

Principles Before Personalities

Deep Dives · The Recovery Files

Growth Through the Challenge of Difficult People

Recovery Made Simple — The Recovery Files

Personality Reaction · Triggered, defensive, judgmental · Principled Response · Accepting, humble, growing

In this workbook

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Each reading is followed by its check-in questions and exercises, in the same order as the app. Your scored results are shown in the app.

PART 1 OF 5 · READING

Principles Before Personalities: The Recovery Foundation You Didn't Expect

Of all the challenges in recovery, the most surprising one for many people is not craving, not withdrawal, not the dismantling of old habits — it is other people.

Specifically, it is the discovery that the recovery community you depend on for your survival contains people you find genuinely difficult to tolerate. People who irritate you, offend you, bore you, trigger you, confuse you, or enrage you.

This is not a design flaw in recovery. It is a design feature. The AA tradition of placing "principles before personalities" is not merely a polite suggestion for community management. It is one of the most profound spiritual practices available in recovery.

Every person who pushes your buttons is offering you an opportunity to grow. Every personality that triggers your judgment is revealing something about yourself that needs attention.

Recovery communities are not self-selected social groups. You share one thing: the disease of addiction and the desire to recover. This means you will encounter a far wider range of personalities than you would in a typical social circle.

Recovery requires vulnerability. You are asked to share your deepest struggles in the presence of people you might not choose to have coffee with.

The emotional rawness of early recovery amplifies interpersonal reactions. You are learning to feel again — and what you are feeling includes irritation, judgment, resentment, and competition.

This intensive helps you examine your relationship with this critical recovery challenge and develop the genuine capacity to place principles before personalities.

Reflection Questions

1. What was your reaction when you first encountered someone in recovery whose personality you found genuinely difficult?

2. If personality conflicts are "a design feature, not a design flaw," what might be the purpose?

3. Who is the most difficult person in your recovery community? What about their personality triggers you?

4. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well do you currently practice "principles before personalities"?

5. Has a personality conflict ever threatened your recovery?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 1 OF 6

Principles Over Personalities Practice

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I regularly practice placing recovery principles above personal preferences
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
2. I can engage with my recovery community even when people I find difficult are present
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
3. I have learned something valuable from someone whose personality I initially disliked
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
4. I focus on finding common ground with others in recovery
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
5. I practice acceptance of others as they are
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
6. I use encounters with difficult personalities as opportunities for growth
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
7. I contribute to unity by focusing on our shared purpose
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5
8. I can separate a person's message from their delivery style
☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

The Meeting Room Map

Where I sit, who I steer around, and what that is costing me

The Room Tells on Us

Where we sit, who we greet and who we avoid are choices we rarely notice. Mapping them shows where personalities have started deciding how we use the rooms.

How I Move Through the Room

1. Where do I usually sit, and why there?

2. Who do I make a point of greeting, and who do I make a point of missing?

3. Is there a meeting, a time slot or a group I now skip because of one person? Which one?

4. When I share, am I speaking to the room or performing for someone in it?

What the Avoiding Costs

1. What am I missing — a meeting, a message, a person who could help — because I steer around someone?

2. If a newcomer copied exactly how I move through the room, what would they learn about recovery?

3. One change I will make at my next meeting:

PART 2 OF 5 · READING

Why Certain People Trigger You

Understanding why certain personalities trigger intense reactions is essential.

Family of origin dynamics: When someone exhibits personality traits resembling a parent, sibling, or authority figure from early life, your brain responds to the original relationship, not the current person.

Ego threat: Your sense of self is more fragile in early recovery. When someone's personality seems to challenge that identity, the reaction is fierce.

Projection: The qualities that trigger the most intense reactions in you are often qualities you possess but refuse to acknowledge. The recovery saying "if you spot it, you got it" is psychologically precise.

Control issues: People whose personalities represent chaos can activate the need for control central to many addiction patterns.

Simple personality incompatibility: The reality that not all humans are designed to enjoy each other's company.

Reflection Questions

1. Which trigger source resonates most — family dynamics, ego threats, projection, control issues, or incompatibility?

2. Can you identify a specific person who triggers a reaction rooted in family dynamics?

3. What quality that irritates you most in others might you possess yourself?

4. How do your control needs manifest in reactions to other people's personalities?

5. What percentage of your reaction is about the current person versus older patterns?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 2 OF 6

Emotional Reactivity to Personalities

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. Certain people in my recovery community trigger intense emotional reactions that feel disproportionate to the situation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I find myself replaying conversations with difficult people in my head, unable to let go of what they said or did

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. Particular personality types activate old patterns from my family of origin

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I sometimes feel physically activated — heart racing, jaw clenching — in response to specific people's behaviors

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have seriously considered leaving a meeting or recovery community because of one or two people I find intolerable

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. When someone triggers me, I struggle to separate my emotional reaction from the current situation

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I notice that the intensity of my reaction to certain people is more about what they represent than what they actually did

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My emotional reactions to difficult personalities have at times threatened my recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 3 OF 6

Projection & Self-Awareness

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I recognize that some qualities that irritate me most in others are qualities I possess myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I can identify when my strong reaction to someone is about my own unresolved issues

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I understand that "if you spot it, you got it"

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I am willing to examine what my reactions to specific people might be teaching me about myself

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I can distinguish between a genuine boundary concern and a personality-based prejudice

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I have grown in my ability to see difficult people as mirrors

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. When I feel intensely negative toward someone, I include self-examination

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I recognize that my discomfort with certain personality types may be rooted in family dynamics

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Personal Trigger Inventory

Mapping Who Triggers You, How, and Why

Why This Matters

You cannot manage what you cannot name. This inventory creates a detailed map of your personality triggers to reveal the patterns in YOUR reactions.

Trigger Person #1

Describe this person (no names) — what personality traits trigger you?

Your reaction — what do you feel physically, emotionally, behaviorally?

Does this person remind you of anyone from your past?

What might this trigger be revealing about YOUR unresolved issues?

Trigger Person #2

Describe this person (no names) — what personality traits trigger you?

Your reaction — what do you feel physically, emotionally, behaviorally?

Does this person remind you of anyone from your past?

What might this trigger be revealing about YOUR unresolved issues?

Trigger Person #3

Describe this person (no names) — what personality traits trigger you?

Your reaction — what do you feel physically, emotionally, behaviorally?

Does this person remind you of anyone from your past?

What might this trigger be revealing about YOUR unresolved issues?

Trigger Person #4

Describe this person (no names) — what personality traits trigger you?

Your reaction — what do you feel physically, emotionally, behaviorally?

Does this person remind you of anyone from your past?

What might this trigger be revealing about YOUR unresolved issues?

Trigger Person #5

Describe this person (no names) — what personality traits trigger you?

Your reaction — what do you feel physically, emotionally, behaviorally?

Does this person remind you of anyone from your past?

What might this trigger be revealing about YOUR unresolved issues?

YOUR EXERCISE

The Mirror Exercise

What I See in You That I Have Not Faced in Me

If You Spot It, Check Whether You've Got It

The traits that irritate us most in other people are often traits we carry, used to carry, or have forbidden ourselves. That is projection, and it is one of the most common ways personality conflicts hijack a recovery. The mirror is a question, not a verdict — sometimes the answer is that it really is about them. The work is asking honestly before deciding.

Where the Mirror Does Not Apply

If someone is threatening, exploiting, harassing, or pursuing you, that is not a mirror exercise and your reaction is not a character defect. That is a safety matter. Take it to your sponsor, a trusted member of the group, or a counselor, and put distance between yourself and that person.

Three Traits I Can't Stand

Name a trait — not a person — that gets under your skin. Then turn the mirror.

Trait #1

The trait, and how it shows up in others:

Where does this show up in me — even in a smaller, quieter, or better-disguised form?

The last time I acted this way:

Trait #2

The trait, and how it shows up in others:

Where does this show up in me — even in a smaller, quieter, or better-disguised form?

The last time I acted this way:

Trait #3

The trait, and how it shows up in others:

Where does this show up in me — even in a smaller, quieter, or better-disguised form?

The last time I acted this way:

Four Ways a Mirror Works

Pick the person who triggers you most. A strong reaction usually means one or more of these is true. Write what fits and what does not.

1. I do it too — and I have not admitted it.

2. I used to do it, and seeing it brings back shame about who I was.

3. I wish I could do it, but I will not allow it in myself (speak up, rest, ask for help, take up space).

4. They remind me of someone who hurt me, and I am reacting to that person, not this one.

The Mirror Works Both Ways

1. Name someone in recovery you admire strongly — maybe more than you are comfortable with. What exactly do you admire?

What you see, and what it says about you...

2. Where is a seed of that quality already in you, even if it is small or unpracticed?

What you see, and what it says about you...

3. What would it take to grow it — one action this week?

What you see, and what it says about you...

What the Mirror Showed Me

1. The most uncomfortable thing I recognized in myself doing this exercise:

2. How does knowing this change how I see the person who triggers me?

3. Who will I talk this through with — sponsor, counselor, trusted friend — and when?

PART 3 OF 5 · READING

Common Personality Triggers: A Field Guide

Recovery communities contain predictable personality types:

The Know-It-All: Has answers for everything. Your reaction reveals your own need to be seen as knowledgeable, authority issues.

The Crisis Creator: Lives in constant crisis. Your reaction reveals discomfort with emotional intensity, caretaking patterns.

The Rule Follower: Rigidly adheres to protocols. Your reaction reveals ambivalence about structure, fear you're not doing it "right."

The Rule Breaker: Disregards guidelines. Your reaction reveals envy of their freedom, fear their casualness will infect your commitment.

The Oversharer: Dominates with intimate details. Your reaction reveals difficulty with emotional expression, boundary issues.

The Silent Type: Rarely shares. Your reaction reveals fear of silence, need for validation.

The Successful Type: Has it "figured out." Your reaction reveals comparison-based self-evaluation, inadequacy feelings.

The Struggling Type: Visibly having a hard time. Your reaction reveals fear that recovery is fragile, need to see yourself as "further along."

Your reaction is information about your own inner landscape.

Reflection Questions

1. Which personality type triggers the strongest reaction in you?

2. Read the "what this reveals" section for your strongest trigger. How accurate is it?

3. Are there personality types not listed that challenge you?

4. Is there a type you used to find intolerable that you've learned to accept?

5. Which of these types might YOU sometimes be for someone else?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 4 OF 6

Judgment & Intolerance Patterns

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I often form quick judgments about people based on their personality style or appearance

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have a mental list of "types of people" I find difficult

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I sometimes feel superior to people whose recovery approach differs from mine

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I struggle with tolerance for people who process recovery differently

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I catch myself gossiping about difficult personalities rather than examining my own reaction

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I have difficulty seeing the humanity in people whose personalities strongly irritate me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I expect others to behave according to my standards

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I am more focused on what is wrong with other people than on what I can learn

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Personality Type Reaction Analysis

Working Through the Field Guide, One Type at a Time

Your Reaction Is the Data

Exercise 1 mapped specific people. This exercise works from the other direction: the eight types from the Field Guide reading. You are not diagnosing anyone. Every type is there so you can

study the one person in the room you can actually change — the one having the reaction. Skip any type that leaves you cold; that is information too.

The Know-It-All

Has an answer for everything.

What your reaction may reveal: Your own need to be seen as knowledgeable; old issues with authority.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Crisis Creator

Lives in constant crisis.

What your reaction may reveal: Discomfort with emotional intensity; a pull to caretake.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Rule Follower

Rigidly sticks to the protocols.

What your reaction may reveal: Mixed feelings about structure; fear you are not doing it "right."

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Rule Breaker

Disregards the guidelines.

What your reaction may reveal: Envy of their freedom; fear their casualness will loosen your commitment.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Oversharer

Dominates with intimate details.

What your reaction may reveal: Difficulty with your own emotional expression; boundary questions.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Silent Type

Rarely shares.

What your reaction may reveal: Discomfort with silence; a need for validation.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Successful Type

Seems to have it all figured out.

What your reaction may reveal: Measuring yourself by comparison; feelings of inadequacy.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

The Struggling Type

Visibly having a hard time.

What your reaction may reveal: Fear that recovery is fragile; a need to see yourself as further along.

Who fits this type for me? (No names — a description is enough.)

What happens in me — body, thoughts, urges?

Does the "what this may reveal" line fit? If not, what is my version?

When have I been this type for someone else?

My Top Three and the Principle for Each

Name the three types that stir you most. For each, choose the principle you will practice instead of the reaction — acceptance, humility, tolerance, patience, service, honesty — and say what practicing it would look like in the room.

#1

The type...

The principle, and what it looks like in practice...

#2

The type...

The principle, and what it looks like in practice...

#3

The type...

The principle, and what it looks like in practice...

Next Time I'm in the Room With My Strongest Type

1. Recognition — the first sign in my body that I am triggered:

2. Pause — what I will do to create space (breathe, stay seated, hold my comment until the end of the meeting):

3. Inquiry — the one question I will ask myself instead of "What is wrong with them?":

4. Response — the principle-based action I will take, even a small one:

YOUR EXERCISE

From Judgment to Curiosity

Turning “What is wrong with them?” into one honest question about me

Judgment Closes, Curiosity Opens

Judgment ends the thinking: they are the problem, case closed. Curiosity keeps it open long enough to find the part that is ours. You are not asked to approve of anyone — only to stay curious a moment longer.

My Current Verdict

1. The person (initials only) and the verdict I have passed on them:

2. The evidence I am using:

3. What I do not know about their life, their day or their recovery:

Turning the Question Around

1. Instead of “What is wrong with them?”, what is one honest question I can ask about me?

2. What does my reaction say about what I value, fear or expect?

3. Where have I been on the other side of the same kind of judgment?

4. What would I say to a sponsee who brought me this verdict?

PART 4 OF 5 · READING

The Spiritual Practice of Acceptance

The people who challenge you most are your greatest teachers — because your reaction to them reveals exactly what needs to grow in you.

Acceptance does not mean approval or liking. It means acknowledging reality without requiring it to be different. Every ounce of energy you spend wanting someone to change is energy stolen from your own growth.

Humility is most challenged by personality conflicts. When you encounter someone you dislike and immediately judge, you have placed yourself as arbiter. Humility asks: "What can I learn? What is my reaction teaching me?"

Unity requires subordinating individual preferences to collective wellbeing. A recovery community of only people like you would be comfortable but limited. A community that includes challengers expands your capacity for tolerance, empathy, and growth.

Tolerance generalizes. When you develop tolerance for difficult people in recovery, you develop tolerance everywhere.

Service orientation provides the ultimate reframe. When you shift from "What can I get?" to "What can I contribute?", personality conflicts lose their power.

Reflection Questions

1. What is the difference between acceptance and approval?

2. Where does humility challenge you most in personality conflicts?

3. How would your recovery community be different if it only contained people you liked?

4. Has tolerance practiced in recovery generalized to other areas of your life?

5. If you shifted to "what can I contribute," how would your experience change?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 5 OF 6

Control vs. Acceptance

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I recognize that I cannot change other people's personalities, only my response

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I have released the expectation that everyone should be easy to get along with

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I understand that trying to control how others behave is itself a recovery issue

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I can apply the Serenity Prayer specifically to personality conflicts

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I have stopped trying to "fix" people whose personalities bother me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I accept that a diverse recovery community is stronger than one of people just like me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. I recognize that my need to control how others behave often masks my own fear

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. I practice letting go of resentments toward difficult personalities

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

The Person I Can't Change

An acceptance practice for one ongoing relationship

Acceptance Is Not Approval

Accepting someone does not mean liking what they do or staying where you are harmed. It means you stop spending your peace on trying to make them different, and put that energy into

what is yours to change.

The Fight I Keep Having

1. Who is the person, and what do I keep wanting them to change?

2. What have I tried — hinting, arguing, avoiding, keeping score?

3. What has the fight cost me in peace, sleep, meetings or sobriety?

Where I Am With Acceptance

Rate how true each is for you right now.

I replay conversations with this person

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

I try to get others on my side

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

My mood depends on how they act

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

I expect them to be different next time

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Practicing Acceptance This Week

1. What about this person is simply true and not mine to fix?

2. What is mine to change — my words, my boundaries, my distance, my part?

3. A short acceptance statement I can say when they come to mind:

4. If this is a safety matter, who will I talk to about it this week?

YOUR EXERCISE

Unsent Letter

To someone who pushes my buttons — then the letter I would want back

Get It Out, Not At Them

This letter is never sent. Write it honestly, including the parts you would not say out loud. Then write the reply you wish you could receive. Both letters usually show more about you than about them.

My Letter to Them

1. Dear ___ (initials only). What I really want to say to you is...

2. What I have been holding back, and why:

3. What I want from you that I have never asked for:

The Letter I Would Want Back

1. Write the reply you wish they would send:

2. Which part of that reply could you give yourself, without waiting for them?

After Writing

1. What did I notice in my body while writing?

2. What part of this belongs with my sponsor or in my inventory?

PART 5 OF 5 · READING

From Reaction to Reflection: The Growth Model

Managing personality conflicts requires a structured process: from automatic reaction through conscious reflection to intentional response.

Step 1 - Recognition: Noticing you've been triggered. Signs are physical (tension, elevated heart rate), cognitive (judgmental thoughts), and emotional (irritation, resentment).

Step 2 - Pause: Creating deliberate space between the trigger and your response. This "sacred pause" returns your prefrontal cortex to the conversation.

Step 3 - Inquiry: Instead of "What is wrong with that person?" ask "What is this reaction telling me about myself?" Questions include: "Is this about current situation or an older pattern?" "What am I afraid of?" "Am I projecting?"

Step 4 - Response: Choosing action based on recovery principles rather than emotional reactivity. Listen instead of argue, accept instead of control, stay present when instinct says leave.

Step 5 - Integration: Incorporating what you learned into ongoing practice. What did this encounter teach? What pattern did it reveal?

Over time, this accelerates. You recognize triggers faster, pause more readily, inquire more honestly, respond more skillfully.

Reflection Questions

1. Describe a recent personality conflict through the five steps.

2. Which step is most difficult for you?

3. Have you ever experienced the "sacred pause" successfully?

4. What has a personality conflict taught you that you would not have learned otherwise?

5. If you practiced this model consistently, how would your relationships be different?

CHECK YOURSELF · CHECK-IN 6 OF 6

Ego & Defensiveness Patterns

Scale: 1 = Not at all · 2 = A little · 3 = Somewhat · 4 = Quite a bit · 5 = Very much

1. I become defensive when someone challenges my opinions, recovery approach, or way of doing things

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

2. I find it difficult to take suggestions from people whose style or personality I don't respect

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

3. I sometimes dismiss valuable recovery messages because I don't like the messenger

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

4. I need to be seen as competent or "together" — and people who threaten that image trigger strong reactions

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

5. I catch myself competing with certain people in recovery

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

6. I struggle to admit that someone I dislike might have something valuable to teach me

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

7. When criticized by certain personality types, I immediately become defensive

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

8. My ego sometimes prevents me from participating fully if certain people are involved

☐ 1 ☐ 2 ☐ 3 ☐ 4 ☐ 5

YOUR EXERCISE

Ego Defense Audit

Being right, having the last word, keeping score

Ego Defends, Principles Respond

When personalities clash, the ego reaches for its usual defenses: being right, winning, keeping score. Naming the ones you use most is the first step to choosing something else.

How Often I Reach for These

Rate how true each is for you right now.

Needing to be right

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Having the last word

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Keeping score of who did what

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Defending myself before anyone attacks

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Sarcasm or humor to put someone down

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

Withdrawing to punish

☐ 1 Not at all ☐ 2 A little ☐ 3 Somewhat ☐ 4 Quite a bit ☐ 5 Very much

My Top Defense

1. Which defense did I rate highest? A recent example:

2. What was I protecting — my image, my fear, my hurt?

3. What did the defense cost me afterward?

4. What principle could have answered instead — humility, honesty, patience, tolerance?

YOUR EXERCISE

My Pause-and-Respond Script

What I will do in the ten seconds before I react

Ten Seconds Is Enough

Most reactions happen in seconds. A plan written in advance gives you something to do in those seconds besides react. Keep the script short enough to remember when you are triggered.

My Early Warning Signs

1. The first thing I notice in my body when a person gets to me:

2. The first thought that shows up:

3. The first thing I usually do or say:

My Script

1. Step 1 — what I do to pause (breathe, sit back, hold my comment):

2. Step 2 — the question I ask myself:

3. Step 3 — the principle I choose:

4. Step 4 — what I say or do instead, if anything:

5. Where I will keep this script so I can find it (phone, wallet, book):

After I Use It

1. When I used the script, what happened?

2. What would I change in the script next time?

YOUR EXERCISE

Daily Principles Check-In (7 Days)

One person, one reaction, one principle practiced each day

Small Daily Practice

Principles grow through repetition, not big moments. Each evening for seven days, note one person who stirred a reaction and the principle you practiced — or the one you could have.

Seven Days

Day 1

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 2

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 3

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 4

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 5

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 6

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Day 7

The person (initials) and what stirred a reaction:

How I reacted, honestly:

The principle I practiced — or could have:

Looking Back on the Week

1. What pattern did I notice across the seven days?

2. Which principle came easiest, and which was hardest?

3. What will I carry into next week?
