

## CHAPTER 11

# STOP SHRINKING TO KEEP THE PEACE

*You have done the inner work.*

*But the moment someone needs something from you,  
a yes, a smile, a softened response, who do you become?*

# Section 1. The Psychological Foundation

## **Naming the Pattern Without Shame...**

There is a particular kind of exhaustion that no one talks about. It is not the exhaustion of doing too much, although that is real too. It is the exhaustion of being someone slightly different in every room you enter. Or feeling the thing you actually wanted to say, replaced, instantly, by whatever seemed safest.

If you have worked through this workbook to this point, you have already done something remarkable. You have learned to watch your thoughts instead of becoming them. You have named your values and built the bones of a life that is actually yours. You have practiced, maybe for the first time, moving toward what matters even when anxiety says to stay still.

But there is one place where all of that work meets its most demanding test: the moment another human enters the room.

Because overthinking does not only live inside your head. It turns into a specific kind of action. It reads the temperature of a room and makes split-second calculations about what version of you is most likely to keep things comfortable. And for many high-achieving women, women who are brilliant and capable and deeply feeling, that calculation has been running so long, so automatically, that it no longer feels like a choice. It just feels like who you are.

But it is not who you are. It is what you learned to do. And that is a very different thing.

This chapter is not about becoming someone who doesn't care about what others think. Right now, especially in our times, empathy is so valuable. The problem is when caring about others has slowly become more automatic than caring for yourself, when their comfort has become the metric by which you measure your own worth in a relationship, that is what we are here to look at. Honestly, and without shame.

*People-pleasing is a strategy that worked once, possibly for a very long time in your childhood. The work here is not to criticize yourself for using it. The work is to NOTICE it, UNDERSTAND it, and CHOOSE something different.*

We will move through this chapter in three sections. First, we name the pattern with psychological precision, what it is, where it lives in your nervous system, and what it has cost your identity over time. Then we build the tools: practical, values-based. Lastly, we build spiritually grounded ways of showing up in your relationships that do not require you to shrink in order to belong.

Take your time though each section. This material has a way of landing in layers.

CONCEPT 1 • DEFINITION + REFRAME

## How People Pleasing is Overthinking in Disguise

*Before we can change the behavior, we have to see it clearly... what it is, where it lives, and why it makes sense.*

Let's start here, because this reframe changes everything: **people-pleasing is not a pushover personality type problem.** It is a thinking problem and that means it can be unlearned the same way you have been unlearning every other thought pattern in this workbook.

Here is what the loop actually looks like:



The overthinking and the people-pleasing are not separate. The people-pleasing is the conclusion your overthinking keeps arriving at.

And it feels like consideration. It feels, often, like love. You tell yourself you are thinking of others, keeping the peace, being the bigger person. Sometimes that is true. But if it is happening automatically, if the response arrives before you have even checked in with what you actually feel, then it is not consideration. It is a reflex. And reflexes, by definition, bypass choice.

What makes this particularly common among high-achieving women is the way our culture rewards it. The woman who anticipates everyone's needs, who smooths over conflict before it surfaces, who delivers her truth so gently it barely registers, she is praised. She is called emotionally intelligent, nice, kind, and mature. The praise becomes its own trap. You get so good at managing everyone else's experience that you lose track of your own.

THREE REFRAMES TO SIT WITH -----

<p><i>"I'm too much"</i></p>	<p><i>"I have to say yes. It's good manners &amp; I don't want to be rude &amp; have them be upset with me."</i></p> <p>OR</p> <p><i>"Being lovable means being agreeable."</i></p>	<p><i>"What if this relationship ends &amp; I'm alone"</i></p>
<p><b>Needs are part of building meaningful relationships, not evidence you are difficult.</b></p> <p>Notice who gets the real you, and who gets the managed version. That gap is where the work lives.</p>	<p><b>REAL love survives healthy boundaries &amp; honest needs.</b></p> <p>Chronic yes is not generosity. Its fear &amp; damages my intuitions</p>	<p><b>"I will always be able to rebuild, heal, &amp; begin again if needed"</b></p> <p>Your life is bigger than any one relationship outcome</p>



# Meet the Fawn Response: The Fourth Stress Response Nobody Told You About

## A NOTE AS A THERAPIST

*As a LLMFT, I want to give you something clinical here, not to overwhelm you with terms, but because understanding the nervous system basis of people-pleasing is what separates this from a willpower conversation. It's not about trying harder to be more assertive. It's more about understanding what your nervous system learned to do, and giving it something new to practice.*

You have probably heard of fight, flight, and freeze, the three responses the nervous system defaults to under threat. What gets far less attention is the fourth response: **fawn**. The term was developed by therapist, Pete Walker, in his work on complex trauma, and once you understand it, you will see it everywhere.

**To fawn is to soothe someone by giving into their demands to resolve a conflict, restore, or maintain peace.** When a situation feels threatening, that threat doesn't have to be physical, the fawn response kicks in automatically.

FIGHT	FLIGHT	FREEZE	FAWN
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become defensive when conflict appears</li> <li>• Raise voice, interrupt, or try to control the conversation</li> <li>• Treat disagreement like threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoid hard conversations</li> <li>• Distract yourself with work, scrolling, or staying "busy"</li> <li>• Pull away when things feel uncomfortable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go silent when emotions get intense</li> <li>• Overthink so much that you can't take action</li> <li>• Feel stuck, numb, or unable to respond in the moment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Become agreeable</li> <li>• Apologize for things that are not your fault</li> <li>• Soften your position when someone pushes back</li> </ul>

It's important to understand what a threat means in this context. For many high-achieving women, the nervous system treats criticism like danger, conflict like catastrophe, and someone's disappointment like a genuine emergency. The brain does not distinguish

cleanly between a tiger in the jungle and a partner who is upset with you. Both can activate the same stress response and fawn is the strategy that developed when fighting or fleeing was not an option.

For many of us, this pattern began long before we were adults. It developed in childhoods where being good, quiet, and accommodating kept things safe. Where expressing a need created tension. Where the emotional climate of the room was something we learned to monitor constantly, because our sense of safety depended on it. You were adaptive. You learned to survive by managing other people's emotional states and at the time, that may have been exactly right.

The problem is that the nervous system does not automatically update when the environment changes. The strategies that kept you safe at seven years old can still be running at thirty-five, long after you are no longer in the situation that required them.

### **HOW TO RECOGNIZE FAWN IN REAL TIME**

- You apologize before you have assessed whether you have done anything wrong

- Your voice changes (it gets softer, higher) the moment you sense tension

- You feel a sudden, urgent need to fix or smooth over someone else's discomfort

- You change your position on something the moment someone disagrees with you, not because you were persuaded, but because the disagreement itself felt dangerous

- You walk away from an interaction feeling vaguely hollow, like you left something of yourself behind

### **Clinical Tool · The Fawn Check-In**

Before you respond in a moment that feels heavy, pause and ask yourself one question:

***Am I saying this because I believe it, or because it feels safer than what I actually think?***

That is it. You do not need to perform a full psychological analysis mid-conversation. Just that one question, and whatever it surfaces, notice it. You do not have to act on what you notice immediately. Awareness is the first and most important step. The goal is simply to bring consciousness to a pattern that has been running unconsciously for years.

### ◆ **Spiritual Bridge**

*When you are in a fawn response, you leave your own body in a very real sense. You stop reading yourself and start reading the room. Your intuition, that quiet, reliable inner signal that the earlier chapters of this workbook have been training you to hear, goes offline. You cannot access your own guidance when you are fully occupied managing someone else's emotional state.*

*The practice of pausing before responding is not just a communication strategy. It is a return to yourself. A breath. A moment of re-inhabiting your own body before you decide what to offer someone else. That moment is where your alignment lives.*

***Spiritual prompt: When I fawn, what am I afraid will happen if I stay in my own truth instead?***

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## CONCEPT 3 • THE EXISTENTIAL COST

## The Identity Tax: Who You Stop Being When You Never Say No

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We have talked about the nervous system. Now I want to talk about something that operates on a longer continuous timeline, the slow, cumulative cost that people-pleasing extracts from your sense of who you are.

Jean Paul Sartre, the philosopher, called it bad faith: living inauthentically, occupying a role rather than a self, doing what is expected rather than what is chosen. We tend to think of bad faith as a dramatic thing, someone who has abandoned their dreams entirely, who is living a life they never wanted. But bad faith is most often subtle. It happens in small moments. In the word you swallowed. The need you never named because naming it felt like too much of a conflict.

Each one of those moments is small. Together, they compound. Over months and years of automatic self-erasure, something happens: you begin to lose reliable access to what you actually think, feel, and want. Not because those things are gone, they are not gone. But they have been overridden so consistently that they have learned to go quiet. **They stop offering themselves up, because you have taught them, through repetition, that they will not be honored anyway.**

**This is what I mean by the identity tax.** It is levied in tiny installments, and you do not feel the accumulation until one day you realize you cannot answer a simple question (What do you want?) without a long pause and a great deal of uncertainty. All because you have spent so long optimizing for what everyone else wants that your own preferences have gone underground.

And here is where it connects back to everything we have covered in this workbook: you cannot build an aligned life, one grounded in your values, moved by your intuition, shaped by your actual desires, while simultaneously running a background program of chronic self-abandonment. One will always undermine the other.

Authentic relationships require two real people. If you are performing in a relationship, showing up as the version of yourself that seems safest rather than the version that is truest, then there is, in a meaningful sense, no real relationship. There is you managing someone else's experience of you. That is not intimacy.

*The version of yourself people fall in love with when you are performing is not the version worth loving. Because they are not loving your true self, they are loving the shape you made yourself into so they would stay. - Sabrina*

◆ **Spiritual Bridge**

The subconscious mind is always listening. Every time you override your own truth to manage someone else's comfort, you deposit a belief into the subconscious record: I am not allowed to take up space. My needs are a burden. Belonging requires my smallness. These deposits accumulate the same way any habit accumulates — through repetition, through consistency, through the simple fact that you have done this enough times that it now feels like truth.

The good news is that the subconscious record can be rewritten. Not through affirmations alone, but through behavior, through the small, repeated, embodied choice to act differently. That is what Section 2 of this chapter is about. Every tool we build there is also, in a very real sense, a rewrite.

**Spiritual prompt: What version of myself am I protecting people from and why do I believe they could not handle the real one?**

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◆ **Reflection — Before Moving to Section 2**

*Looking at these three concepts — the overthinking loop, the fawn response, and the identity tax — which one lands most for you right now? What does it name that you have been living but perhaps not had words for?*

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*"People-pleasing is not a push over problem. It is a thinking problem, and a nervous system problem, and an identity problem. You cannot call in aligned relationships while embodying misalignment. But none of those things are permanent. You learned this. **You can learn something different.**"*

**WORKSHEET #1**

**THE PEOPLE PLEASING AUDIT**

This worksheet helps you understand where and with whom are you abandoning yourself and the costs. Work through each honestly. There is no shame here. Seeing the pattern clearly is the first step to choosing a different path. Take your time. Rambling is encouraged. Use the back if you need more space

**01 RELATIONSHIP MAP - WHERE DOES IT HAPPEN**

*For each relationship category below, reflect on how people-pleasing shows up. Rate the intensity by filling in the circle (1 = mild, 5 = significant)*

<p><b>♥ PARTNER / SPOUSE</b></p> <p>What do you agree to that you actually don't want?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>INTENSITY: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>	<p><b>CHILDREN / FAMILY</b></p> <p>Where do you overgive to avoid guilt?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What request do you always say yes to?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>INTENSITY: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>
<p><b>FRIENDS</b></p> <p>Where do you show up when you're depleted?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>INTENSITY: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>	<p><b>CLIENTS / BUSINESS</b></p> <p>What do you undercharge or over-deliver?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>What boundary do you set but later undo?</p> <p>-----</p> <p>INTENSITY: ○ ○ ○ ○ ○</p>

## 02 TRIGGER SITUATIONS

Check every situation that activates your people pleasing. Then write who it's usually with

<input type="checkbox"/> SOMEONE IS UPSET W/ ME Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING ASKED FOR A FAVOR Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> CONFLICT OR DISAGREEMENT Usually with:
<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CRITICIZED OR JUDGED Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> SETTING A PRICE OR A RATE Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> SAYING NO TO SOMETHING Usually with:
<input type="checkbox"/> SHARING A STRONG OPINION Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> ASKING FOR WHAT I NEED Usually with:	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:_____ Usually with:

## 03 THE COST MATRIX

People-pleasing extracts payment in four currencies. Name the cost in each area for your top two relationships from activity 1 & 2 - the relationship map.

RELATIONSHIP	EMOTIONAL COST	TIME / ENERGY COST	IDENTITY COST
Relationship #1	How do you feel after?	What do you give up?	Who do you stop being?
Relationship #2	How do you feel after?	What do you give up?	Who do you stop being?

### 04 BODY SIGNALS – HOW DOES YOUR BODY KNOW FIRST

Your body signals people-pleasing before your mind registers it. Check every signal you recognize, then note when it happens.

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|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid breathing        | <input type="checkbox"/> Shallow breathing / Held breath                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jaw tension            | <input type="checkbox"/> Shoulder tension   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher vocal pitch     | <input type="checkbox"/> Voice gets quieter                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Excessive head nodding | <input type="checkbox"/> Fidgeting / Clenching                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chest tightness        | <input type="checkbox"/> Stomach sinking / Nausea                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Throat clearing        | <input type="checkbox"/> Headaches  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Forced smiling         | <input type="checkbox"/> Making your body appear smaller<br>by crossing your arms |

When do these signals usually appear?:

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### MY TOP 3 PATTERNS – NAME THEM CLEARLY

Looking at everything above, identify 3 most significant people pleasing patterns. Name the behavior, who it's with, and the belief driving it.

THE BEHAVIOR (WHAT I DO)	THE BELIEF BEHIND IT	SEVERITY

## Section 2 • The Tools

### **From Shrinking to Standing in It**

Understanding why you people-please is important. But understanding alone does not change behavior and I want to be honest about that. Insight is the beginning, not the destination. What changes behavior is practice: small, consistent, embodied actions taken in the direction of who you are actually becoming.

The tools in this section are not grand gestures. They are about learning to stay in your own body while in relationship with others. About building the capacity to be honest with yourself first, and then with the people around you.

We begin with how you communicate your limits. Then we get very small and very practical. And then we zoom out and look at the whole relational landscape, who has access to you, and whether the distribution of your energy reflects your actual values that we discussed in the previous chapter.

**CONCEPT 4 • VALUES-BASED COMMUNICATION**

## **Boundaries Are Not Walls — They Are the Language of Your Values**

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The word "boundary" has developed a reputation it does not entirely deserve. In some circles it has come to mean a wall, a way of keeping people out, of protecting yourself by withdrawing. That is not what a boundary is, and that is not what we are building here.

**A boundary, in the Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT) framework, is simply a committed action in service of your values.** It is a statement, sometimes spoken, sometimes embodied in behavior, about what you need in order to show up as your best self in a relationship. It is not about what the other person is. It is about what you are and are not willing to participate in. That distinction matters *enormously*, because it keeps the boundary rooted in you rather than in an attempt to control someone else.

Here is the structure that makes boundaries feel possible instead of punishing:

<b>The 3-Part Values-Based Boundary Statement</b>
<p><b>Part 1 — Name what is happening:</b> "<i>When</i> [specific behavior or situation]....."</p> <p>Not a character judgment. Not "<i>when you always</i>" or "<i>when you never</i>." Just the specific, observable thing.</p>
<p><b>Part 2 — Name what it creates for you:</b> "<i>I feel</i> [honest emotional response]..."</p> <p>Not "<i>I feel like you are being...</i>" — that is a thought, not a feeling. An actual feeling: overwhelmed, dismissed, resentful, unseen.</p>
<p><b>Part 3 — Name what you need:</b> "<i>What I need is</i> [specific, actionable request]..."</p> <p>A clear, honest statement of what would allow you to stay present and engaged in this relationship.</p>
<p><i>Example: "When I send a message and receive a one-word reply after a difficult conversation, I feel dismissed and unsure whether we're okay. What I need is a few sentences so I know where we stand."</i></p>

**Notice what is not in that structure: an apology for having the need.**

An over-explanation. A softening statement at the end that takes it all back. The boundary statement is complete without those things. If you find yourself adding them anyway, and most people-pleasers do, at first, that is useful information. That is the fawn response trying to smooth over the discomfort of taking up space.

**WHAT NOT TO ADD - THE FAWN TRAPS**

AVOID SAYING THIS AFTER YOUR BOUNDARY	SAY THIS INSTEAD IF YOU NEED TO CLOSE
X "I'm sorry for bringing this up"	"I appreciate you hearing me"
X "I don't know, maybe I'm wrong..."	"That's where I stand"
X "I just need you to not be upset w/ me"	"I hope we can work through this"
X "Forget it, it doesnt matter"	"It does matter. I'm staying with what I said."

One more thing about boundaries that is worth saying clearly: **someone pushing back on your boundary is not evidence that the boundary was wrong.** People who are accustomed to you having no limits will often resist the first time you introduce one. This is information, about the relationship, about what has been normalized, about what is changing now. **You are not responsible for managing their reaction to your honesty.** You are responsible for your honesty.

◆ **The Broken Record Technique — When They Keep Pushing**

When someone does not respect your boundary the first time, you do not need a new argument. You simply return, calmly, without escalation, to the same statement. Not louder. Not with more explanation. *The same words, the same tone, as many times as it takes.* Explanation invites negotiation. Repetition communicates that the boundary is real.

*"I understand you see it differently. This is still what I need." — pause — "I hear you. This is still what I need." — pause — "I know. This is still what I need."*

**◆ Energetic Declaration · Say This Before Any Hard Conversation**

*"I am going into this conversation as myself. I do not need them to agree with me in order for this boundary to be real. I do not need their approval in order for my need to be valid. I am allowed to take up space in this relationship and I am doing that now, from a place of love for both of us."*

*Which relationship is asking for your honesty the most? Name the boundary you are committing to speaking this week — even if your voice shakes.*

**CONCEPT 5 • PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE BUILDING**

## The Small No: Building the Muscle Before the Hard Conversations

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Here is a mistake that many people make when they decide to stop people-pleasing: they go looking for the hardest conversation first. The one they have been avoiding for years. The relationship where the stakes are the highest. They build up to it, have the conversation, it does not go perfectly, and they conclude that honesty does not work, or worse, that they cannot do it.

Do not start there. Start here: **with the smallest honest no you can find today.**

The small no is about the practice of the nervous system staying regulated while you prioritize your own truth over someone else's comfort. That is the skill. And like any skill, it is built through repetition at a level that is challenging but not overwhelming, the same principle we use in ACT for any committed action.

A small no might look like:

- declining a request for a favor that you do not have capacity for, without offering an elaborate explanation.
- Saying "*I need to think about it*" instead of an immediate yes and then actually thinking about it rather than defaulting to an immediate yes.
- Sending back an order at a restaurant that was made incorrectly.
- Expressing an opinion in a low-stakes conversation that you know the other person does not share.
- Leaving a social event when you said you would, rather than staying another hour because it seemed easier.

These feel small. That is the point. Each one is a micro-deposit into the account of your own self-respect. Each one tells your nervous system, slowly, consistently, through repetition, that expressing your actual preferences does not result in catastrophe. That you remain intact. That the relationship, if it is a good one, can hold your honesty.

### The Daily Small No Practice — How It Works

One small honest no or honest expression per day. It does not have to be a dramatic refusal. It simply has to be true for you.

The pre-response pause: Before answering any request, in person, by text, by email, take three breaths. To check in. *Do I actually want to say yes to this?* This pause creates the gap that choice requires.

**"Let me get back to you" is a complete sentence.** It is not a soft yes. It is not an obligation to eventually say yes. It is a statement that you are a person who does not make commitments from a place of reflexive appeasement. Use it. Mean it. Follow through on what you actually decide, not on what feels safest in the moment.

After each small no: Notice the guilt. Do not fight it. The guilt is the fawn response's protest, proof that something real is shifting. Let it be there. Let it move through with no judgement. Check whether the catastrophe you anticipated actually happened. It usually has not.

A note about guilt, because it will come: **guilt is not evidence that you did something wrong. For chronic people-pleasers, guilt is evidence that you prioritized yourself**, which means your nervous system, for now, treats those two things as identical. They are not. The guilt will get quieter the more evidence you accumulate that honesty is survivable. That is the process. It takes time. Be patient with it.

### ◆ Spiritual Bridge

God or the universe, or source, if you prefer that framing, responds to what you demonstrate, AND what you intend. Aligned action starts in the smallest moments. The small no is not a minor thing. It is the building block of an entirely different way of being in a relationship & attracting the exact kind of relationships that align with what you want..

◆ **Reflection — The Small No**

Where is the smallest, safest small no available to you right now, this week, in your actual life? Name it specifically. What would you need to believe about yourself in order to say it?

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## CONCEPT 6 • RELATIONAL DISCERNMENT

## The Energy Inventory: Who Fills You, Who Drains You, Who Gets Your Best?

Here is something that people-pleasers almost universally discover when they begin doing this work: they have not been giving their best to the people who matter most. They have been giving their best, or their most, to whoever was making the most noise. To the relationships that demanded the most management. To the people whose displeasure felt most threatening. And meanwhile, the relationships that are actually safe, actually reciprocal, actually built on something real, those have been getting whatever was left over.

This is the predictable consequence of a nervous system that treats threat-management as the primary goal. When your attention is organized around who might be upset with you, the people who would never try to make you feel unsafe barely register as a priority. They do not create urgency, so they do not get the same level of attention.

The energy inventory is an honest look at this. Not to make you feel guilty, but to give you information. Because what you want, ultimately, is for the distribution of your energy to reflect your actual values. And right now, it may not.

The inventory asks a simple question for each significant relationship in your life: *After I spend time with this person, do I generally feel expanded or restricted?* That is not a question about whether the relationship is easy. Some of the most important relationships in our lives are not easy. It is a question about whether the relationship, over time, on balance, returns something to you, or only takes.

### The Distinction That Changes Everything

**Draining vs. hard:** Some relationships are worth the difficulty. A friendship that challenges you, a partnership that requires real work with communication, a family relationship you are actively trying to repair, these can be hard and still be worth the investment. **Hard relationships stretch you to grow. Draining relationships extract from**

**you without return.**

**What to do when a draining relationship is non-negotiable:** If you share children with someone, or work for someone, or are caring for an aging parent, you cannot always simply reduce contact. What you can do is be honest about the nature of that relationship, **stop expecting it to give you what it is not able to give, and be very intentional about how you protect your energy within it.** Boundaries become most important precisely where you have the least freedom to leave.

**Releasing the guilt of not giving everyone equal access:** Not everyone gets the same level of access to you, and that is not a failure of love. Managing it well is an act of responsibility to yourself and to the people who genuinely depend on you.

A final word on this, because it needs to be said plainly: **you are not responsible for the emotional management of every person in your life.** You are responsible for how you treat people, with honesty, with care, with the dignity they deserve as human beings. **You are not responsible for ensuring that they never feel disappointed, never feel the friction of encountering a person with real limits.** That is an impossible job that no one assigned to you, and that you have been doing anyway at enormous cost to yourself.

When you begin to release that responsibility, when you stop treating other people's emotional states as emergencies that require your immediate intervention, something unexpected often happens: the relationships that are actually yours, that can hold the real you, get stronger. Because you are finally actually in them.

### ◆ Grounding Truth

Keeping the peace at the cost of your truth is not peace, it is self-abandonment dressed up as kindness. The aligned woman doesn't shrink. She chooses her words, holds her ground, and loves people enough to be honest with them. She knows that a relationship built on her performance is not a relationship. It is a role she has been playing.

Your energy is a resource, who has permission to spend it?

**WORKSHEET #3**

**THE RELATIONSHIP ENERGY INVENTORY**

**Who fills you, who drains you & who gets the best of you right now**

*This is not about judging your relationships or deciding who to cut off. It is about honest accounting. List the significant relationships in your life, rate the energy each one returns to you, and use that information to make intentional decisions about where your energy goes, not who you love most, but who has access to the fullest version of you.*

**THE ENERGY SCALE - HOW TO RATE**

1 SIGNIFICANTLY DRAINING	2 MOSTLY DRAINING	3 NEUTRAL / MIXED	4 MOSTLY FILLING	5 CONSISTENTLY FILLS ME
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**YOUR RELATIONSHIP INVENTORY**

PERSON / RELATIONSHIP	RATING 1-5
<b>PARTNER / SPOUSE:</b>	
<b>CHILDREN / FAMILY:</b>	
<b>CHILDREN / FAMILY:</b>	
<b>CHILDREN / FAMILY:</b>	
<b>FRIEND / ACQUAINTANCE:</b>	
<b>FRIEND / ACQUAINTANCE</b>	
<b>CLIENT / COLLEAGUE</b>	
<b>CLIENT / COLLEAGUE</b>	
<b>EXTENDED FAMILY:</b>	
<b>EXTENDED FAMILY</b>	
<b>OTHER</b>	

**FOR RELATIONSHIPS 1-2 THAT YOU CANNOT WALK AWAY FROM**

Name the relationship & write one boundary, limit, or protection you can put in place, not to punish them but to protect your energy within it. If you need help coming up with ideas paste this prompt into chatgpt: *"Please give me ideas of different types of boundaries to implement to protect my peace with \_\_\_\_\_. This person is overstepping my boundary of [insert frustration]."*

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What expectation have you been carrying about this relationship that you can release?

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**THE PARADOX CHECK**

Looking at your inventory, are the relationships rated highest (most filling, most mutual) receiving the most of your energy? Or are you pouring the most into the lowest-rated ones? Name what you see.

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**ONE INTENTION SHIFT**

Based on this inventory, what is one relationship you want to invest more in, and one you want to consciously give less of your unscheduled, unasked-for energy to? Be specific.

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**◆ Energetic Stewardship Declaration**

*"My energy is sacred. I choose, from this point forward, to direct it toward the relationships that reflect who I am becoming. This is alignment in action."*

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*The next section of this chapter moves into the spiritual closing, the cord-cutting visualization and the declaration. Before you go there, work through Worksheets 1 through 5, which are found in the pages immediately following. Take your time. Come back to the visualization when you are ready, not before.*

## Section 3 • The Spiritual Closing

### Releasing What Was Never Yours to Carry

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*A written guide for releasing the energetic agreements that are no longer built on love*

You have done the hardest part. You named the pattern. You looked honestly at where you have been disappearing in your relationships. You built the language to start showing up differently.

Now we go deeper, not into more analysis, but into release.

Because there is a layer beneath the behavior that thinking alone cannot touch. Beneath every people-pleasing pattern is an energetic agreement, an unspoken contract you made, often long before you had the words for it, that said: *I will make myself smaller so that you feel safer. I will hold my truth back so that you stay. I will be who you need me to be so that I am not left alone.*

Those agreements are not just psychological. They live in the body. They run in the background of every interaction. And they do not dissolve through insight alone, they dissolve through intention, through breath, through the conscious decision to reclaim what was never truly theirs to hold.

That is what this closing is for. You do not need to believe in any specific spiritual framework for this to work. You simply need to be willing, willing to release an old agreement and willing to receive yourself back. That is all this requires of you.

Take your time here. Light a candle, or put relaxing music on if that helps. Print this out & put your phone down. This part is just for you.

## WORKSHEET #4

## The Cord-Cutting Visualization

Before you begin this is not about cutting people out of your life. A cord-cutting releases the energetic agreement beneath a relationship (the unspoken contract that says "I will give endlessly so you don't leave"). Find somewhere quiet..

### 01 GROUND YOURSELF FIRST -----

#### Step 1: Feel the ground beneath you

Press both feet firmly into the floor. Feel the weight of your body in your seat. Take one slow breath in through your nose, hold it for a moment, and release it fully through your mouth. Do this twice more. While doing this notice the movement of your breath throughout your body.

Say silently or aloud: *"I am safe. I am here. I am doing this from a place of love, for myself."*

### -----BREATHE THREE FULL ROUNDS WITH STATEMENT THEN CONTINUE-----

### 02 NAME THE RELATIONSHIP -----

#### Step 2: Bring them into your mind, without a story

Bring to mind the person, or the role, where you have been giving from obligation rather than genuine love. You do not need to feel angry at them. You do not need to justify anything. Simply see their face or feel their presence in your awareness.

Ask yourself: *What is the agreement I have been holding with this person that is costing me myself?* Not what they have done, but what you have agreed to be, or not be, in your mind's eye. Then, imagine a cord, a thread, stretching between your chest and theirs. This cord is not love. Love does not tether. Love does not demand your smallness as its price.

**◆ Write It Down — Name the Agreement**

*In this relationship, I have been agreeing, without words, to...*

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**03 SEE THE CORD** -----

**Step 3: Visualize the cord**

This cord is made of the unspoken agreements: the swallowed words, the shrinking, the smiling through resentment, the endless giving that left you empty. Look at it honestly. Notice its color, its weight, its texture. Notice where it pulls at you & brings tension within your body. Notice what it has been asking you to carry.

You are not here to blame this cord on anyone. You may have woven it together. But you are the only one who can choose to release your end.

**◆ Pause — What Does the Cord Feel Like?**

*Describe it. What is it asking you to keep being?*

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**THE RELEASE** -----

## ◆ STEP FOUR • LET IT GO

**Step 4: Let it go**

Place one hand on your chest. Take a breath. And in your own time, when you are ready, not before, imagine the cord gently dissolving. Not cut with anger. Dissolved with intention.

As it releases, say inwardly: *"I release the agreement I made to be less than I am in order to keep this relationship comfortable. I release this with love for myself. I release this with no ill will toward you."*

Notice what happens in your chest as you say it. Notice if your shoulders drop. Notice if something in you exhales that has been held for a long time. This is not a final goodbye to the person. It is a first hello to yourself.

**WHAT YOU RECLAIM** -----**Step 5: Return to yourself****What comes back when the cord is released**

Where the cord was, imagine golden light filling in its place, your own energy, returning to you. The parts of you that were always there, waiting: your voice, your needs, your truth, your capacity to give from genuine fullness rather than fear-driven depletion.

You do not have to perform love for this person any longer. You can choose what to give freely and from the truest part of who you are. That changes everything about how you show up with them and with everyone else.

**NAME WHAT RETURNS TO YOU**

What comes back when you stop carrying this agreement? What part of yourself do you reclaim?

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## The Closing Declaration

*Read this aloud if you are able. The voice matters. The subconscious responds to the spoken word differently than the thought, it registers sound as lived reality because it connects multiple senses. If you cannot speak it aloud right now, whisper it. If you cannot whisper, press a hand to your chest as you read, and let your body receive it as truth*

### ◆ Your Declaration — Read Aloud or Write in Your Own Hand Below

I, \_\_\_\_\_ am done shrinking to keep the peace in my own life. I have spent enough time making myself smaller so that others could feel more comfortable

I release the agreement I made w/ \_\_\_\_\_ that required me to be less honest, less present, or less fully myself than I am. I do not release this person. I release the version of me that believed I had to perform in order to be loved by them.

I am choosing, from this day forward, to give from fullness, not from fear. To say yes when I mean yes, and no when I mean no. To let the people who are meant to stay, stay and to trust that the ones who leave when I am honest were never holding the real me anyway.

I reclaim my boundaries as my own, the part of me I gave away in this relationship. It belongs to me. It always did.

I am aligned. I am honest. I am free to love from a place that does not require my disappearance. And I am done mistaking self-abandonment for love.

COMPLETE YOUR DECLARATION — FILL THESE IN

<p><b>The relationship or role I'm releasing the agreement with:</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>	<p><b>What I'm reclaiming - name it specifically:</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>
<p><b>One way I will show up differently in this relationship starting this week:</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>	<p><b>The truth I've been holding back that I'm now willing to live in my body</b></p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p>

SIGNATURE - YOUR NAME,

DATE

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*"You don't have to disappear to be loved. The people who are meant for you will love the real you and the ones who can't were never even safe to shrink for." — **Aligned & Unshaken***

*If this chapter resonated w/ you....*

This is just one piece of the Aligned and Unshaken framework. The full workbook goes deeper into [specific transformation]. Presale is open now at the lowest price it will ever be.

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