your triggered state has an outside view your partner learns to read — help them read it earlier.

How my voice/face/body changes in the first minute (they may know this better — ask):

What I typically SAY when triggered that I don't fully mean:

The difference between my ordinary bad mood and my triggered state (so they stop mixing them up):

41.3 My care instructions

What helps, what harms — in writing.

The most valuable section. Triggered-you cannot explain what it needs; calm-you writes the manual now.

DO: (space first then check on me? stay close but quiet? touch or no touch? water? humour or absolutely no humour?)

DON'T: (the well-meant moves that make it worse — "calm down", logic, fixing, following me):

The line that lands ("you're safe, I'm not going anywhere" / "take your time, no rush" — write your actual line):

How to know I'm coming back, and what I need then (usually: no immediate debrief):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/couples-triggers/

42. Parenting With a Trauma Response: A Worksheet

The cruellest trick of a trauma response is that children press its buttons better than anyone — the noise, the defiance, the neediness, the door-slam — and then absorb whatever fires. But here is what the research and the clinics keep finding: children do not need untriggerable parents. They need parents who notice, recover, and repair. This sheet trains exactly those three, and none of them require you to be healed first.

Who this is for: Parents who hear their own parent's voice come out of their mouth — or feel themselves shut down, flee into busyness, or appease their own child — and want the buck to stop here.

This work runs on self-honesty, which collapses instantly under self-attack — so the ground rule: every pattern you spot here is evidence you are the cycle-breaking generation, not proof you have failed. The parent who worries about passing it on is already the anomaly in the chain. Fill in section 1 over a normal week; build section 2 the same day you read it; use section 3 forever.

42.1 Where your pattern meets your parenting

One honest week of noticing.

Log the moments your child triggered your response — without editing for shame.

Day	What my child did	What fired in me	What I did

End of week — my most common trigger-moment, and which response fires (fight: snap/loom; flight: phone/busyness/leave; freeze: glaze over, go through motions; fawn: cave in, over-accommodate, need them happy):

42.2 The mid-trigger fallback

A pre-decided move for the moment itself.

Design your fallback for the triggered moment: a physical anchor (hand on the counter, one slow exhale), a holding line said to the child ("I need a minute, then we'll sort this out" — it models regulation instead of transmitting dysregulation), and an exit-with-supervision plan for the big ones. Write it; rehearse it out loud once.

My physical anchor:

My holding line, word for word:

For the big surges — where the child safely is while I take 90 seconds, and what I do in them:

42.3 Child-sized repair

The skill that changes everything downstream.

Repair after you snap/vanish/cave teaches the child the most protective lesson available: ruptures get fixed, feelings are speakable, adults own their behaviour. Child-sized means: short, concrete, no self-flagellating monologue (which makes them caretake you), no "but you made me". Shape: name it, own it, reconnect. "I shouted. That wasn't okay — my frustration is mine to handle. You're not in trouble for my shout. Come here."

A recent rupture that could still use repair:

My repair script for it, child-sized:

What happened when I delivered it (their face, the ten minutes after):

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/parenting/

43. The Four Trauma Responses: A Client Handout

This page is written to be printed and handed to a client — plain language, no jargon, nothing diagnostic. Therapists, counsellors, support workers and students are welcome to use it freely in sessions and groups. Clients who found it themselves: this is the same explanation a therapist might talk you through, and it stands alone.

Who this is for: Therapists and counsellors who want a clean psychoeducation sheet for session use — and clients who want the plain-language version of the 4F model.

The handout below deliberately frames all four responses as intelligent adaptations rather than pathologies, uses everyday behavioural examples rather than clinical criteria, and ends with normalising questions rather than a screener — clients tend to self-locate within minutes and the questions structure that conversation. Print freely; the reflection prompts at the end work as between-session homework.

43.1 When stress gets big enough, your body picks a strategy

The idea in four sentences.

Under serious threat, brains stop deliberating and deploy a survival strategy automatically. There are four main ones: FIGHT (meet the threat with force — arguing, controlling, attacking first), FLIGHT (get away — literally leaving, or escaping into busyness, work, planning), FREEZE (go still — shutting down, going blank, numb, unable to start things), and FAWN (make the threat like you — appeasing, people-pleasing, abandoning your needs to keep others calm). Everyone has all four available; most people default to one or two. The default was set by what WORKED in the environments you had to survive — which is why it is an adaptation, not a defect.

Reading the four, my likely default is _____ and my backup is _____.

43.2 How the four look in ordinary life

Not in emergencies — on a Tuesday.

FIGHT on a Tuesday: snapping at small provocations, needing to win discussions, feedback landing as attack. FLIGHT: a calendar with no gaps, leaving relationships/jobs at the getting-real point, anxiety when still. FREEZE: deadlines watched from inside a fog, decisions that won't decide, hours lost to scrolling, "lazy" as a self-description. FAWN: yes before checking, apologising constantly, no opinions in the room, exhaustion from managing everyone's moods. The responses also stack — many people fawn until it fails, then fight or shut down.

One place my default showed up this week:

What it was protecting me from (first guess is usually right):

43.3 What helps (the honest version)

The change process, briefly and truthfully.

These patterns soften through, roughly: recognising your response IN the moment (which lags recognising it afterwards by weeks — normal), settling the body enough to widen your options (grounding, breath, movement — skills, so they need practice while calm), and then small repeated experiments in doing the not-default thing at low stakes. Insight starts the process; repetition does the work. A therapist accelerates all three stages, which

may be where you are sitting right now.

The stage I'm honestly at with my pattern (noticing after / noticing during / sometimes choosing differently):

One low-stakes place I could experiment with a different move this week:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/therapist-handout/

44. Trauma Response Discussion Questions for Groups

Groups metabolise trauma differently than solo work — hearing your pattern described by a stranger's mouth de-shames it faster than any private insight. But group discussion of trauma needs architecture: questions sequenced from safe to deep, and norms that keep sharing chosen rather than extracted. This sheet provides both, for peer support groups, therapy groups, and book clubs reading in this territory.

Who this is for: Facilitators, peer-group organisers and book clubs who want ready-made discussion structure that respects the material's weight.

Open every session by restating the norms: sharing is invited, never required ("pass" is a complete sentence); speak from your own experience, no advice unless requested; what is said here stays here; and depth is personal — nobody matches anyone else's disclosure level. Use rounds 1-2 for early sessions or new members; round 3 only in established groups with working trust. One question can fill an entire meeting — coverage is not the goal.

44.1 Round 1 — The model, at arm's length

Discussing the ideas before the selves.

These let people participate fully while revealing only what they choose.

Which of the four responses is most misunderstood by the general public, and what does the misunderstanding cost people?

Fight and flight get called "reactive" while freeze and fawn get called "passive" — is that framing fair? What does it miss?

Where do you see the four responses rewarded or punished differently (workplaces, families, cultures, genders)?

What did you believe about your own stress behaviour before you had this vocabulary for it?

44.2 Round 2 — The patterns, personally

Own-experience territory, still bounded.

Invite examples at "Tuesday intensity", not worst-moment intensity.

What is your default response's most respectable disguise — the version of it people praise you for?

Describe the moment you first recognised your pattern operating in real time. What made recognition possible that day?

What does your response protect, and what does it cost? Which side of that ledger do you usually see?

Who in your life gets your most triggered self, and who gets your most regulated self? What decides?

44.3 Round 3 — The deeper water (established groups)

For trust that has been built and tested.

Facilitator opts in explicitly; remind the group that pass remains available at any depth.

What did your response originally protect you from — and what happens in you when you say that out loud here?

What would you have to grieve to lay the pattern down?

Where has your healing been visible to this group in ways it might not be visible to you?

What do you know now that you would carry back to the person you were before?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/group-discussion-questions/

45. Therapy Session Prep Worksheet

The most expensive minutes in therapy are the first ten spent reconstructing the week — and the most expensive silence is the important thing that stayed unsaid for the fourth session running. This sheet is the fix: five minutes before each session to capture what actually matters, one honest line about what you are avoiding, and three minutes afterwards to keep what the session produced. Therapists can spot a prepared client from the doorway; the work simply goes deeper, faster.

Who this is for: Anyone in (or starting) therapy who keeps discovering the real topic in the car home.

Before-section: the evening before or morning of, five minutes, bullet points not essays. The avoidance line (section 2) is the highest-value line on the sheet — you do not have to bring the avoided thing, but naming to YOURSELF that you are steering around it changes the steering. After-section: within an hour of the session, before life overwrites it.

45.1 Before: this week's real material

What actually happened in you since last time.

Scan the week for signal, not summary.

The moment this week I most want to understand (not necessarily the worst one):

Where my trauma response fired, and how far it got before I noticed:

What I felt on the way TO noticing it (the underneath feeling):

Anything from last session that kept working on me during the week:

45.2 Before: the honest layer

The line that changes the session.

Answer privately; bring what you choose.

The thing I keep NOT bringing to therapy, and this week's version of the reason:

What I want my therapist to ask me about, because I can't raise it cold:

If this session could do one thing for me, it would be:

45.3 After: keep what it made

Three minutes to stop the session evaporating.

Sessions are volatile memory; writing is storage.

The sentence from today (mine or theirs) that I want to keep:

What shifted, even 2% — or what stayed stuck, which is equally worth recording:

The thing to try/notice before next time:

Next session, I want to come back to:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/therapy-session-prep/

46. Childhood Trauma Worksheet for Adults

Adults carrying childhood trauma are running an operating system written by a child under fire — rules like "need nothing", "watch everyone", "be good or be gone" that were brilliant then and expensive now. This worksheet works the seam between then and now: not an excavation of everything that happened, but a targeted look at what was LEARNED, where it still runs, and what a resourced adult might re-decide.

Who this is for: Adults who know their childhood explains their present but get lost (or flooded) trying to work with that knowledge directly.

Three rules. Work at "documentary" distance — you are reviewing footage, not re-entering the house; if you notice yourself IN the scene (present tense, body flooding), stop and ground before continuing. Twenty minutes per sitting, maximum. And choose your level: this sheet works a mid-weight memory or era, never the worst material — the worst material is therapy territory, where it responds well to methods a worksheet cannot provide.

46.1 The curriculum

What that childhood actually taught.

Every survived childhood leaves a curriculum — the rules a child concluded about safety, love, needs, and themselves. Extract yours.

To stay safe in that house, a child had to:

Love/approval was available on these conditions:

What happened to needs when they were expressed?

The conclusion I reached about myself back then, in the words I'd have used:

46.2 The curriculum, still running

Where each old rule operates today.

Take the rules from above and find their current addresses.

The old rule	Where it runs now (work/love/friendship)	What it costs today	Still needed? (where, honestly)

46.3 The re-decision

One rule, formally reviewed by the adult.

Pick the rule with the worst cost/benefit today. The child who wrote it had no power, no exits, no allies; you have some of each. Write the review like the adult you are — and expect the old rule to keep firing anyway for a while. Re-decisions are directions, not deletions.

The rule under review, and what it protected then:

What I have now that the rule's author didn't (name your actual resources — money, exits, people, size, rights):

My amended rule ("I still take care around X, AND I can now..."):

The smallest act this week that lives by the amendment:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/childhood-trauma/

47. Trauma Responses at Work: A Worksheet

Workplaces do not just tolerate trauma responses — they promote them. Fight becomes "driven leadership", flight becomes "incredible work ethic", freeze hides inside "thorough", and fawn gets called "such a team player". The pattern draws a salary right up until it caps the career, burns the person out, or both. This sheet identifies your professional disguise, prices it honestly, and installs interventions that fit inside a workday.

Who this is for: Anyone whose performance review praises the exact thing that is eating them.

Fill in sections 1 and 2 about your typical workweek, not your worst one. Section 3's interventions are designed to be invisible to colleagues — no announcements required. One honest caveat threaded through: sometimes the workplace itself is genuinely unsafe (bullying, exploitation), and a threat response to a real threat is not a pattern to fix. Section 2's last prompt is where that distinction gets made.

47.1 Your professional disguise

Which response is on your payroll, and as what.

FIGHT at work: turf wars, savage code-review/feedback, needing to win meetings, "high standards" that are really attacks. FLIGHT: unable to stop, first in last out, panic at empty calendar, job-hopping at the 18-month itch. FREEZE: paralysis on the big deliverable, meetings spent behind glass, "still polishing" as avoidance. FAWN: unable to invoice/negotiate/say no, absorbing everyone's overflow, agreeing in meetings then seething.

My dominant work-mode, and the compliment it usually receives:

The situation that most reliably activates it (deadlines? feedback? conflict? visibility? authority figures?):

Which colleague/boss stands in for the original threat, honestly:

47.2 The career invoice

What the disguise costs and earns.

Patterns persist at work because they pay something. Price both sides.

What my pattern has EARNED me (promotions, reputation, safety from what?):

What it has COST me (the raise unasked, the credit unclaimed, the boundary unset, the evenings, the health):

The career move I keep not making because the pattern votes against it:

Reality check — is my workplace responding to me, or am I responding to my workplace? (What would a sane outsider call this environment?)

47.3 Workday-compatible interventions

Three installs, none visible from the next desk.

Pick per your mode. FIGHT: the 12-hour rule on heated replies; ask one genuine question before disagreeing.

FLIGHT: hard stop time 3 days/week, calendar-blocked "nothing" slots defended like meetings. FREEZE:

two-minute starts on the avoided deliverable; camera-on early in meetings to stay present. FAWN: "let me check my capacity and confirm tomorrow" as the default answer; one deliberate disagreement per week, minuted.

My three interventions, chosen and scheduled:

Week 1 log — which fired, which got skipped, what happened:

The one I'm keeping permanently:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/workplace/

48. Trauma Response Cheat Sheet: All Four Types

Everything on one page, by design: the four responses, how each looks on an ordinary day, what tends to set each off, and what helps — in the moment and over time. Print it for the fridge, the journal, the therapy folder, or the friend who keeps asking what fawning means.

Who this is for: Anyone who wants the whole model at a glance — for themselves, a partner, a client, or the fridge door.

As a reference: check which column lights up on a bad day — that is your entry point into the fuller worksheets.

As a teaching tool: the fastest way to explain the model to someone who lives with you. As a tracker's

companion: the daily check-in sheet pairs with this one, using the same four columns.

48.1 FIGHT — meet the threat with force

The confronter.

Tuesday signs: snapping, needing to win, feedback lands as attack, control of plans/people, jaw and fists.

Common triggers: disrespect, injustice, being controlled or dismissed. In the moment: exit ramp before the point of no return — leave with a sentence, cold water, long exhales. Long game: anger iceberg work (what's under it), repair skills, the escalation ladder.

Sounds most like: me / partner / parent / colleague (circle) — notes:

48.2 FLIGHT — get away from the threat

The escaper.

Tuesday signs: no-gap calendar, escape fantasies, leaving things at the getting-real point, anxiety in stillness.

Common triggers: feeling trapped, conflict brewing, empty time. In the moment: five-minute stay — feet down, exhale long, let the urge crest. Long game: busyness audit, graded staying practice, learning which exits are wisdom and which are pattern.

Sounds most like: me / partner / parent / colleague — notes:

48.3 FREEZE — go still until it passes

The statue.

Tuesday signs: fog, task paralysis, hours lost to scrolling, numb more than sad, "lazy" as self-description.

Common triggers: too-big demands, evaluation, conflict with no exit. In the moment: body first — push a wall, cold water, stamp feet — then one tiny task. Long game: thaw protocol, early fog signals, shrinking demands below the threat line.

Sounds most like: me / partner / parent / colleague — notes:

48.4 FAWN — make the threat like you

The appeaser.

Tuesday signs: yes before checking, constant sorry, no stated opinions, managing everyone's moods,

exhaustion. Common triggers: anyone's displeasure, conflict anywhere nearby, being asked for anything. In the moment: "let me check and get back to you" — the universal pause. Long game: appeasement log, wants inventory, scripted small nos, boundaries that hold.

Sounds most like: me / partner / parent / colleague — notes:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/cheat-sheet/

49. Trauma Response Signs Checklist

Forty signs, four columns, one pen. Tick what genuinely describes you over the last six months — not your worst week, not your best story about yourself — then count each column. The shape that emerges (one tall column, or two, or a spread) tells you where to start reading and which worksheet to pick up first. This is a mirror, not a diagnosis.

Who this is for: Anyone who wants a quick, honest read on their pattern before committing to the deeper worksheets — or something concrete to bring to a first therapy session.

Tick only what is actually true, and beware the two classic distortions: under-ticking the fawn column because the signs sound "just polite", and under-ticking freeze because the signs get filed under "lazy" (they are not laziness — that mislabel is itself on the list). Count per column at the end. Highest column = likely primary; second = your backup. Ten ticks in one column means that worksheet is your obvious next stop.

49.1 Column 1 — Fight signs

Tick what fits.

Score honestly; intensity varies, pattern is what counts.

■ Small provocations get big reactions out of me

■ I need to win arguments, even trivial ones

■ Feedback feels like attack before it feels like information

■ I've been told I'm intimidating when I thought I was just direct

■ Criticising others relieves some pressure in me

■ My jaw, shoulders or fists are often clenched

■ Apologising first feels like losing

■ People walk on eggshells around my moods

■ I regret the intensity, not usually the point

■ Control feels like safety — COLUMN 1 TOTAL:

49.2 Column 2 — Flight signs

Tick what fits.

Include the respectable versions.

■ My calendar has no gaps, by my own hand

■ Stillness makes me anxious, not rested

■ I fantasise about disappearing and starting over

■ I leave — jobs, relationships, rooms — when things get heavy

■ I over-plan for every contingency

■ Relaxing feels like falling behind

■ I keep a mental exit route in most situations

■ Busyness is my answer to bad feelings

■ I start many things and abandon them at the hard part

■ Empty evenings get filled within minutes — COLUMN 2 TOTAL:

49.3 Column 3 — Freeze signs

Tick what fits.

Remember: these are threat responses, not character flaws.

■ Under pressure my mind goes blank

■ Important tasks paralyse me while trivial ones don't

■ I lose hours to scrolling or staring

■ "Numb" describes me more often than "sad"

■ Decisions stall for weeks in my head

■ I watch deadlines pass from inside a fog

■ In conflict I go quiet and distant, not by choice

■ People read my shutdown as not caring

■ Sound sometimes goes far away when I'm stressed

■ I call myself lazy for things that are actually paralysis — COLUMN 3 TOTAL:

49.4 Column 4 — Fawn signs

Tick what fits.

The "just being nice" column. Tick for reflex, not for chosen kindness.

■ I say yes before checking whether I want to

■ I apologise when I've done nothing wrong

■ I struggle to answer "what do you want?"

■ Other people's moods feel like my responsibility

■ I agree out loud with things I disagree with

■ Conflict anywhere near me feels dangerous

■ I monitor faces and tones constantly

■ My opinions go quiet around strong personalities

■ Resentment builds where my nos should have been

■ Being needed feels safer than being known — COLUMN 4 TOTAL:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/signs-checklist/

50. Am I in Survival Mode? A Scored Self-Check

Survival mode is functioning without living: everything urgent gets done, nothing meaningful does, and you cannot remember your last genuinely unclenched hour. It creeps in so gradually that most people only recognise it in hindsight. This check makes it visible in the present: fifteen statements about the last month, scored by hand, with an honest reading of the result and the first three moves for wherever you land.

Who this is for: Anyone functioning impressively while feeling like a browser with 400 tabs open — and wondering when "temporarily stretched" quietly became the permanent settings.

Rate each statement 1 (rarely true) to 5 (constantly true) for the LAST FOUR WEEKS — survival mode is a season, not a bad afternoon. Add as you go. Bands at the end. One framing note: a high score is not a verdict on you; it is a reading of the load your system has been carrying, some of which may be entirely proportionate to your actual circumstances.

50.1 Body and energy (statements 1-5)

The physical ledger.

Score 1-5 each.

I wake tired regardless of hours slept. (1-5)

My shoulders/jaw/gut carry tension I only notice when someone points it out. (1-5)

I run on caffeine, sugar, or sheer deadline adrenaline. (1-5)

Small illnesses keep catching me or refusing to clear. (1-5)

Rest feels physically uncomfortable when I attempt it. (1-5) — subtotal:

50.2 Mind and mood (statements 6-10)

The cognitive ledger.

Score 1-5 each.

I react to small problems as if they were emergencies. (1-5)

Concentration beyond a few minutes keeps sliding. (1-5)

I cannot remember the last thing I did purely for enjoyment. (1-5)

Everything feels urgent; nothing feels important. (1-5)

I am irritable with people who do not deserve it. (1-5) — subtotal:

50.3 Life and connection (statements 11-15), then the bands

The living ledger — and your reading.

BANDS — 15-34: stretched but cycling down normally; protect what is working. 35-54: survival mode is setting in — the three moves: reinstate one non-negotiable recovery block daily (even 20 minutes), cut one commitment this week (something WILL give; choose it before your body does), tell one person the true state of things.

55-75: entrenched survival mode — do the three moves above AND book the GP/therapist conversation; at this band the exit usually needs allies, and the fact that everything still LOOKS functional from outside is precisely why nobody has noticed you drowning.

Meaningful conversations have thinned to logistics. (1-5)

I have cancelled or ghosted things I used to love. (1-5)

The future feels like more lists rather than anything I'm moving toward. (1-5)

People who love me have said some version of "I'm worried about you". (1-5)

I keep saying "once things calm down" — and have been saying it for months. (1-5) — subtotal, and TOTAL /75:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/survival-mode-check/

51. Daily Check-In Sheet

Recovery mostly happens in the unglamorous middle of ordinary days — and the daily check-in is how you catch it happening. Two minutes in the morning (where am I starting from?), two at night (what actually happened in me today?), printed seven-to-a-page so a bad Wednesday doesn't end the practice. This is the companion sheet to every other worksheet on this site: the trackers there are projects; this is the pulse.

Who this is for: Anyone doing the deeper work who wants a daily thread through it — or anyone not ready for deeper work who wants a two-minute-a-day place to start.

If it takes five minutes, you will stop by Thursday — keep answers to single words and numbers, and let the weekly read (section 3) do the thinking. Anchor the morning check to an existing habit (with coffee, after teeth), the evening one to getting into bed. Missed days get skipped, never backfilled: the sheet records your life, not your compliance.

51.1 Morning: the departure reading

Sixty seconds before the day starts steering.

Numbers and single words only.

Body this morning (rested/wired/heavy/braced), and where:

Starting zone: above my window / in it / below it:

Today's one realistic intention (an action, not an outcome):

Load forecast — the moment most likely to poke my pattern today:

51.2 Evening: the arrival reading

Ninety seconds of honest accounting.

Same format nightly; the value is in the accumulation.

Did my response fire today? (which, where, how far it got before I noticed):

One moment I handled differently than old-me would have (tiny counts — it's the whole point):

What I needed today that I did/didn't get:

Day's regulation overall, 0-10:

51.3 The weekly read

Five minutes on Sunday with seven days of data.

This is where the two-minute entries pay off.

My week's numbers, roughly (morning zones, evening scores):

The repeating trigger this week (it repeats — find it):

The differently-handled moments, collected in one place (read them twice — this list is the recovery):

One adjustment for next week, based on the data, not on ambition:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/daily-check-in/

52. Weekly Trauma Response Tracker

Trauma responses feel random from the inside — ambushes out of clear sky. Tracked for a few weeks, they turn out to have a fingerprint: the Sunday-evening spike, the after-that-meeting shutdown, the specific person who precedes 70% of episodes. This tracker exists to lift that fingerprint. It watches all four responses at once (patterns often hunt in pairs), and it tracks the one number that most reliably improves first: how long before you noticed.

Who this is for: Anyone ready to move from "I have a pattern" to "I know exactly when, where and with whom my pattern operates".

An entry is one episode: any moment a response visibly fired (snapped, bolted, fogged, caved). Log it the same day — episode memory decays overnight. The "noticed after" column is the progress metric: two hours shrinks to twenty minutes shrinks to mid-episode, and that shrink IS the skill being built. Three-to-four weeks of sheets is when the fingerprint becomes undeniable.

52.1 The episode log

The week's firings, one line each.

Response codes: FI (fight), FL (flight), FR (freeze), FA (fawn). Blends welcome: "FA→FI" is a classic.

Day/time	Code	Trigger (best guess)	Where/who	Intensity 0-10	Noticed after...

52.2 The fingerprint read

End of week: interrogate the table.

The table knows things you don't. Ask it.

Time pattern (day of week, time of day my episodes cluster):

People pattern (who appears in the where/who column more than chance allows):

State pattern (was I tired/hungry/premenstrual/hungover/unslept before the big ones?):

My noticing gap this week, averaged — and versus last week:

52.3 One experiment for next week

Use the fingerprint on exactly one thing.

Pick the single clearest finding and design one countermeasure: pre-eat before the Sunday call, walk after THAT meeting, deploy your grounding move at first contact with the named person. One experiment, run for one week, logged on next week's sheet.

The finding I'm acting on:

The countermeasure, precisely:

Next week — did episodes around that trigger change (count, intensity, noticing gap)?

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/weekly-tracker/

53. Coping Skills Menu

Most coping-skills lists fail at the exact moment of need, because they are sorted alphabetically instead of by problem: breathing exercises sit next to "call a friend" as if a panic spike and a numb fog needed the same medicine. This menu is sorted by what the moment requires — settling DOWN, coming back UP, holding ON, reaching OUT — because the first skill of coping is diagnosis: which of the four is this moment?

Who this is for: Anyone who owns three coping lists and still freezes at "just use your coping skills" — the sorting is what was missing.

First learn the four questions: Am I too activated (need settling)? Too shut down (need activating)? In a wave that just needs surviving (need holding on)? Alone with something too big for one person (need connection)? Then test-drive skills from the right column on ordinary days and rate them — your top two per column become your personal menu card at the end. A skill rated 7+ that you have rehearsed twice beats a perfect skill you once read about.

53.1 Column 1 — Settling down (too activated)

For racing, rage, panic, wired.

Rate each you try, 0-10.

Exhale twice as long as the inhale, ten breaths. Rating:

Cold water — face, wrists, or held ice. Rating:

Walk it off outdoors, no phone, until the pace slows itself. Rating:

Muscle dump: tense everything for 10 seconds, release slowly, twice. Rating:

Weighted pressure: heavy blanket, or lie under cushions, ten minutes. Rating:

53.2 Column 2 — Coming back up (too shut down)

For numb, foggy, heavy, gone.

Gentle activation — strong enough to register, kind enough to tolerate.

Stand, push palms into a wall for 30 seconds, feel the ground push back. Rating:

Strong sensory input: mint, sour sweet, cold air on the face. Rating:

One song with a beat, standing up, moving anything. Rating:

Name aloud: 5 things seen, 4 heard, 3 touched — voice ON (the voice matters). Rating:

A two-minute task with a visible result (make the bed, wash three dishes). Rating:

53.3 Columns 3 & 4 — Holding on / Reaching out, then your card

For the wave, and for the too-big.

HOLDING ON (the wave passes; your job is not making it worse): the 20-minute delay rule on any drastic urge; "this is a wave, waves crest" said aloud; the crisis-card from your self-soothing toolkit. REACHING OUT (some loads are two-person): the low-bar text ("rough day, no reply needed"); asking for company without conversation; and knowing your lines — GP for the body, therapist for the pattern, crisis line for the edge.

My holding-on move, tested and rated:

My reaching-out move, and the person attached to it:

MY MENU CARD — top two per column, copied somewhere permanent:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/coping-skills-menu/

54. Trauma-Informed Morning Routine Builder

For a trauma-shaped nervous system, the first fifteen minutes are a launch trajectory: wake into threat (alarm panic, phone-first doomscroll, dread inventory) and the whole day fights that opening bid. Productivity-guru routines miss the point — cold plunges and 5am miracle hours are activation stacked on a system that may already be over-activated. This builder starts from YOUR wake-up state and designs the counterweight.

Who this is for: Anyone who wakes already braced — heart going, dread scanning, phone in hand before both eyes open — and would like the day to start on their side.

Section 1 identifies how you actually wake — above your window (wired, braced), below it (leaden, unable to surface), or mixed — because the right routine is the counterweight: wired mornings need settling and slowness; leaden mornings need gentle activation and light. Build the sequence in section 2 from the right menu, keep it under fifteen minutes, and run it two weeks before judging.

54.1 The wake-state audit

Three mornings of honest observation.

Before changing anything, watch the current launch.

First 60 seconds after waking, my body is (racing/braced/leaden/foggy) and my mind goes straight to:

Phone: how many minutes until I'm holding it, and what does it do to my state (honestly, check after):

By the time I leave the house / start work, my zone is usually (above/in/below window):

My wake-state verdict: I mostly wake ABOVE / BELOW / MIXED:

54.2 Build the launch sequence

Fifteen minutes, three moves, matched to your state.

WAKE-ABOVE menu (settle): light on + three long exhales before standing; warm shower ending 30s cooler; tea made and drunk sitting down, no inputs; write the 3-line dread list to park it. WAKE-BELOW menu (activate): curtains + face to actual daylight for 2 minutes; 20 slow stamps or stairs once; shower ending 30s cool; one song while dressing. BOTH: phone stays parked until the sequence ends (charging outside arm's reach is the single highest-leverage move on this sheet).

My move 1 (in bed / on waking):

My move 2 (body):

My move 3 (kitchen/table):

Phone protocol: where it charges, and when it gets picked up:

54.3 The two-week trial

Run it, track it lightly, keep what works.

Tick mornings it ran; score the pre-work state weekly.

Week 1 — mornings run: ____/7. Average pre-work zone versus the audit:

Week 2 — mornings run: ____/7. What earned its place; what gets cut:

The keeper routine, final version, in one line where I'll see it:

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/morning-routine/

55. Printable Grounding Cards

A grounding technique you cannot access mid-flood might as well not exist — and mid-flood, nobody opens a bookmarked article. Cards solve the access problem physically: one technique per card, large type, short words, stationed where your bad moments actually happen. Print this page, cut the twelve cards below, and deploy them like the safety equipment they are.

Who this is for: Anyone whose techniques evaporate exactly when needed — and anyone who wants to leave real help lying around for a household that needs it.

Print at 100% and cut along the card blocks below — each exercise section is one strip of three cards. STATION them where floods happen: wallet/phone case (public), desk drawer (work), bedside (3am), kitchen (home rows), car glovebox. REHEARSE each card once calm — a card's job is to trigger a practised move, not teach a new one. Write your name-and-person card last: it is the one card only you can write.

55.1 Cards 1-3: The body anchors

For carrying everywhere.

Cut as three cards.

CARD — FEET. Press both feet into the floor. Hard. Feel it push back. You are somewhere real. Stay 30 seconds.

CARD — EXHALE. Breathe in for 4. Out for 8. The long out-breath is the brake. Six times. Count on fingers.

CARD — WALL. Find a wall. Push it with both palms, arms straight, 30 seconds. Let it hold what you're carrying.

55.2 Cards 4-6: The senses

For desk and kitchen.

Cut as three cards.

CARD — 5-4-3-2-1. Out loud or whispered: 5 things you SEE. 4 you HEAR. 3 you can TOUCH. 2 you SMELL. 1 you TASTE.

CARD — COLD. Cold water on wrists and face. Or hold something from the freezer. Cold is faster than thoughts.

CARD — ONE OBJECT. Pick up anything near you. Describe it aloud like a detective: weight, texture, temperature, colour, age.

55.3 Cards 7-9: The mind anchors

For bedside and 3am.

Cut as three cards.

CARD — NOW, NOT THEN. Say aloud: your full name. Your age. Today's date. Where you are. One thing that is true NOW that was not true THEN.

CARD — CATEGORIES. Name every animal you can. Out loud. When you stall, switch: cities. Songs. Foods. Keep the mouth moving until the mind follows.

CARD — THE WAVE. This feeling is a wave. Waves crest. You have survived 100% of them so far. Twenty minutes before any big decision.

55.4 Cards 10-12: The connection cards

Two ready-made, one only you can write.

Cut as three cards; fill in card 12 by hand before stationing it.

CARD — LOW-BAR TEXT. Send exactly this: "Rough moment. No reply needed. Just telling someone." Sending it IS the technique.

CARD — AFTER. It passed. Drink water. Eat something. No post-mortem tonight — the review can wait until you're rested.

CARD — MINE (fill in): My person and their number: _____. What works fastest for me: _____. The line I need to read: _____.

Full version, with the notes and examples: whatsmytraumaresponse.com/worksheets/grounding-cards/

Where to go next

If you have not taken it yet, the free 2-minute quiz at whatsmytraumaresponse.com/quiz/ shows which of the four responses you lead with, so you know which worksheets in this pack are the ones for you.

If you want to work on this with a professional, whatsmytraumaresponse.com/therapy/ compares the trauma-focused online therapy options, including what to ask for depending on your response. That page contains affiliate links, which is how this pack stays free.

A trauma response explains why your body reacts the way it does. It never makes frightening, controlling or violent behaviour acceptable, in either direction. In the US, the National Domestic Violence Hotline is 1-800-799-7233.