



AUTOPILOT STRESS RESPONSE TOOLKIT

Your Distance Repair Guide

But First: You May See Yourself in More Than One

Quick, important truth before you read your result.

Most of us don't run just one autopilot pattern. We run different ones in different rooms. You might **Distance** the second you walk through your own front door, checked out and numb after holding it together all shift... and **Overfunction** the moment you're back on the unit, the one who handles it, no matter what. Or you might stay composed at work and let the **Conflict** pattern loose at home, where it feels safest to finally let the tension go.

That's normal. That's how these patterns actually work... they're not a fixed personality type, they're **autopilot responses** that activate based on the system you're in. And they have originated from experiences similar in your first formation of life (childhood). And these patterns run on a spectrum, not a switch. On one end... it's avoiding a coworker after an awkward shift or steering conversations away from the uncomfortable topic. On the other end... it's cutting someone out of your life entirely, a friendship or a family relationship you just let go quiet and stay that way. **Still avoiding, still disconnecting from honest feelings and relationships, no matter where you are on the spectrum.**

Overfunction

Carrying it all. Can't delegate, can't stop, worth tied to being the responsible one. Taking on other's tasks and emotions.

Distance

Managing stress by pulling back. Numbing, checking out, disconnecting from others and from yourself.

Conflict

The tension finds its way out sideways. Reactivity, short fuse, snapping at the people closest to you.

Projection

Focus quietly shifts onto someone else's problem instead of facing your own.

Meet Your Autopilot

Your result today points to your primary pattern... the one most active right now. But this guide is only your starting point, not the whole map. Fully identifying every place these patterns show up, and doing the deep repair work underneath all of them, is exactly what we build together inside STEADY (my group coaching program). We practice real tools together, in real life, to disrupt your autopilot and and show up as your best self.

For now, let's go deeper on your primary pattern:

Distance



Where This Started (And Why It Works)

"if I don't engage, I'm safe."

You are an empath- a feeler. So, naturally you didn't wake up one day and *decide* to stop feeling things. **It happened slowly**, shift after shift, *as a way to survive*. Grief you didn't have time to process. Fear you couldn't afford to sit with mid-code. **Somewhere your body learned: if I feel less, I can keep going.**

That's not coldness, it's protection. But protection that never gets turned off doesn't stay contained to work. It follows you home, into every relationship where honesty feels like one more thing you don't have room to carry. **Your nervous system built a second rule on top of the first: if I don't engage, I'm safe. If there's no conflict, there's no risk.**

And for a long time, that rule kept things *calm*. Nobody likes conflict, and you became the one relationships could count on to stay easy, peaceful, undemanding. But a rule built to protect you from feeling too much eventually becomes distance... from your patients, your family, and honestly, from yourself. You can be sitting right across the table, nodding along, fully present on the outside... and internally, you've already left the conversation. *Cordial. Composed. Numb.* Some relationships and situations get the emotional withdrawal, others get the literal kind: the call you don't return, the group you quietly stop showing up for, the person you let fade rather than ever say what's actually wrong.

Something that's very important to note: distancing gets mistaken for maturity. **Staying calm, staying peaceful, never causing a scene...** in a family or a team that values keeping things smooth, that can look like the healthy response. It isn't. It has the exact same effect on a relationship that outright conflict does... *nothing actually gets resolved*, it just goes quiet instead of loud. And the most extreme version of this pattern has an actual name: cutting off. Not a hard conversation avoided, but a relationship ended rather than faced. *Girl, that's distance running the show, and it can cost you people you never meant to lose.*

Why the Tools Haven't Worked for You

Journaling and gratitude practices ask you to sit with what's already there. But your autopilot's real job isn't just avoiding feelings, it's avoiding the conversation underneath them. So you journal about how drained you feel, gratitude-list your way to calm... and the actual thing sitting between you and that coworker, that friend, your spouse, never gets touched. That's not you doing it wrong. That's the autopilot doing exactly what it was built to do: keep the peace by keeping things unsaid.

Your First Repair Step

Tonight, before you reach for the usual numbing... the wine, the scrolling, the trashy TV... **pause and name ONE thing** you actually felt today. Out loud if you can. *One honest sentence: "I felt overwhelmed." "I felt alone in that room."*

Then notice what rises when you let yourself feel it instead of moving past it. What thoughts appear? Listen for them! Because it's like a conversation you've avoided so many times... you've stopped even noticing you're avoiding it.

That discomfort is the belief revealing itself. Perhaps *the belief is "if I say this out loud, it becomes real, and real things can hurt me."* The beliefs that come up are the exact thing we can discuss in your **complimentary Stress Assessment call**. Because the answer isn't just "journal more" or "practice gratitude." **The answer is repairing the belief that staying quiet and avoiding was ever the same thing as staying safe.**

Know Your Triggers: then Disrupt the Autopilot

Common triggers for the Distance pattern:

- ☐ Someone asks "how are you, really?" and you can't go there, definitely not right now, so you deflect or joke it off
- ☐ You reach for your phone, the remote, or the fridge before you've even set your bag down
- ☐ Something happens on shift that should hit you... a code, a hard loss, a moment you'd expect to feel... and you clock that you feel nothing at all
- ☐ Your spouse tries to talk about something real at the end of the day, and you go quiet, one-word answers until they stop trying
- ☐ You pull into your driveway and realize you don't remember any of the actual drive home
- ☐ There's a coworker or friend you still haven't cleared the air with... it's just easier to work around them than actually bring it up

Use this list and the tracker on the next page to learn more about your autopilot pattern. **Notice when** it arises and **what** the circumstances are. Are you mostly at work? Is it only at home? A lot of times, different autopilot patterns (conflict, distance, over/under function, projection) will arise for different environments. When **we can see it, we can then disrupt it** and show up as our best self. Which takes a lot of practice and the work of digging up where it originated.

I pray Ephesians 1:17 for you and urge you to pray it for yourself, as well...."I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him."

And Be still and KNOW "He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'" — Psalm 46:10 (NIV)

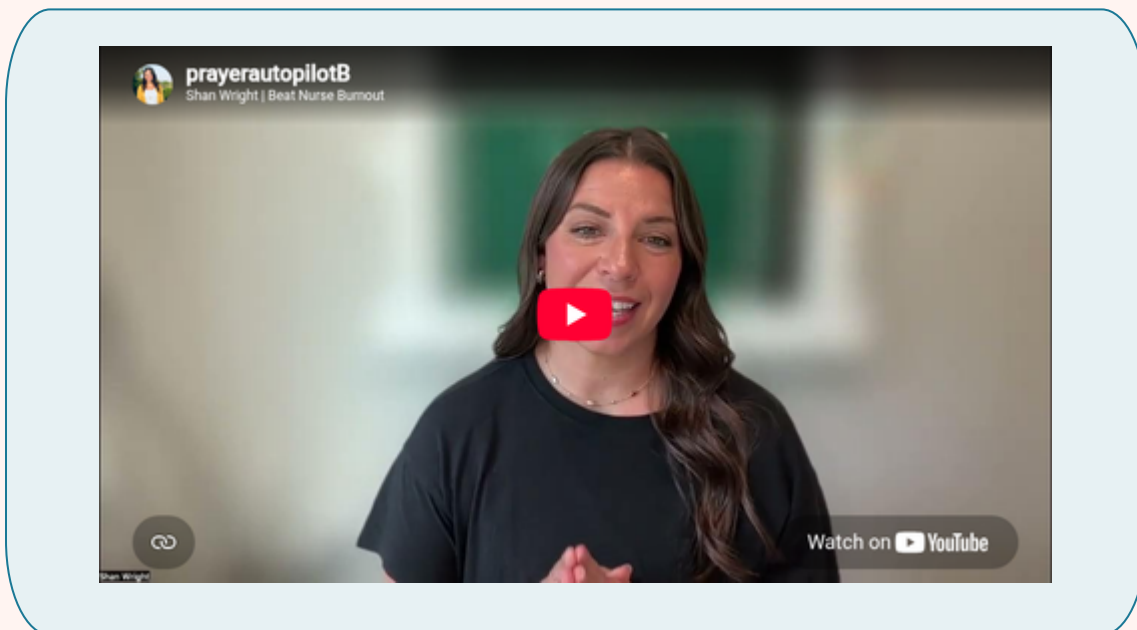
The Disruption Tracker

You don't have to get this right every day. You just have to notice. Noticing is the repair beginning.

Day	Trigger I noticed	What my body did	What I did (autopilot)	What I tried instead
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				

Your Guided Breath Prayer

Psalm 34:18



follow the prompt below or let me guide
you through it on the video

"The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are
crushed in spirit." — Psalm 34:18

Find a quiet moment. Hands palm open resting on your lap. We're
going to breathe and pray together, for one minute. Inhale pulling
everything up, speak words out loud at top of inhale. Exhale
everything out and speak words out loud at end of exhale.

Inhale for four... Lord, I am safe. Exhale for eight... to feel this, with you.
Inhale... Lord, I am safe. Exhale... to feel this, with you.
Inhale... Lord, I am safe. Exhale... to feel this, with you.

You are not too much for Him. He is close, even here.

Don't Stop Here

Don't let this insight close back up. Walk through your 7-Day Autopilot Disrupt Tracker, one day at a time. Return to your breath prayer whenever the bracing creeps back in. Let yourself **actually notice**, this week, how often "if I just avoid it, I'm safe" runs the show. What you find matters. And I'd love to sit with you and look at it together.

Book your complimentary Stress Assessment— a focused conversation to talk through what surfaced in your tracker, and discover the clearest next right step on your path toward steady. No pressure, no pitch. Just clarity, and a plan.
<https://calendly.com/theshanwright/stress>

Been there, done that, still doing it

Really, the work never ends. That's why I'm here to support you and meet you where you are.

Hi, I'm Shan Wright, RN, holistic nurse life coach, host of the top 1.5% ranked podcast, Beat Nurse Burnout and **someone who's lived every page of this guide from the inside.**

I spent years at the bedside in high-acuity units, wearing *the "strong one" title* like a badge of honor... until my own body and mind hit a wall I couldn't outwork or out-perform. My healing came through faith, holistic care, and finally understanding that my burnout wasn't a discipline problem. It was an identity problem.

Now I walk alongside veteran nurses doing the same work I once needed someone to walk me through... *repairing what's underneath before trying to regulate what's on top.* I'd be honored to be that person for you too. Shalom, Shalom!

